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Romanian Philosophical Culture, Globalization and Education

Romanian Philosophical Studies, VI

Edited by
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Table of Contents

Introduction <i>Stefan Popenici and Alin Tat</i>	1
<i>Part I. Romanian Philosophical Culture</i>	
Chapter 1. Aesthetics and Philosophy of Culture in Tudor Vianu <i>Vlad Alexandrescu</i> (University of Bucharest, Romania)	7
Chapter 2. The Philosophical Periods of Emil Cioran <i>Ciprian Valcan</i> (Tibiscus University Timisoara, Romania)	17
Chapter 3. The Phenomenological Movement in Romania: A Historical and Systematic Overview <i>Mădălina Diaconu</i> (University of Wien, Austria)	37
Chapter 4. Noica, a Thinker in a Time of Need and the Philosophy of Becoming unto Being <i>Laura Pamfil</i> (University of Bucharest, Romania)	53
Chapter 5. Alexandru Dragomir: Notebooks from the Underground <i>Gabriel Liiceanu</i> (University of Bucharest, Romania)	85
<i>Part II. Romanian Philosophical Inquiries into Globalization and Education</i>	
Chapter 6. Globalization, Nationalism and Romania's Educational Reform(s). <i>Stefan Popenici</i> (Simon Fraser University, Faculty of Education, Canada)	127
Chapter 7. Global Processes: What Has Education to Learn from Globalization <i>Ciprian Fartusnic</i> (Institute for Educational Sciences, Romania)	149
Chapter 8. Education and Globalization in Pseudo-Modern Romania: The Issue of Difference <i>Catalina Ulrich</i> (University of Bucharest, Romania)	165

Chapter 9. Romania: A Developing Country and the Challenges of Globalization	189
<i>Paul Blendea</i> (Institute for Educational Sciences, Romania)	
Chapter 10. The Dilemma of the Cultural Researcher: Are Global Answers Suitable for Local Queries?	203
<i>Serban Iosifescu</i> (Institute for Educational Sciences, Romania)	
Chapter 11. Globalization and Cultural Diversity	213
<i>Zeno Reinhardt</i> and <i>Oana Almasan</i> (National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Faculty of Communication and Public Relations, Romania)	
Index	225

Introduction

Does a history of Romanian philosophy exist? This question was raised some time ago by Gabriel Liiceanu and his answer was rather negative. Part I, “Romanian Philosophical Culture,” of this book does not pretend to answer that question in a speculative manner, but to show some of the contributions of Romanian philosophers to such key philosophical themes as: being and becoming, art and the beautiful, reason and faith, and the meaning of life. These studies about the Romanian philosophy offer a cultural background for the discussions in Part II on integrating specific cultures in the specific context of global education.

We have chosen to present the work on Romanian philosophers in two different ways: by general presentations of some authors (Vianu, Cioran and Dragomir), and by particular themes in other philosophers (Noica and Patapievici). There is also a group portrait of the Romanian contribution to phenomenology.

This selection is not exhaustive, and cannot pretend to do complete justice to authors and works. One easily remarks the absence of such “classical” Romanian philosophers as: Ion Petrovici, C. Radulescu-Motru, P.P. Negulescu, Nae Ionescu, Mircea Vulcanescu, Lucian Blaga, D.D. Rosca, Mihail Sora and such more recent names as Gabriel Liiceanu (himself a contributor to this volume), and Andrei Plesu. Yet Part I on the cultural presuppositions of present day debates and provides a bases for thinking and imagining the future.

In the first chapter, Vlad Alexandrescu presents a comprehensive view of Tudor Vianu’s philosophy. “In his fertile activity in the fields of aesthetics, philosophy of culture, theory of values, stylistics, literary history and criticism, he integrated the academic philosophical style with the exigencies of independent research. His philosophical works stand out as a series of rich and personal syntheses which speak of a multi-faceted philosophical attitude.”

In the second chapter, Ciprian Valcan presents the philosophy of Emil Cioran, with a special focus on the differences between his Romanian and French works.

In the third chapter, Mădălina Diaconu presents the Romanian work in phenomenology “as an apparent paradox because the main original Romanian thinkers, even those who were explicitly influenced by phenomenology, with few exceptions, neither practiced exegetical studies in phenomenology, nor even called their own work phenomenological.”

In the fourth chapter, Laura Pamfil presents the core of Constantin Noica's philosophy of becoming unto being. What “singles him out in the Romanian cultural landscape is that he provided an ontological perspective on the question of national identity.” His ontological works hinge on modulations

of the verb "to be". Inspired mainly by Hegel, Noica was the most important Romanian thinker to deal in his work with the classical philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, and, in modern times, of Kant, Hegel and Heidegger.

In the fifth chapter, Gabriel Liiceanu tells the philosophical story of Alexandru Dragomir, a very interesting and until recently unknown figure in Romanian philosophy. A friend of the Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica, Dragomir did not publish during his lifetime, but his works are now being edited.

Part II is on "Romanian Philosophical Inquiries into Globalization and Education". Present day, discussions about globalization within academic literature seem restricted to the capital market. This is true even when we look at the fields of philosophy and education which are supposedly concerned with supporting and strengthening our common humanity. Similarly, International Education is approached by both its critics and supporters from an equally narrow perspective as they, too, focus almost exclusively upon financial flow and capital gains. This single-mindedness is not unfounded: in the year 2004 more than two million students worldwide studied outside their home countries; and, it is expected that this number will rise to eight million by 2025. Foreign students contribute more than \$12 billion to the United States' economy each year. Export revenue related to international student mobility amounted to an estimated \$30 billion in 1998, or roughly three percent of global services exports.

Beyond these legitimate but limited interests, we find that the present challenges of our world include the very real threats of religious fanaticism, extremist nationalist movements, global warming and ecological disasters. Even so-called "local issues" such as social injustice or inequity, corruption and poverty can no longer be approached from only a regional perspective. Organized crime, including such corruption as the trafficking of humans, now acts on a global scale, often with ramifications on two or more continents.

All of these concerns require a more profound philosophical analysis of globalization and its accompanying issues. Academics in the education field are heeding this calls for a deeper understanding of the limits and challenges of globalization. This includes examining the oft overlooked aspect of knowledge exchange in a debate that is too often dominated by financial arguments and narrow ideological stances.

Addressing the challenges presented by globalization, a group of Romanian academics in the field of education here confront the elusive concept of globalization from different perspectives. The opening study, "Globalization, Nationalism and Romania's Educational Reform(s)" analyses globalization from the perspective of a country that has been isolated by communism and which is now eager to use and enjoy the benefits of globalization and hence to

reconnect with the international community. This study opens the debate on the conflicting positions of globalization and nationalism and looks at this issue in relation to educational and democratic reforms. To do so it studies the complex and often disjointed initiatives of educational reform in Romania and discusses how future development projects for public education must utilize educational imagination to re-connect Romanian youth with their democratic roots and the humanistic cultures of the world. This study ends with an open challenge to begin a further study on the globally imagined community based upon common human values, ecology and mutual interest.

“Global Processes: What Has Education to Learn from Globalization” by Ciprian Fartusnic extends the ideas of the previous study one step further by an in-depth analysis of the influence exerted by the process of globalization upon curricular reform in Romania. Defending the statement that globalization should not be ignored by those in the field of education, the author bases his analysis upon a structured definition of citizenship that goes beyond the boundaries of nation-state and nationalistic identities. The main trends of citizenship and participation in governance, civil affairs, education, the labor market and consumption as shaped by global interests and international issues should be an integral part of our curricular reforms. From this point of reference, Fartusnic synthesizes the arguments that demonstrate that preparing the student for a global society is an ineluctable part of a good common future.

“Education and Globalization in Pseudo-modern Romania: the Issue of Difference” by Catalina Ulrich examines the readiness-level of Romanian educators for globalization and postmodern values. Using the operational approach that globalization is an inevitable phenomenon, her study focuses upon Romania with a cultural analysis from an international outlook. Ulrich investigates the concept of “difference” amid the context of public education: she explores teachers’ perceptions on difference, identity, distinctiveness and solidarity, and the influence of communist propaganda on current residual mentalities. The author uses data collected from Romanian teachers to pinpoint the range of confusion and axiological conflict in order to reveal the absolute need of continuous support for a culturally differentiated curriculum and cross-boundaries perspectives in education.

In “Romania: a Developing Country and the Challenges of Globalization”, Paul Blendea presents an historical perspective on Romania’s evolution with regard to globalization and historical determinism. Pinpointing the rise of poverty as a major criticism of globalization, the author presents the current situation of Romania based on statistical data and offers a critical scrutiny of globalization as a process *per se*. Globalization is linked here with educational systems; Romania stands as a case study for an atypical post-communist country. Sketching a detailed picture of the evolution of a local educational system, 15 years after communism, Blendea suggests some possible

directions for public education. He seeks to equip the new generations with the appropriate skill set to enable them to challenge globalization through active participation and equal opportunity.

This perspective is continued in “The Dilemma of the Cultural Researcher: Are Global Answers Suitable for Local Queries?” by Serban Iosifescu. Here we find a “cultural researcher’s perspective” on data presented in the previous study, and its implications for educational research in conjunction with the process of globalization. Linked to his research activity, the author presents a short analysis on the cultural background of education, its connection with educational reform and the enlargement of Europe.

Finally, “Globalization and Cultural Diversity” by Zeno Reinhardt and Oana Almasan is focused upon the theoretical debates that have been common to the last part of this volume. The authors present a comprehensive perspective of the latest studies on globalization. This includes an examination of Zygmund Bauman’s perspective on globalization, particularly in relation to such ideas as *ethos*, ethnocentrism, cultural relativism and communication.

Covering a myriad of themes and ideas, this volume stands as a collection of studies on the Romanian mind and contemporary issues on globalization and education. This provides a small glimpse into a new generation of Romanian thinkers and their views on some of the most important challenges we all face. While focused upon Romania, these discussions are relevant to the world as a whole. Ideally, as our “global village” shrinks in size, so too will the differences between us all. If education can bridge the gaps between us, educators will lead the way.

Alin Tat and Stefan Popenici

Part I

Romanian Philosophical Culture

Chapter I

Aesthetics and Philosophy of Culture in Tudor Vianu (1897-1964)

Vlad Alexandrescu

In his fertile activity in the fields of aesthetics, philosophy of culture, theory of values, stylistics, literary history and criticism, Tudor Vianu integrated the academic philosophical style with the exigencies of independent research. His philosophical works, treating aesthetics, philosophy of culture and the theory of values, were designed to serve as a basis for the lectures he delivered at the University of Bucharest. They stand out as a series of rich and personal syntheses which speak of a multi-faceted philosophical attitude. Central to this attitude is the image of man as a creative being *par excellence* – man as author of a work in which he comes fully to manifest his freedom by galvanizing his conscious, rational resources, and thus enriches reality with new spiritual meanings. Championing a distinctly personal position within the pre-war Romanian cultural debate, advocating faith in the individual's creative energies and in his willingness freely to share life with his fellow beings, Vianu ran counter to contemporary Romanian trends such as the 'ethnic soul' theory (N. Crainic) or the 'state mystique' theory (P. Marcu-Balș). For him, the state was simply a regulator of social mechanisms and had a representative role in international law. Thus, apart from his specialized intellectual expertise, Vianu was acknowledged as a true man of the *polis*, fighting for a liberal society built on justice, order and the power of reason.

LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL ITINERARY

Tudor Vianu was born on December 27, 1897 (old style calendar) in Giurgiu, Romania. His family belonged to the bourgeoisie that supported the young Romanian Kingdom, ruled by Carol I, which had declared its independence in 1877 after the war with Turkey. His father, Alexandru, had been born into a Jewish family which seems to have settled on Romanian territory before the great migrations of the 19th century. He had fought as a volunteer in the War for Independence and organized a field ambulance which won him Romanian citizenship by a decree of naturalization (1879). After a period in which he completed his medical studies and was granted specialist degrees in Bucharest, Vienna, Berlin and Paris, he returned home in 1883 and converted to Orthodox Christianity in 1893 – an act germane to his will of

assimilation and his faith in the future of modern Romania, a creed that also led him to opt for the career of a public service military physician.

Tudor received a good education while in Giurgiu, a Balkan town on the banks of the Danube. After his mother died in 1912, he moved to Bucharest where he graduated from high school and completed his studies at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in the University of Bucharest. Meanwhile he also wrote poetry and newspaper articles and was a member of the literary circle run by symbolist poet Macedonski. Vianu chose to pursue advanced philosophical studies first in Vienna, then in Tübingen, Germany; he thus came into direct contact with the effervescent cultural life of Germany in the 1920s. It was here that, under the supervision of German philosopher Karl Groos, a representative of the school of aesthetic empathy (*Einfühlung*), Vianu wrote his Ph.D. thesis, *Das Wertungsproblem in Schillers Poetik*, his first piece of research in value theory, which he published in Bucharest in 1924.

On his return to the Romanian capital in 1924, Vianu began to teach aesthetics at the University; concurrently, he lectured alternately on the philosophy of culture and on fundamental ideas of modern culture. His philosophical interests grew and took on a new dimension due to explorations in literary history and criticism (*Eminescu's Poetry*, 1930; *Ion Barbu*, 1935; *Junimea*, 1944). In 1935 he was elected correspondent member of the Romanian Academy. During the war, he started to work at his studies in stylistics, and thus broke new ground for Romanian literary research (*The Art of Romanian Prose Writers*, 1941). In 1942 he wrote an introduction to the theory of values. In 1948, as a result of the communist reform of education, the aesthetics chair at the University was dissolved and Vianu had no other choice but to teach universal literature. The interdiction was not without effect on his work, as practically it brought his philosophical activity to an end. Until 1955 his publications remained scarce, and he devoted part of his time to translations from universal literature (Goethe, Shakespeare). In 1950 he composed the poem *Arcadia*, a critique of utopian thinking and of Romania's captivity in the Stalinist prison, which remained unpublished and uncirculated. In 1955 he became a full member of the Academy and thus accepted the role of a public figure representing official culture, for the sake of continuing his own projects and of salvaging what cultural values could still be saved.

Intellectually, beside the writings on universal literature, sometimes presented in the form of short monographs (*Schiller*, 1961; *Goethe*, 1962; *Stendhal's Ideas*, 1959), Vianu could now pursue his earlier interest in stylistics. In his *Problems of Style and Literary Art* (1955), artistic form is defined as being its very content, grasped at its most original. Form thus understood, i.e. as the ensemble of facts of style, continued to be the object of Vianu's linguistic-oriented analyses. This gave birth to an extended series of studies, among them *The Questions of Metaphor* (1957). Yet another outlet for

his philosophical preoccupations was the history of ideas, an interest he developed out of the historical component of the lectures he had delivered on the philosophy of culture (*The History of the Idea of Genius*, 1964, unfinished, published posthumously). During his last years, surrounded by disciples and revered by the younger generation, Vianu carved out for himself the figure of a moralist, as is apparent in his autobiographical sketches, his articles on general themes or his private conversations. It is certain though that he experienced the pangs of a tragic consciousness due to the impossibility of assimilating intellectually the disaster of Romania's fall into communism, which at the time seemed permanent. He died on May 21, 1964, in Bucharest.

Aesthetics

With his *Aesthetics* (1934-1936), Vianu places himself within the field of research known as "*Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*" opened up by Max Dessoir and Emil Utitz. The treatise explores the problem of the work of art, considered first in the pure form of its organization and then in its relations with, and influence upon, society; along the way it enriches and elevates material culture. The governing idea of the *Aesthetics* is that the work of art – a product of the transformation undergone by some material – is a form of human labour. But while all the other types of human labour result in works that can easily be replaced by other more perfected ones, the artist's work is irreplaceable and perfect, and as such resembles the products of nature. More than that, since art is a perfect form of labour, Vianu concludes that 'whatever its forms, human labour needs to strive and aspire to the condition of art'. In a distant future of civilization, the labourer might be able to acquire the conscience of an artist by recognizing his own purpose in 'finite and harmonious work' (*Lived Ideas*, 1958). Further consideration of the artistic phenomenon as teleological activity leads Vianu to highlight the conscious and rational factors at work in the process of artistic creation. Art imbues its various forms of creation with values deriving from all domains of contemporary culture and by its extra-aesthetic content it becomes humanly eloquent, a part of the mobility of historical life and a source of inspiration for society.

Philosophy of Culture

Vianu's interest in the philosophy of culture can be traced back to its first formulation in his *The Rationalist and Historical Conception of Culture* (1929), echoing the French-German debate about the development of culture, which animated intellectuals like Ch. Andler, P. Lasserre, H. Massis, E.R. Curtius, E. Troeltsch and O. Spengler. Vianu's study retraces the stages of configuration, rationalism and historicism from Rousseau to Nietzsche, points

out the limits of each approach and introduces the premises for an original synthesis. He throws light upon Enlightenment rationalism from the vantage point of German classicism and its human ideal, which Vianu sees as a revival of the ancient Greek ideal (*The Classical Ideal of Man*, 1933). As for historicism and the doctrine of the independence of cultures it promotes, Vianu is particularly attracted here by the very idea of value as focal point of any culture specific system of values. Yet he rejects German historicism as too focused on the contemplation of traditions and threatening to engulf men of culture in pessimist attitudes. He shows that in Herder's and Hegel's great syntheses historicism had absorbed the fundamental elements of rationalism and could present the history of culture as a 'unitary development of humanity towards a universal ideal of dominion over sensuality, of the triumph of reason and liberty' (*Works*, vol. 8, p. 29).

Yet, in his analysis of the problems raised by Nietzsche's critique, Vianu forges an activist conception of culture, wherein the act of culture is seen as a 'creative addition to the process of reality by means of which reality ceaselessly refines its own spiritual meaning' (*ibidem*, p. 43). Thus, culture neither perfects nature, as with the rationalists, nor does it oppose nature, as with the historicists, but 'completes it, adding to it ever newer dimensions' (*ibidem*). Vianu further expands this synthesis in *Philosophy of Culture* (1944), where he reflects more deeply on the idea of culture as the 'work of human freedom'. The activist conception is here considered to affirm 'the sovereign expression of human freedom as emergent in the creative act of culture' (*Works*, vol. 8, p. 313).

In looking at the Romanian debate about the development and guidance of culture from the perspective of this theory, Vianu acknowledges the strength of the rationalist orientation, which led to the Westernization of Romania in the second half of the 19th century. On the other hand, he also explains the historicist advice given by M. Kogălniceanu, T. Maiorescu and M. Eminescu; and he believes that Romania was then entering a new stage, where cultural initiative and creation needed to prevail and were capable of enriching Romanian civilization to the point where it would acquire 'the character of a work of art'.

Theory of Values

The philosophical core of Vianu's thinking is nowhere more apparent than in his works of axiology, where echoes can be heard of his German years, his neo-Kantianism and readings from Scheler and N. Hartmann. Over the years, Vianu made several attempts to define the concept of value, which was central to both his aesthetics and his philosophy of culture. He finally chose to build on the premises of Brentano's empirical psychology and in his

Introduction to the Theory of Values Grounded on the Observation of Consciousness (1942), he defines value as object of desire. However, in contrast to the Kantian tradition, for Vianu the acts of consciousness comprise, rather than produce, their objects. Consequently, value is not a reflection of subjectivity, but an objective and special reality, as it is also for Hartmann and Scheler. On the other hand, it does not precede, but rather succeeds desire, just as any object succeeds the act that comprises it. Things invested with value (goods) have ontological profundity and require that we discover the values that abide in them. Persons are configurations that compel us to penetrate their depth and, on the other hand, they are also centres of their own value-investments. They never remain indifferent to us as they force us to take a stand in relation to the values they express. Vianu gives a description and classification of values, as well as a rational system accounting for them; he considers his system closed class-wise, but open content-wise. The theory opens into morals with the formulation of a hierarchy of values deemed objective.

Due to the generality of values, if every human consciousness were to reach the highest point of its capacity for value-recognition and investment, and if there were nothing to obstruct consciousness in the spontaneous realisation of its preferences, then all individuals would be able to develop the same personal sphere of values, and their personal spheres would coincide fully. In reality, though, because of the different weights allotted to values in the empirical existence of consciousness, individuals differ from one another on account of the specific values they choose, in a preferential or exclusive way, to desire and attain. Vianu believes that the connections established across each person's value-spheres are a source both of conflict and of love or harmony. Axiological disagreement is not a result of empirical limitation, but an outcome of the person's imperialism, and an openness towards the great works of culture, for instance, is capable of pulling people out of their stubborn and arbitrary subjectivism.

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comparative literature; Vol.12 : writings on the plastic arts, performing arts, criticism and literary methodology; Vol. 13: university lectures on the history of aesthetic theory, the theory of aesthetic value and the problem of originality; Vol.14 : correspondence received by Vianu (347 letters), interviews and the poem *Arcadia*.

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Chapter II

The Philosophical Periods of Emil Cioran

Ciprian Valcan

Emil Cioran was born on April 8th, 1911 in Rășinari, near Sibiu, in a Romanian region that until 1918 was part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. His father, Emilian Cioran, was an Orthodox priest, while his mother, Elvira Comanicu, descended from the family of a notary who had earned a baronship for notable service. Cioran spent his childhood in the beautiful scenery of Rășinari. At the age of ten he started attending the classes of the “Gheorghe Lazăr”¹ highschool in Sibiu where his entire family moved in 1924. In 1926, when he was fifteen years old, the young Emil dedicated himself to his first intense literary and philosophical reading; his notebooks of the time display a series of quotations from Lichtenberg, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Diderot, Balzac, Flaubert, Sholoviov, Tagore and Dostoïevski.

Between 1928 and 1932 he was a student of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in Bucharest, particularly attracted to German philosophers, among whom he assiduously embraced Simmel, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Dilthey, without ignoring Kierkegaard, Bergson and Shestov. He concluded his undergraduate studies with a dissertation on Bergsonian intuitionism. From 1931 onwards he published numerous articles and essays in periodicals such as *Mișcarea*, *Discobolul*, *Azi*, *Vremea*, *Gândirea*, *Calendarul*, *Floarea de foc*, *Ațiunea*. Between 1933 and 1935 he lived in Berlin on a Humboldt Foundation scholarship and in 1936 became a philosophy teacher at the “Andrei Șaguna” highschool in Brașov.

In 1937 he went to Paris on a scholarship of the French Institute in Bucharest, which was extended until 1944. After 1945, he returned to Romania for only short periods of time, choosing to live in exile. His Parisian existence was that of a marginal character who lived precariously on uncertain income. At the beginning, he lived in cheap hotels in the Latin Quarter and, after 1960, eventually settled in the famous attic at 21, rue de l’Odéon, where he was to remain until his death, in 1995.

1934 witnessed his debut within a volume; his first book, *Pe culmile disperării* was followed by other five written in Romanian and ten more published in French: *Cartea amăgirilor* (*The Book of Illusions*), Bucharest, 1936; *Schimbarea la față a României*, Bucharest, 1936; *Lacrimi și sfinți*, Bucharest, 1937; *Amurgul gândurilor* (*The Crepuscule of Reason*), Sibiu, 1940; *Îndreptar pătimăș* (*Passionate Guide*), Bucharest, 1991; *Précis de décomposition* (*Treaty of Decomposition*), Paris, 1949; *Syllogismes de*

l'amertume (Syllogisms of Sadness), Paris, 1952; *La tentation d'exister (The Temptation to Exist)*, Paris, 1956; *Histoire et utopie (History and Utopia)*, Paris, 1960; *La chute dans le temps (The Fall in Time)*, Paris, 1964; *Le mauvais D miurge (The Evil Demiurge)*, Paris, 1969; *De l'inconv nient d' tre n *, Paris (*The Shortcomings of Being Born*), 1973; *Ecart lement (Excruciation)*, Paris, 1979; *Exercices d'admiration (Exercises in Admiration)*, Paris, 1986; *Aveux et anath mes (Confessions and Anathemas)*, Paris, 1987. *Mon Pays/ Țara mea (My Country)*, Bucharest, 1996; *Cahiers (Notebooks)*, Paris, 1997 ; *Cahier de Talamanca (The Talamanca Notebook)*, Paris, 2000 were published posthumously.

CIORAN'S NIETZSCHEAN PERIOD

The differences between Cioran's Romanian and French works have often been overlooked by his commentators, who have proved much too attached to the idea of unity of his thought, considering that the writer's obsessions and interests remained unchanged throughout. Thus, differences were allegedly noticeable only on a stylistic level, where the often careless and exaggeratedly lyrical writing of the early texts were replaced by the sober and elegant formulations belonging to one of the most important masters of verbal use in 20th century French prose. Cioran's own confessions might have contributed to shaping this inaccurate image, for both in his writings and in interviews he insisted upon the organic nucleus of his inspiration to the disadvantage of the shifts of perspective which are easy to detect in his work. He would stubbornly maintain that his entire vision of the world was practically acquired at the age of 20, without undergoing any subsequent important transformations.

The situation is, in fact, completely different. Cioran's work represents the perfect expression of a contradictory spirit, who approaches a series of quasi-obsessive themes from constantly changing perspectives. While the interests of Cioran, the thinker, remain unaltered, the way in which they relate to the central motifs of his reflection vary considerably, making it impossible to establish a continuity between his early and his mature work. It seems easier to state that Cioran's French work is an almost systematic and willful denial of all the beliefs and spiritual formulae in his Romanian work, a merciless demolition of the idols built in youthful frenzy. Cioran appears to be fighting against himself. The famous phrase "to think against yourself" provides the title of a superb essay to be found in *La tentation d'exister*, later borrowed by Susan Sontag¹ in order to characterize the essayist's philosophical manner.

¹ See Susan Sontag, "Penser contre soi: r flexions on Cioran" in *Sous le signe de Saturne*, Paris, Seuil, p. 47-75

Consequently, it can be understood as a continuous and furious battle against his juvenile self, still insufficiently experienced to install its sceptical shell and reject all the siren-voices of the illusion generated by living in the world.

The young Cioran received Nietzsche's texts with enthusiasm, using them to legitimise his innate need to challenge and undermine certainty. He distances himself quite rapidly from the models offered by classical philosophy – the honourable quality of the system and of a certain type of discourse considered to be the only true one – in order to take on a meditation on being. Cioran adheres to the kind of philosophy encountered in Nietzsche's work, not only because it corresponds to the way in which he himself deciphers the structure of the world, but also because it contains a considerable potential of rebellion against traditional metaphysical theses.

Far from being a superficial surface masking the hegemony of other philosophical models, Nietzsche's influence is present on all levels of Cioran's early work. It is the constant organizing element in the agitated dynamics of his thinking, serving as a reference point and presiding over his vision of the world. This influence fades into practical nothingness in Cioran's last volumes. His distancing himself from Nietzschean thinking is the consequence of a real *Kehre* which marks the transition from the thinker's Romanian stage to the French stage. In this later period, beyond rather apparent incongruities and a certain thematic similarity, his thinking registers a profound transformation, adopting positions in many respects to those strictly antithetical of his youth.

The ontological vision embraced by the young Cioran reflects his choleric temperament and his strong inclination towards a tragic heroism which values drive, abnegation, courage and power more than the refined sophistic games of the intellect or its subtle conceptual distinctions. This is precisely the reason why his perspective is not dominated by reflection on the countless variations that interfere in the relationship between existence and essence. It is not a meditation on pure being or on the way in which its various features can be determined by means of categories. Rather, it is entirely governed by the author's interest in capturing the mystery of life. Life with a capital letter, Life as an ontological principle, is Cioran-the-thinker's main preoccupation: he strongly believes that the central stake of his existence is its very consonance with the overflowing power of life, with its irrational and over-individual nature.

To Cioran, the background of existence is made up of dark transformations, chaotic and contradictory movements, incessant competition between creation and destruction, between imposing certain forms and necessarily surpassing them. The world is not harmonious, symmetrical, teleologically controllable; it is mastered by the merciless exigency of evolution and infinite transformation, by the cruelty of a process that develops fatally, with no purpose or reason: "The true dialectics of life is a demonic and agonic

one, before which life appears as winding in an eternal night lit by phosphorescences meant to increase the mystery”². Cioran’s view on the anarchic tumult of life and its delirious and barbarous rhythm echoes the numerous Nietzschean texts which talk about the abyss of existence, about the terrifying magma that boils and stirs behind the temporary creations of the intellect so as to make daily life possible.

In Cioran’s case, this dramatic perspective upon the never-ending interplay of forces at the basis of existence instantiates a vision animated by tragic heroism, which opposes both the optimistic theories regarding the fate of the Universe and the often apocalyptic formulations of the pessimists. By rejecting passivity, monotony, resignation, Cioran tries to put forward a daring confrontation between life’s trials and the exalted reception of their consequences. If in Nietzsche’s case the proclamation of *amor fati* is the consequence of his paradoxical idea of the eternal return and of the importance he attributes to the will to power, Cioran preserves the idea of a possible synthesis between optimism and pessimism, supposedly capable of surpassing them both.

The solution Cioran envisages for a fair integration in the cosmic rhythms resides in the intensification of living, the divinisation of life’s paradoxical cannibalism, the acceptance of the horrors and of the dynamic explosions in where the vital flux consists: “My brothers, may your life be so intense that you should die and crumble against it. May you die of life! May you wreck your life! May you scream from the howls of the life inside you, may you sing in final songs the last whirls of your life!”³. This vital surplus, this enthusiastic entrance into the vortex of existence is the only way in which people can lead a dignified life. Grasping meaninglessness is not an excuse for despair, but the privileged means by which the individual grows stronger and decides to face the accumulation of events offered by his destiny with his whole being, without remorse or reserve. Since he is trapped inside the monstrous spectacle of the world, like a mere actor in the irrational cosmic drama, he simply enjoys living.

Feeling the absence of a philosophy ready to affirm the importance of life, the lack of that philosophy of *Yes* already mentioned by Nietzsche, Cioran – who uses a rhetoric close enough to the lyricism of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* – never ceases to proclaim the need for people to adore life, to become idolaters of living: “A thousand repetitions will be needed to state that Life alone, pure

² Cioran, “Împotriva oamenilor inteligenți” (“Against Intelligent People”), *Discobolul*, 9/ May 2003, p. 1-2 in *Revelațiile durerii* (Revelations of Suffering), Cluj, Echinox, 1990, p. 106.

³ Cioran, *Cartea amăgirilor* (*The Book of Illusions*), București, Humanitas, 1991, p. 81-82

life, the pure act of living can be loved, that we hang onto nothingness by the thread of our consciousness”⁴. From this perspective, the only capital sin is the depreciation of life, the blockage of its unconscious energy by means of rational mechanisms which question its meaning and tend to challenge its absolute value as a goal in itself: “Guilty consciousness is the result of willing or unwilling attacks on life. All the times that were not moments of ecstasy before life have added up to the infinite guilt of consciousness”⁵.

The only way to capture the mystery of life is an exclusive orientation towards the procession of appearances, an attempt at exhausting their charm and tasting their concreteness and unending diversity by renouncing whatever contradicts the natural tendencies of individuals to fully assume their vital potential. The attempt to enter a deeper level of reality, to discover truths that escape the senses, in a horizon to which only reason – by means of its specific power to pierce through the veil of appearances – has access, these are all signs of mistrust in the transfigurative power of life, in its ability always to stage thrilling shows where the impenetrable destiny of humanity is at stake at every given moment. To Cioran, these attempts are all in vain: they can only spread a diffuse nihilism, an unexplainable disgust for living which refuses deciphering and forever keeps its mask, preserving its freshness and fascination: “There is no other world behind ours; nothingness hides nothing. Whenever you may dig for treasures, the digging is in vain: the gold is scattered in the spirit, yet the spirit is far from golden. Defame life by useless archaeologies? There are no *traces*. Who would have left them? Nothingness does not stain. What steps could have gone under the earth, when there is no *under*?”⁶.

The implicit gnosiology to be discovered in Cioran’s texts corresponds to his vision of a universe made up of an anarchic agglomeration of forces and is clearly inspired by Nietzsche. It takes over all the key elements of the German philosopher’s conception of knowledge and truth. To Cioran, knowledge is a form of the predator instinct which governs the human being, a means by which it tries to expand its domination of the world, without displaying any special virtue or inclination apart from the will to dominate: “The instincts of the predator beast reveal themselves in knowledge. You want to master everything, to make it yours – and if it is not yours, you want to smash it to pieces. How could anything escape you, when your immense thirst pierces the ceiling and your pride arches rainbows over an abyss of ideas?!”⁷.

⁴ *ibid*, p. 138

⁵ *ibid*, p. 109

⁶ Cioran, *Îndreptar pătimăș (Passionate Guide)*, București, Humanitas, 1991, p. 57.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 46.

In order to populate the universe with enough conceptual beings to mask the wilderness of the abyss that underlies the entire human existence, in order to hide the meaninglessness that mysteriously presides over the cannibalistic metabolism of life, one needs steadily to hang onto illusions, to project a screen of beliefs strong enough to allow the comfortable survival of the individuals without permitting them to glimpse the background drama, the furious spectacle of growing and shrinking, of being born and irrationally rushing towards destruction: “People believe in something in order to forget what they are. Burying themselves under ideals and cuddling in idols, they kill time with all sorts of beliefs. Nothing would hurt them more terribly than to wake up on top of the heap of pleasant deception, faced with pure existence”⁸.

Like Nietzsche, Cioran notices the unitary nature of the productions of the intellect. They act as filters which prevent the perception of plural reality and the incessant evolution of all things, building the edifice of a stable world, homogeneous and identical with itself. If the world is in fact an infernal succession of sensations, a terrible carousel of always obsolete forms, a theatre of uniqueness and of the unrepeatable, our gnosiological apparatus constantly works on the skilful deformation of these aspects of existence. It suggests their replacement with a comfortable image, in which constancy, continuity, measurability, predictability are the main pillars that make people confidently believe that they are walking on safe ground⁹.

The ossification of reality comes about particularly due to the language filter which tries to constrain possibly similar situations within the oppressive frame of identity. Thus, the linguistic sieve privileges levelling and standardisation to the disadvantage of a discontinuous vision that would precisely observe difference and the incongruities rendered perceptible by means of the senses. The mission of concepts is to pacify the world, to make it into a province of the self where there is no room for unpredictability or accident, where everything abides by the laws of reason, following their immutable order and refusing the interference of affectivity or sensitivity.

All these observations lead Cioran towards adopting the theory of truth proposed by Nietzsche. First, he notices that the truths people invoke represent nothing but a systematic effort to falsify reality and idolize a set of useful errors that make life possible, so that “living equals a specialization in error”¹⁰. This type of truth organizes the whole process of individual accommodation to reality, eliminating with sombre voluptuousness the fictions that are struggling to disguise its veritable appearance. It is the type of truth which parallels the ‘truth-probity’ from Nietzschean fragments. Yet, if in the German philosopher’s

⁸ Ibid, p. 99.

⁹ Ibid, p. 17.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 10.

case the main impulse behind this tendency is a terrible necessity to know the ultimate truth, “the real truth”, if its motive power is the passion for knowledge, things are different with Cioran.

For this type of investigation, the determining element is the diminished vitality that finds its expression within, endangering the survival of individuals because of its shortage of energy, a dangerous malady that menaces being: “Truth – like any minus of illusion – only appears in a compromised vitality. Unable to further nourish the charm of errors in which our life indulges, instincts fill the void with the disaster of lucidity. One starts seeing things for what they are and then one can no longer live. Without errors, life is a deserted boulevard on which one walks like a peripathetician of sadness”¹¹.

Cioran lays more emphasis than Nietzsche upon the dangers such knowledge implies with regard to life, taking into account the destruction of illusions it entails. He tends to see it as a capital, inexpiable sin against nature that threatens to tear the individual apart from the irrational stream of living and project him into a delirious and fatal obsession with truth searching. This obsession ceaselessly opposes consciousness to natural and unconscious development, thus enacting, according to Klage, an irreducible adversity between spirit and life: “Since any knowledge equals loss – of being, of existence – any kind of knowledge brings along weariness, disgust towards being and a certain detachment. The act of knowing only increases our distance from the world and embitters our human condition”¹².

Imposing a devastating lucidity leads to questioning the entire fictional architecture of the world. It involves the danger of dissolution, of giving in to the demented carousel of uncertainties, challenges and hiatuses of being and thus making it possible for life to expand carelessly, to develop in the shadow of a suite of imaginary constructs to a purely utilitarian end. In order to allow the consolidation of living, to provide it with the proper circumstances in which to manifest itself, a spontaneous acceptance of a set of truths and principles is necessary. It should act without the always harmful mediation of reflexivity, which inhibits the vital impulse and overturns the most solid certitudes: “An individual or an epoch must breathe unconsciously within the unconditional nature of a principle in order to recognize it. Knowing overthrows any shade of certainty. As an extreme phenomenon of reason, consciousness is a source of doubts that can only be defeated in the dusk of the awakened spirit”¹³.

This is, however, only one of the levels of Cioran’s thinking, which does not exhaust the sphere of his reflections upon truth. Like Nietzsche, he

¹¹ Cioran, *Amurgul gândurilor (The Crepuscule of Reason)*, București, Humanitas, 1991, p. 91.

¹² Cioran, *Cartea amăgirilor (The Book of Illusions)*, op. Cit, p. 36.

¹³ Cioran, *Amurgul gândurilor (The Crepuscule of Reason)*, op. Cit., p. 202.

tries to capture the ambiguous nature of truth, the eternal competition between revelation and concealment, the frantic proliferation of masks and perspectives, heading towards the proclamation of a type of truth that comes close to the truth-duplicity from Nietzschean texts. Cioran's effort is particularly directed towards keeping the creative dynamism of life unaltered, towards a subtle approach to its contradictory aspects, so that there should be no endangering of life by means of eliminating the shield of fiction necessary to the expansion of the vital flux. Simultaneously, there should neither appear a challenge of the background fluidity of the world, of its plurality and evolution. The heroic dimension of living in the world occupies a central place in Cioran's early texts, also reflected in his understanding of knowledge and truth. It prohibits both passive conformism in the reception of a tame version of the universe and the ultimate triumph and dangerous exaltation, the suicidal instinct placed in the service of destroying all the errors one needs in order to survive.

Warning against the perils of knowledge and the ill-fated part it may play due to its life-endangering nature, the young philosopher does not settle for an obedient acceptance of truth-utility. He vehemently criticises the idea of certainty that lies behind it and proclaims his revolt, especially because of the mediocre standard it seems to impose and the less dramatic vision it underscores. The artificial fabrication of a meaning solely serves the purpose of a cowardly search for stability and certainty, acting as an ignoble lie. It denies precisely the virility of confrontation with the unleashed cavalcade of appearances and tends to devalue the agonistic emotion, the intensity impossible to capture in an ephemeral, spontaneous form¹⁴.

The battle against certainties is fought in the name of the creative effervescence of nature, of the paradoxical spectacle offered by the explosive unpredictability of life. Accepting an ultimate foundation, introducing indubitable nuclei of meaning, strictly and voluntarily limiting the entire space of existence equals restricting the potential of surprising productions, offering forms and the idea of containment the ultimate triumph upon the furious matter of evolution, upon the demonic side of its unstructurable contents. It equals giving in to the illusion of control over the deep irrationality of the world: "Let us not build our lives upon certainties. Let us not build it so, since we do not have these certainties and we are not cowardly enough to invent stable and final ones. Where in our past would we find certainties, solid grounds to balance or support us? Has our heroism not started the moment we began to realize that life can only lead to death and still did not give up on affirming it? We do not need certainties since we know that they can only be found in suffering, sadness and death – too intense and too lasting to be less than absolute"¹⁵.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 73.

¹⁵ Cioran, *Cartea amăgirilor (The Book of Illusions)*, p. 43.

Cioran's solution is also borrowed from Nietzschean texts, and it consists of imposing a vision of the world in which appearances reunite all opposites and make the logics of identity explode. It contains both truth and lie, reality and fiction; evolution changes into an infinite interplay of interpretations, into a continuous sliding of masks that can only lead towards other masks. Truth, in such a context, is a frantic overlapping of perspectives, a ceaseless challenge, a chain of perplexity and revelation, all subjected to the overflowing dynamics of life, to its uncontrollable pulse: "Ambivalence and equivocal are part of the ultimate realities. *Being on the side of the truth against itself* is not a paradoxical formulation, since anybody who understands truth's risks and revelations cannot but love and hate it. Whoever believes in truth is naïve; whoever does not, is stupid. The only straight way is on the edge of a knife"¹⁶.

Devoted – despite his taste for paradoxes – to the Nietzschean vision of the forces that make the whole machinery of the world go round, charmed by this dynamic image extremely suitable to his temper, Cioran also borrowed other key elements from the German philosopher's thought. In his early writings he proves to be an almost Orthodox Nietzschean who put into practice his master's theses by adapting them to his own style. His thinking is entirely dominated by typically Nietzschean motifs and solutions which he takes up almost organically, finding them suitable to express his own way of relating to existence.

Although Cioran's writing is strongly impregnated by the spirit of Nietzsche's philosophy, although even the tonality of the texts is seriously influenced by a certain rhetoric characteristic for Zarathustra's creator, Cioran is only interested in those Nietzschean reflections which answer certain issues he feels the need to almost spontaneously address, thus surpassing any bookish mediation. He uses only those ideological nuclei which allow him to express himself better and parallel his dominant affective tonality.

It is in this manner that his numerous confessions regarding the vital sources of his philosophy and the organic inspiration of his thoughts should be understood. There is no denial of any influence from another thinker and no claim to spontaneous elaboration – independent of written sources. Cioran emphasizes his closeness to the model as being strictly determined by his spiritual metabolism, somewhat following the direction indicated by a fleeting note of Valéry's: "*Rien de plus original, rien de plus soi que de se nourrir des autres. Mais il faut les digérer. Le lion est fait de mouton assimilé* (There is nothing more original, more personal than feeding oneself on the others. Yet, digestion is needed. The lion is made up of assimilated lamb)"¹⁷.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 195.

¹⁷ Paul Valéry, *Tel Quel*, 1, in *Oeuvres*, II, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, p. 478.

Along with a series of motifs belonging to Spengler, Simmel, Schopenhauer and Weininger, the stream of Nietzschean thought represents one of the pillars which gradually allowed the configuration of Cioran's original thinking, providing it with the necessary matter for its particular philosophical style, with its recurrent themes and its specific writings. In the context of the young Cioran's predominant interest for German philosophy and Northern thinking in general (e.g., for Kierkegaard) which he considered much closer to barbaric transfiguration, to the authentic sources of life, Nietzsche plays the father figure, the idol whose positions are adopted with much enthusiasm and very little critical spirit.

CIORAN'S LATER FRENCH PERIOD

The French period brings along a different set of privileged readings and intellectual sources. German influences start to wither, being replaced by massive appeal to the great books of the humanist and sceptical European tradition, as well as to a series of Gnostic and Buddhist texts. French authors become almost obligatory reference, providing the thinker with an arsenal of arguments and ideas that contribute to the crystallization of his new image of himself. It is the image of the doomed, disillusioned character, whose flesh is wounded by an insurmountable evil which makes him immune to all the fantasies and hallucinations of an exalted humanity in perpetual quest for ideals.

The new Cioran breaks away from his former masters, the main figure whom he repudiates along the way being Nietzsche himself – the dangerous prophet, a true prince of the exalted natures, a histrionic senior of delirious times. In the writer's first book to be published in French, *Traité de décomposition (Treaty of Decomposition)*, one can still find enough fragments placed under the easily noticeable influence of the German thinker – especially with regard to issues connected to knowledge and truth. Later on Nietzsche's presence fades, leaving the fore-ground open to a series of themes which will contribute to shaping Cioran's portrait as a radical sceptic, a perpetual lover of doubt.

The convulsive exaltation of living, the creation, the effort of his early work are replaced by the disillusioned outlook of one who arrives to consider himself *the* sceptic of the Occident, the damned master of doubt, the exorcist of all certainty and conviction. Cioran's French writings constitute a true *Summa sceptica*, a transcript with phenomenological accents of the abysmal mechanisms of doubt, of the disease that attacks the spirit, detaching it from

any vital stake and making it impossible to choose out of sheer indecision¹⁸. Cioran insists upon the voluptuousness the intellect feels while trapped in the whirl of unmasking illusions, of demystifying drunkenness of the senses. He describes the pride of those who feel able to transcend all human boundaries, letting themselves be consumed by their inquisitorial mania, aiming at annihilating all fiction and projecting a merciless image of the entire architecture of the universe, made out of tenebrous nudity and left without the protective shield of idealization or of teleological projections.

However, apart from designing this veritable orgy of the intelligence, the writer inventories the disappointing consequences of such an outburst of the implacable machinery of the spirit. He ruthlessly analyses the results of the “uncharming” of the world he imposes, herein including the progressive elimination of all belief, the undermining of all arguments to the benefit of life, the hegemony of a generalised indifferentism, the spread of boredom and anguish, the neutralization of affection, the assuming of sterility, the triumph of an aseptic feeling towards existence that encourages the headlong rush towards catastrophe, the quest for a breakaway from the curse of the almighty consciousness: “I know a crazy old woman who spends her days and nights on the watch, expecting her house to fall apart at any time. Walking to and fro in her room, listening to small noises, she is extremely irritated that the event is running late. On a larger scale, the old woman’s behaviour belongs to us all. We live hoping for a downfall, even when we are thinking of something else”¹⁹.

The pre-eminence of this vision determines Cioran to start drawing a relentless image of the world, in which naivety, illusion, utopia have no place whatsoever. Sarcasm and cynical notes are the preferred means used to demonstrate the insanity of all hope or belief in the blessings of reason. The writer ridicules even the most moderate form of optimism, deconstructing with malicious ingeniousness all the arguments held by the partisans of progress and disqualifying any claim at amelioration of the destiny of humanity. It seems extremely obvious to Cioran that a lucid outlook on the universe does not allow for the slightest hope. Creation is the work of an evil divinity, of a ‘tarred god’²⁰ who has corrupted the roots of existence from the very beginning, launching a generalized process of vitiation and destruction, generating the movement and chaos of change, blowing up the harmony of the initial whole. Man is the victim of this initial error. He is a composite being, naturally oriented towards evil, cohabitating with monstrosity and horror, capable of well-doing only inattentively or by mistake.

¹⁸ See mostly Cioran, “The Sceptic and the Barbarian” in *La chute dans le temps*, *Oeuvres*, Paris, Gallimard, 1995, p. 1096-1106.

¹⁹ Cioran, *La Tentation d’exister (The Temptation to Exist)* in *Oeuvres*, p. 885.

²⁰ Cioran, *Le mauvais démiurge (The Evil Demiurge)* in *Oeuvres*, p. 1169.

The nostalgia for the unborn, for the state preceding creation, for the paradisiacal, preverbal and preconscious initial condition, is extremely present in Cioran's French work, marking another significant difference from his Romanian volumes. The young Cioran exalts manifestation, and the thrill of creation; he encourages the most terribly selfish exaggerations, eulogizing individuality and its heroic fragility, trying to push his sleepy, passive people forward into the swirls of history – which he considers to be the only suitable scene for the affirmation of nations, the only court that can judge them, bringing their salvation or expiation.

In contrast, the mature Cioran is adept at erasing all traces, renouncing the illusion of the self, extinguishing all passions and suppressing all projects. He warns against the danger of succumbing to the carousel of appearances. For this reason, history appears to him as a territory of evil, as a necessarily harmful episode which induces a fatal involution, as a brutal force which subjects everything to the implacable corrosion of time, thus quickening the pace at which the end approaches. Consequently, the theme of destiny becomes omnipresent in the French volumes, continuing the dialogue with Spengler's thinking that Cioran had started in his youth in an original manner.

The first book published in France, *Traité de décomposition* contains an essay, "The faces of decadence" which is still extremely strongly influenced by the way in which Spengler describes a culture on the verge of decline. Cioran's phenomenology of decadence, present in this text, starts from the German philosopher's observations: by contrast with the unconscious individual of climactic cultural eras ("the individual is not aware of his being alive, he just lives"²¹), the declined individual establishes the "reign of awareness"²². The myths of the creative periods are replaced by concepts; life changes from a means to an end in itself.

Physiological degradation imposes the abandonment of worn out instincts and the harmful hegemony of reason, which inhibits the pulsating spontaneity of emotions ("Decadence is nothing but instinct turned impure under the influence of consciousness"²³). Religious effervescence is replaced by an incapability of believing that leads to the downfall of all divinity; man chooses to kill his gods in order to be free, at the cost of his creativity: "since man is only free – and sterile – while the gods are dying; just as he is only enslaved – and creative – when, tyrannically, the gods prosper"²⁴.

²¹ Cioran, *Précis de décomposition (Treaty of Decomposition)* in *Oeuvres*, p. 679.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 679.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 680.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 680-681.

The difference from Spengler manifests itself in the way in which the two interpret the significance of decline. The German philosopher sees in civilization the formula adopted by a culture that has reached its end, without this end questioning the survival of the entire humanity and without its meaning a general crepuscule, a denial of the possibility for other cultures to emerge, a universal decline. Cioran seems to prefer a vision that contradicts the cyclic perspective subject to the Spenglerian morphology of culture, seeing in the whole symptomatology of decadence either a preparation for the extinction of the human race²⁵, or a proof of its permanent decline²⁶. The circularity of the model imagined by the German philosopher is replaced by headlong linearity towards catastrophe, either implying the final destruction of humankind, or involving its persistence in a post-historical condition, by inevitably accepting regress, the perpetuation of a race of “subhuman”, “crooks of the apocalypse”²⁷.

Cioran seems to return to a unitary vision of history by denying a discontinuity which he had previously defended in the name of Spengler and by renouncing the structural homologues the latter had suggested as means of studying major cultures. Appropriating his diagnosis of decline, Cioran expands it to an universal scale. He takes it out of the precise context of formulation in order to describe the final stage of a culture and transforms it into an argument for his own disillusioned vision of the world, for his apocalyptic pessimism: “we are the great decrepits: burdened by ancient dreams, forever incapable of utopia, we are technicians of exhaustion, grave diggers of the future, terrified by the avatars of old Adam. The Tree of Life will never see a new spring: its wood is dry, they will make coffins out of it – for our bones, for our dreams and sufferings”²⁸.

This vision was to persist throughout Cioran’s French work, appearing in a series of essays such as “After History”²⁹ or the “Urgency of Catastrophe”³⁰, marking a significant change from his early Spenglerian conception of strict obedience. Cioran thus explicitly repudiates the cyclic understanding of history in a fragment reminding of Heraclitus’ vision of the fire that will envelop the entire universe at the end of every cosmic period. He considers the idea unbearable because of the repeatability of catastrophe, infinite circularity of disaster: “Less daring and less exigent, we settle for one ending because we lack the power that would allow us to imagine and bear more. It is true that we admit a plurality of civilizations – just as many worlds

²⁵ Ibid, p. 686-687.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 686.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 687.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 686-687.

²⁹ See Cioran, *Écartèlement (Excruciation)* in *Oeuvres*, p. 1426-1433.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 1434-1442.

that are born and perish: but who among us would consent to the entire history to always starting over? With every event we take one step further towards the unique outcome, according to a rhythm of progress whose scheme we adopt, implicitly refusing its fiddlesticks. We do advance, we even rush towards certain disaster, not towards wonderful fulfillment”³¹.

Such a change of perspective also triggers a radical shift in valuing history, establishing a new point of view with regard to the relationship between major cultures, obsessed with doing and self-affirmation, and a-historical, a-temporal cultures which refuse to enter the game of evolution. In his Romanian work, Cioran never ceases to blame and deplore the situation of the cultures that lack a destiny, those minor cultures which are only interested in the values of survival, have no metaphysical ambition or desire to transform the world, remain permanently anonymous, eulogizing the force of major cultures to make their mark on the development of history, to put everything down to the intensity of emotion, to search for glory at the cost of ineluctable decline.

The French books put forward the very opposite vision. A-temporal cultures possess a higher wisdom that allows them to keep their distance from the inevitable combustion which devours the actors of universal history. Decline, the precipitation of the end, is the result of greed in the evolution of major cultures: “What is ruining us, what has already ruined us, is the craving for destiny, whatever it may be”³². History is not the salvation of peoples by means of inscribing their final place in the memory of Humanity; it is not their felicitous escape from anonymity. It represents a death trap, the acceptance of a devastating disease that will bring about the end, the sacrifice of deep essence to the advantage of a dangerous suite of simulacra, an agglomeration of facts and gestures that mark the only important stake – that of living according to one’s own interiority:

There certainly is no redemption in history. It is by no means our fundamental dimension: it is nothing but the apotheosis of the appearances. Could it be possible that, once our journey through the world has ended, we might retrieve our own essence? Will a completely shallow being, the post-historic man, be able to find in himself the a-temporal dimension, everything that history has stifled in us?³³

³¹ Ibid, p. 1439.

³² Ibid, p. 1433.

³³ Ibid, p. 1432.

Major cultures do not offer a model: their metabolism is not to be imitated, their endemic aggressiveness is not to be followed, as the young Cioran used to think. On the contrary, their itinerary is to be avoided, since they cannot offer any solutions, but only push the race towards disaster. The mature Cioran deplors the conspiracy of “advanced” peoples against the ones “left behind by history”³⁴ and the devious scheming the latter are not able to face, succumbing to vices they seemed protected from, being pushed in the swirl of history against their will, and thus meant for inevitable decline”³⁵.

Having been a fervent propagandist of modernization, having eulogized the power of major cultures to change the world and their indefatigable activism, Cioran comes to regret the breakaway from the mild animalism of the natural state, which, in his youth, he would have called ‘the passage from biology to history’: “Lousy and serene, we should have settled for the company of animals, to rot together with them for millennia to come, to breathe the odor of the stables rather than that of the laboratories, to die of our diseases, not of our remedies [...] To the duty and obsession of absence we have substituted events; yet, any event touches and erodes us, since it only emerges on account of our balance and durability”³⁶.

The apocalyptic pessimism of Cioran’s thinking results not only in a somber vision of history and of the whole structure of the world in which the pre-eminence of evil is a metaphysical fact, but also in a vitriolic description of human nature, seemingly inspired by Goya’s or Hogarth’s most crushing engravings. This is Cioran’s moralistic dimension, expressed in the most surprising of ways, forcing the absurd, the parodic or the macabre, counting on the rhetoric effect of paradoxical and sophistic formulation, shaping a whole catalogue of human vice – laughable or hideous, monstrous or merely grotesque. Nevertheless, Cioran differs from the French moralists of the 17th and 18th centuries, who used the conciseness of aphorism in order to project an objective image on humanity, following a pedagogical aim by means of the merciless unmasking of individual meanness and emotional handicap and thus setting out to contribute to moral recuperation.

Cioran offers the hallucinating spectacle of a museum of horrors on which the stamp of his subjectivity is permanently present. According to George Bălan, the French classics of the aphorism count on a series of examples that can be almost universally applied and accentuate the general quality of their thinking, trying to determine a spontaneous identification of the readers with the situations described. Meanwhile, Cioran prefers the unusual, eccentric and even shocking psychological situations in which individuals can

³⁴ Cioran, *La chute dans le temps (The Fall in Time)* in *Oeuvres*, p. 1987.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1086-1087.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1088.

hardly recognize themselves, since they are so far out of the ordinary, common experience³⁷. Moreover, he has no illusions as to the possible effect of his writings, he sets himself no moral aim; by settling for inventorying in detail the misery of humanity, he empirically illustrates his demonstration of the hegemony of evil, of its easy and natural triumph.

In such a context, we witness the attentive deconstruction of all real resorts of individual behaviour. We take part in the systematic elimination of noble or disinterested motivations and in the unveiling of the deep reasons that determine them as they are – often ignoble and hilarious, born out of resentment³⁸, cowardice, envy, vanity, desire for glory³⁹ and will to power⁴⁰. The world described by Cioran is one of a visceral inferno, of irrational passions that subject the spirit, leading to the slaughtering of the enemy and to the setting up of the most hideous schemings to the purpose of obtaining honors and supremacy. It is a world in which the only functional strategies are cajoling and hypocrisy, resentment and imposture. They leave no place for sincerity, abnegation, friendship, heroism or admiration which have become simple words without a meaning, instruments perfidiously used to disguise the only real impulses – almighty and low.

Illustrative for his demystifying position is his analysis of love. The young Cioran is searching for an explanation of an essential mystery when he tries to discover the fundamental meaning of love and its fatal mechanics by getting involved with enormous passion in solving this enigma and believing in the importance of his action. Having reached maturity, he regards ironically and quite cynically a topic which had previously stirred his enthusiasm. The few aphorisms dedicated to this topic are relevant of his disillusioned view, of the acid skepticism with which he scrutinizes all the reasons currently invoked as a justification for individual exaltation, for the necessity of an ideal, of the transfiguration of an often risible reality.

The young Cioran's vision is often dominated by his obsession with life, with unstoppable energy and overwhelming fulfillment, with the quest for ecstatic experience, be it in mystical rapture or as a consequence of the orgasmic agony of the bodies. The other Cioran does not seem able to distance himself for a moment from the contemplation of the skeleton, of the rotting

³⁷ See George Bălan, *Emil Cioran*, Paris, Éditions Joliet Lzon, 2002, p. 108-111.

³⁸ See Cioran, "The Odyssey of Resentment" in *Histoire et utopie (History and Utopia)*, *Oeuvres*, p. 108-1034.

³⁹ See Cioran, "The Craving for and the Horror of Glory" in *La Chute dans le temps (The Fall in Time)*, *Oeuvres*, p. 1113-1122.

⁴⁰ See Cioran, "Attending the School of Tyrants" in *Histoire et utopie (History and Utopia)*, *Oeuvres*, p. 1005-1116.

flesh, of the organic revelation of the futility of all things. Devoted to such a view, he sarcastically captures the bodily details which are deliberately overlooked by the partisans of ideal love. He particularly insists upon the grotesque ceremonial of sexuality, upon the profound animal character that governs the dynamics of apparently higher feelings, noticing the transformations brought about by ferocious desire: "The flesh is incompatible with forgiveness: orgasm would change a saint into a wolf"⁴¹. "One declares war on the glands, but bows before the odors of a common whore ... Pride is powerless when confronted with the ceremonial of smells, of zoological incensing"⁴².

In his Romanian writings, sexuality – without which love is impossible to imagine – forms the pretext for an extreme experience, an opportunity to transcend limits and to reach emotional paroxysm, a privileged means to celebrate life by undermining reason and minimizing its certainties, an opening towards the mystery of ecstasy, celebrating the abyss of corporeality⁴³. In the French texts, sexuality appears as a marker of man's corrupt nature – a ridiculous gesticulation, a hideous gymnastics of the bodies. Sexuality is assimilated in the terms of a tradition famous for the severity of its formulations that aim at stirring disgust. This tradition starts with the Gnostics and goes on to Saint Augustine and Luther, favouring the perception of sexuality either as a grunting or with a moment of "drooling"⁴⁴.

In young Cioran's view, man must assume his carnality and use it as an indispensable means of living the magic of vitality, of increasing the powers of its spirit and contributing to the deepening of his heroic attitude. Man must face his inevitably tragic existence by means of intensifying the undergone sensations and experiences. Yet, to the Cioran of the French writings, the body is just one of the motors of illusion, just another source of proliferating appearances, just another enemy of the merciless scrutiny of reality. True lucidity demands overlooking the body, eliminating its disturbing effect, erasing this source of phantasms.

Due to the radical nature of his thinking and to the boycott he imposed on the traditional instruments of philosophy, Cioran's work has raised numerous problems for his commentators, intriguing them by its fragmented character and by the extraordinary stylistic quality of the writing, and

⁴¹ Cioran, *Syllogismes de l'amertume (The Syllogisms of Sadness)* in *Oeuvres*, p. 794.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 795.

⁴³ Cioran, *Pe culmile disperării (In Full Despair)*, București, Humanitas, 1990, p. 129.

⁴⁴ Cioran, *Syllogismes de l'amertume (The Syllogisms of Sadness)* in *Oeuvres*, p. 795.

preventing the easy labeling of his thinking. Part of the exegetes have considered that his work must be included in the sphere of literature⁴⁵, while others have argued in favour of the philosophical nature of his texts, regarding him as a follower in the tradition of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein⁴⁶.

Beyond this controversy, they all nevertheless emphasized the value of his writings, proclaiming him either “a La Rochefoucauld of the 20th century”⁴⁷, or the greatest writer of aphorisms since Nietzsche⁴⁸, or the most important French prose writer⁴⁹. Maybe the most suggestive attempt at characterizing Cioran is that of Peter Sloterdijk, who writes: “*Il est, après Kierkegaard, l’unique penseur de haut niveau à avoir rendu irrévocable la compréhension du fait que nul nu peut désespérer selon des methodes sûres*”⁵⁰ (After Kierkegaard, he is the only high level writer who has established irrevocably that nobody can despair according to certain methods”).

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⁴⁵ See Livius Ciocârlie, *Caietele lui Cioran (Cioran’s Notebooks)*, Craiova, Scrisul Românesc, 1999.

⁴⁶ See Susan Sontag, op. Cit., p. 56.

⁴⁷ Jean Chalon, “Un La Rochefoucauld du XXe siècle”, *Le Figaro*, April 23rd 1977.

⁴⁸ The opinion of Benjamin Ivry from Cioran, “Entretien avec Benjamin Ivry”, *Entretiens*, Paris, Gallimard, 1995, p. 210.

⁴⁹ Angelo Rinaldi, “La médecine Cioran”, *L’Express*, January 24-30th 1986.

⁵⁰ Peter Sloterdijk, “Le revanchiste désintéressé” in *L’Heure du crime et le temps de l’oeuvre d’art*, Paris, Calman-Lévy, 2000, p. 153.

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Chapter III

The Phenomenological Movement in Romania: A Historical and Systematic Overview

Mădălina Diaconu

One of the most productive philosophical streams in contemporary Romania is represented by phenomenology. However it would be an exaggeration to pretend, at least until recently, to the existence of a systematic phenomenological movement and of a corresponding school in Romania, as was the case in other former East-European countries. Moreover, the main original Romanian thinkers, even those who were explicitly influenced by the phenomenology, with few exceptions, neither practiced exegetical studies in phenomenology, nor even called their own work phenomenological. Finally, the development of the phenomenological ideas in Romania was subject to the interference of external factors, so that its fluctuations and partial interruptions reflect the deep political and economic changes that have shaken Eastern Europe along the 20th century and effected the international academic contacts.

The history of phenomenology in Romania can be divided into four major phases, whose main characteristics are resumed further: (a) During the first, between 1918 and 1948, the reception of the European phenomenology began, and the first Romanian original contributions from a phenomenological perspective were published. (b) After the Second World War, in a turbulent political context, in which the monarchy was abolished and replaced by a communist government in December 1947, dialectical and historical materialism was proclaimed as the official ideology and the (positive) mention of the phenomenology was restricted or even prohibited. Several of the previous professors and researchers in the realm of philosophy were dismissed, imprisoned or received were interdicted from exert public activities. Consequently, also the contacts with the Western academic circles were drastically restricted and controlled by authorities. (c) After this difficult stage, the processes of a cultural opening after 1964 mark the beginning of a third phase of the reception of phenomenology. This relaxation proved, however, to be only temporary. Except for some translations of the phenomenological writings into Romanian, the 1980s were generally marked by increasing political, economic and also cultural isolationism. (d) This ended with the events of December 1989, that restored liberty of thought and opinion. Since then the history of Romanian philosophy witnesses the renewal of the interest in phenomenology, especially among young scholars, and an intensive activity

at its organization. In the past few years, there were founded reviews and phenomenological centers affiliated to international phenomenological organizations. However, one has also must add that such processes are not confined to the rediscovery of phenomenology, but are general positive signs of our new *Gründerzeit*.

PROMISING BEGINNINGS: HEIDEGGER'S "LATINS" (1918–1947)

In the 19th century, at the beginning of the modern Romanian culture, scholars in Romania were sent for philosophical studies mainly to France, due to the close relations between our two countries and because of the similarities of the two Romance languages. Somehow different was the situation in Transilvania and Banat, i. e. in the Central, Northern and Western regions of the country, where – because of their political dependence on the Habsburg and later the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the German language was widely spread and also the contacts to Austria and Germany were more intensive. This bipolar orientation remained a characteristic of the Romanian culture also after the unification, after the First World War in December 1918, of Transilvania and Banat with the so-called “Old Kingdom” which had been founded in 1859 and had gained its independence after the Russian-Ottoman war in 1877/78.

One of the most influent thinkers between the World Wars was Nae Ionescu, professor at the University of Bucharest, who had gained his doctor's degree in philosophy in Germany with a thesis on logic. He was among the first in Romania to mention phenomenology in his lectures on metaphysics and logic in the 1920s.¹ Nae Ionescu was apparently not only a charismatic person, very popular among his students, but also a controversial thinker, who later approached the fascist movement in Romania, though the same cannot be said of his most prominent disciples. Some of them, such as the historian of the religions Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, later better known as a French essayist, Constantin Noica, the writers Eugène Ionesco, a founder of the theater of the absurd in France, Mihail Sebastian, Paul Sterian, and others, belong to the so-called “generation 1927”, generally considered the golden generation of the Romanian culture between the two World Wars.

One of the major works which contributed to the propagation of the phenomenological ideas in Romania is the monumental *History of the modern philosophy* in five volumes dedicated to Prof. Ion Petrovici from the University of Bucharest; its third volume includes special chapters about Husserl (by Camil Petrescu), Heidegger, Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann (all three written by

¹ For the most bibliographical and historical information I owe grateful thanks to my father, Marin Diaconu.

Virgil Bogdan).² Whereas Virgil Bogdan's presentation of the Heideggerian ideas concentrates on *Being and Time*, his study on Scheler deals with various phases and dimensions of Scheler's work, such as *ordo amoris*, the connection between phenomenology and "affective ontology", Christian love and religious phenomenology, the material ethics of values, etc. Camil Petrescu, a well-known poet, novelist and playwright, deserves a special mention as one of the very few consistent Husserlians in Romania during this incipient epoch. In the *History of modern philosophy* he adopts a somewhat reserved attitude in evaluating Husserl's phenomenology as a conception that is "too new and too vast". Still, this does not hinder him from expressing certain doubts concerning, for example, Husserl's solution to the "unity of the universal genesis of the ego" and to "the general laws" of this unity. Besides, he misses in phenomenology as well a complete description of the signification of absolute existence.

Several manifestations organized in those years indicate the openness to a great diversity of phenomenological theories: In 1938 and 1939 several obituary notices for Husserl were published in cultural reviews and newspapers, in 1943 Nicolai Hartmann was invited to lecture at the University of Bucharest, not least young Romanian scholars organized public lectures on Scheler (Mircea Vulcănescu, 1928), on Husserl (Constantin Floru, 1934) and on phenomenology in general (Constantin Noica, 1932). However, after the 30s the phenomenological interests in Romania shifted obviously away from Husserl to Heidegger. This can be explained also by the fact that, between 1928 and 1944, several Romanian students and young scholars, such as Constantin Floru, Walter Biemel, Octavian Vuia, Alexandru Dragomir, and D[umitru] C[ristian] Amzăr,³ attended Heidegger's courses and seminars in Freiburg.⁴

Probably the first Romanian student of Heidegger was Constantin Floru. He graduated in 1926 in Paris with a doctorate on the topic *Les études logiques de l'école phénoménologique (E. Husserl)*, under the supervision of L. Brunschvicg. In June 1927 he passed the exam for the *Diplôme des études supérieures en philosophie* with *L'idée d'une logique pure chez Ed. Husserl* before a commission composed by A. Lalande, L. Robin and P. Fouconnet.

² *Istoria filosofiei moderne. Omagiu Professor Ion Petrovici*, Societatea Română de Filosofie, Bucharest: Tiparul Universitar, 1938, vol. 3, "Fenomenologia", 375–485.

³ D. C. Amzăr studied with Heidegger in 1932/33; later he abandoned phenomenology and translated Kant's *Critique of the practical reason*.

⁴ Romanian philosophical circles often invoke, not without a certain pride, a question ascribed to Heidegger: "Na! Was sagen die Lateiner?" ("What do the Latins say?"). This is supposed to have been addressed by Heidegger to his Romanian students during his seminars, when he sought theoretical challenges.

After spending the summer semester of 1929 in Freiburg, where he was examined by Profs. Honecker, J. Kohn and Heidegger, he returned to Bucharest as Nae Ionescu's assistant for logic and published several papers about phenomenology in reviews and collective volumes⁵. After the war, Floru was allowed only to carry on translations from Hegel, Leibniz and Nicolai Hartmann⁶.

But the most prominent figure among Heidegger's students from Romania and the only one to be an international academic career was Walter Biemel, born in Braşov; after studying philosophy in Bucharest, he succeeded in overcoming the hostility of the German embassy in Bucharest against Heidegger and went to Freiburg to study with him (1942–1944). When the University of Freiburg is closed in 1944, he spent some years as a researcher at the Husserl Archives in Louvain, where he deciphered and edited, together with his wife, Marly Biemel, Husserl's writings. In 1952 he returned to Germany to the Husserl's archives in Köln and becomes professor in Aachen (1962) and in Düsseldorf (1976). Prof. Biemel is well-known as an editor, exegete, and translator (into French) of Heidegger and Husserl and as a subtle phenomenological interpreter of modern art and literature. For the Romanian philosophy Biemel is also the first one to introduce the name of Heidegger in Romania,⁷ in an autobiographical record of Heidegger's seminars from 1942, and a year later in his own interpretation of Rilke's *Sonette an Orpheus*.⁸ To Walter Biemel the Romanian phenomenology owes also the first translation from Heidegger into Romanian, in the same year, 1942.⁹

Finally, a third student Heidegger's was Alexandru Dragomir, the son of a well-known historian from Cluj-Napoca, who graduated in Bucharest in

⁵ Constantin Floru, "Husserl și realismul", in: *Convorbiri literare*, nr. 5, May 1934, 406–413.

⁶ Nicolai Hartmann, *Estetica*, Bucharest: Ed. Univers, 1974.

⁷ More precisely it was Lucian Blaga, one of the most original Romanian thinkers, who mentioned for the first time *Being and Time* at a lecture from 1933 (*Cunoaşterea luciferică*), however his philosophical conception can be hardly labeled as phenomenological.

⁸ Martin Biemel, "Martin Heidegger", in *Universul Literar*, an LI, nr. 48, December 10, 1942, 1, 4; idem, "Sonetele către Orpheu de Rainer Maria Rilke. Încercare de interpretare", in *Saeculum*, an I, nr. 5, September–October 1943, 58–66. Both articles were republished in their original Romanian version in *Kunst und Wahrheit. Festschrift für Walter Biemel zu seinem 85. Geburtstag*, ed. by Mădălina Diaconu, Bucharest: Humanitas, 2003, 295–298 and 299–306.

⁹ Idem, "Martin Heidegger – Hölderlin și esența poeziei" (fragments), in: *Universul Literar*, an LI, nr. 48, December 10, 1942, 4, also published in: *Kunst und Wahrheit. Festschrift für Walter Biemel zu seinem 85. Geburtstag*, ed. cit., 315–318.

Philosophy, “Literare” (Literature) and Law. Between 1941 and 1943 he attended some of Heidegger’s seminars on Hölderlin, Hegel, Parmenides and Heraclitus, where he was preparing a doctorate thesis on Hegel’s concept of spirit. During this time he translated with Walter Biemel into Romanian Heidegger’s *Antrittsvorlesung* from 1929, when he became *Ordinarius* in Freiburg.¹⁰ Witness noted the esteem Alexandru Dragomir enjoyed from Heidegger for his keen sense of logic and occasionally for his pertinent objections. Constrained by the war from returning to Romania, Alexandru Dragomir practically gave up any public philosophical activity, while maintaining contact with prominent thinkers like Mircea Vulcănescu and Constantin Noica until 1951. Generally speaking, due to his proverbial discretion until his regrettable passing away in 2002 it is still difficult to reconstruct the outline of his biography; yet what we already know predestines him to become a legendary figure of Bugarian phenomenology: after the change of political regime in Romania, he had to earn his living successively as an unqualified worker, as an economist, lecturer in a publishing house, functionary at a hydro-electric plant far away from the capital, etc. During all these decades he seemed to have abandoned philosophy, till in 1984, having retired, he suddenly expressed to Constantin Noica, a well-known Romanian philosopher, the intention to organize private seminars mainly with Noica’s disciples, Gabriel Liiceanu, Andrei Pleșu, and Sorin Vieru.¹¹ However, he continues to reject any public work and even publishing. Posthumously, 90 note-books were found with philosophical reflections, and in 2004 were first edited a selection of his essays devoted to the topics of time, nation, liberty and the “enigma of the intellectual”.¹² Many of them attest a deep knowledge of the Greek philosophy, some investigate aspects of modern life or analyses Platonic ontological schemata in classical texts of the Romanian literature. Some others, such as the reflections on time, are deeply marked by Heidegger. If precisely Socrates represents a key figure in his meditations, this can hardly be a surprise: Dragomir is particularly interested in the method of inquiry, and combines therefore in his discourses the maieutic with the phenomenological method, not to mention his own oral-Socratic temperament. Although he does not avoid

¹⁰ The translation was published only in 1956 in a review of the Romanian exile, *Caiete de dor*, cf. Gabriel Liiceanu in his foreword to the volume Alexandru Dragomir, *Crise banalități metafizice*, ed. by Gabriel Liiceanu and Cătălin Partenie, Bucharest: Ed. Humanitas, 2004, XI.

¹¹ In the 1990s also Cătălin Partenie, Horia Roman Patapievici, Matei Pleșu and myself, maybe some others enjoyed his highly ironical private comments and subtle interpretations of classical texts.

¹² Alexandru Dragomir, *Crise banalități metafizice*, ed. cit.

precise quotations, the historical exegesis interests him basically only insofar it helps clarify aspects of daily life.¹³

Finally, another original contribution belongs to Mircea Vulcănescu, assistant of Nae Ionescu and minister during World War II: He ended as a political prisoner in 1952, after pronouncing the last words “do not take revenge for us!”. His work, mostly in fragments, was able to be published only after 1989. Vulcănescu outlined an ontology supposed to be specifically Romanian, on the basis of the Romanian language and popular literature. Nevertheless, even if he subtitled his in 1943 lecture on *The Romanian dimension of the existence*¹⁴ as a “phenomenological sketch” and in spite of the genuine novelty of his approach, the strict phenomenological background of the work remains rather vague and unsubstantial.

BETWEEN OFFICIAL IDEOLOGY AND “PRIVATE” SYSTEMS (1948–1963)

After 1948, in a fundamental new political context which imposed Marxism-Leninism as the unique philosophy in Romania, phenomenology as well as existentialism were considered idealistic philosophies of the bourgeoisie. An essential role in the ideological reorientation in general and in the prohibition of phenomenology in particular was played for a short time in the first postwar years by the Marxist philosopher Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu¹⁵.

On the other side, further on phenomenology was practiced by Camil Petrescu, who carried on for several years a project on “the doctrine of the substance”, which however in turn for several decades was exempt from any public impact: the typescript (dating from 1942 and, in its last version, from 1954/55) was deposited by the author in the archives of the Vatican until 1988, when it was retrieved and first published.¹⁶ The work represents a vast draft of a system, yet it is partly unsystematic and abounds in repetitions. Camil

¹³ Other texts of Dragomir and interpretations to his person and thinking are available in English, French and German in the issue dedicated to him in *Studia Phaenomenologica*. Other volumes with selected writings in Romanian are forthcoming from Humanitas Publishing House.

¹⁴ Mircea Vulcănescu, *Dimensiunea românească a existenței*, reedited, together with other studies, in the volume with the same title by Marin Diaconu, Bucharest: Ed. Fundației Culturale Române, 1991.

¹⁵ See, for example, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu’s chapter on contemporary philosophy in *Curenți și tendințe în filosofia românească*, [Bucharest:] Socec, 1946.

¹⁶ Camil Petrescu, *Doctrina substanței*, edited and with an introduction by Vasile Dem. Zamfirescu, Bucharest: Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1988.

Petrescu's premature death explains why the text remained unfinished. Anyway, this ambitious project aims to reconstruct the so-called ontology of concreteness (which seems to haunt in the Romanian philosophy) from a phenomenological perspective. Moreover, whereas other Romanian thinkers such as Iosif Brucăr¹⁷ or the philosopher of culture Tudor Vianu drew from phenomenology only its method, Camil Petrescu assimilated the very nucleus of the phenomenological doctrine.

At the beginning he keeps distance from traditional rationalism and particularly every logicism, including Hegel, to whom he objects the inversion of the relation between existence and knowledge. Further he criticizes the Kantian apriorism for lacking any genetic explanation, and finds, finally, forerunners in Bergson and Husserl, who succeeded in recuperating the concrete in philosophy. Besides, Petrescu appreciated Husserl for having overcome both the biological Bergsonian intuitionism, akin to instinct, and atomistic "elementarism", as well as for having asserted that the essences (i.e. the transcendental concrete) are not amorphous, but structured. Still, the Romanian thinker objects to phenomenology in general that, of all forms of the absolute, it admits a single one: the consciousness; as such, phenomenology has slipped into a transcendental subjective idealism and disregarded the concrete history. Other examples of absolute reality, argues Petrescu, are the outer world, resistant to our will, all the processes of becoming and change, and the relations. Moreover, he attempts repeatedly to delimitate his own position from Husserl's and strives to replace the intuition of the pure essences through a "substantial intuition", which would add a concrete signification to the essences.

As to the concept of substance, this is two-dimensional, i. e. it exists on the dimension of the necessity and on that of the *nous*, as a result of the function spirit–necessity. The pole of the necessary reality is less substantial than that of the spirit, which is defined, following Bergson, as a vital élan. World history emerges from the conflict between a spiritual and a non-spiritual force; the latter is nothing else than the inferior energetic pole or the primary energy used by the spirit. The universal becoming is achieved along two movements: a substantial and "devolutionary" movement, on one side, and an evolutionary one, within the subspecies, on the other side. The devolutionary movement builds the main axis of the history; this carries on a progressive differentiation and individuation, fulfils the liberation of the spirit (*nous*) from its mixture with the primary energy and leads the creative spontaneity to the spirit. Camil Petrescu rejects any mechanic and materialist explanation of the evolution and, instead, he conceives the devolutionary movement as finalist.

¹⁷ Iosif Brucăr is also the author of a study about Husserl in *Filosofi și sisteme*, Bucharest: Societatea Română de Filosofie, 1933.

Man himself is a “phenomenological animal”, that is, the only being able of self-reflection and who lives according to values. These are hierarchical organized on three levels: The lowest values are subjective and “pre-substantial”; since values consist basically in overcoming subjectivity, the subjective values, destined to preserve biologically the individual, are as a matter of fact pseudo-values, objects of desire and cause pleasure and pain. On a higher level we find the historical values, corresponding to the evolutionary axis, and on the top the substantial values of the devolutionary axis, e. g. the artistic, scientific and technical values. The substantial theory of values culminates in the concept of the “noocracy”, understood not as the reign of the intellectuals, but as the order of the supra-personal intelligence in the world. In its political implications, noocracy refers to a method of social action which aims to promote the substantial values and, by that, intelligence.¹⁸

STRATEGIES OF RECUPERATING PHENOMENOLOGY (1964–1989)

After 1964, in the context of a certain liberalization of the cultural politics in Romania, three categories of scholars dealt with phenomenology: the members of the academic establishment, the elder generation of scholars, who had studied before the war and were now permitted to publish again (if they were not already living abroad), and the young philosophy researchers and writers, who (re)discovered phenomenology and reestablished scientific contacts with (Western) Europe.

The official position of the philosophy professors varied from an open ideological critique of the phenomenology to different forms of theoretical compromise. A special mention deserves Alexandru Boboc, professor for the history of modern and contemporary philosophy at the University of Bucharest and author of several books on phenomenology and on its relations with Marxism-Leninism, inclusively of monographs about Hartmann and Scheler.¹⁹ For example, his book on Scheler focuses on *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Werkethik* and compares Scheler’s ethics with the ethical personalism, with the eudemonism and the ethics of the success. A few years later, Boboc discusses in *Phenomenology and Human Sciences*²⁰ the role

¹⁸ Phenomenological influences are discernible also in Camil Petrescu’s other main theoretical writings, especially in his dramatic theory (*Modalitatea estetică a teatrului*, Bucharest: Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă “Regele Carol II”, 1937).

¹⁹ Alexandru Boboc, *Marxism-leninismul și confruntările de idei în filosofia contemporană*, Bucharest: Ed. Politică, 1973 (“Fenomenologia”, 43–49); idem, *Nicolai Hartmann și realismul contemporan*, Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1973; idem, *Etică și axiologie în opera lui Max Scheler*, Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1971.

²⁰ Idem, *Fenomenologia și științele umane*, Bucharest: Ed. Politică, 1979.

played by phenomenology in the contemporary philosophical discourse, including the dialogue with the Marxism. Alexandru Boboc continues to publish, translate and lecture on phenomenology also after 1989, however rather as a historian of philosophy than as a phenomenologist.²¹

However, the most important studies close to a phenomenological perspective (even if their authors did not call them so), are practiced in this epoch by elder philosophers, like Constantin Noica, Constantin Floru, etc., whose interdiction of publication was suspended after 1964. Constantin Noica is often considered as the most important Romanian philosopher; outside Romania he began only recently to be known through his work and not only through his lifelong friendship with the Romanian exile represented by Emil Cioran, Eugène Ionesco and Mircea Eliade. After being released from the prison, Noica elaborates an original conception in which the Kantian theory of knowledge and the Hegelian dialectics melt with a quasi-Heideggerian inquiry on the philosophical potential of the (Romanian) language.²²

One should not neglect here also the phenomenological contribution of the exiled Romanians, above all of Mircea Eliade, George Uscătescu and Benjamin Fondane (Benjamin Fundoianu). For example, the Spanish professor Jorge Uscătescu corresponds with Heidegger, publishes studies on Heidegger,

²¹ Monographs and special studies on phenomenology wrote, from the perspective of the history of philosophy, also Tudor Ghideanu and Andrei Marga from the University of Cluj-Napoca, as well as the older C.I. Gulian, éminence grise of the official philosophy in Romania before 1989. See Tudor Ghideanu, *Conștiința filosofică de la Husserl la Teilhard de Chardin*, Iași: Junimea, 1981 (contains special chapters dedicated to Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Ricœur, Dufrenne, and Teilhard de Chardin); idem, *Temeiuri critice ale creației*, Bucharest: Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1988 (examines Sartre's phenomenology of the imaginary and the "phenomenological ontology of the human freedom"); idem, *Percepție și morală în fenomenologia franceză (Maurice Merleau-Ponty și Simone de Beauvoir)*, Bucharest: Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1979; Andrei Marga, *Introducere în filosofia contemporană*, Bucharest: Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1988 (in the chapter on the "Transcendental phenomenology", 111–125 he mentions the influence of the "regional ontologies" on the sociology of the Romanian Traian Herseni); idem, *Introducere în metodologia și argumentarea filosofică*, Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Dacia, 1992 (about the phenomenological method, 107–112); C.I. Gulian, *Structura și sensul culturii*, Bucharest: Ed. Politică, 1980 (with special chapters dedicated to the problem of the sense in Husserl, 160–216, and to Mikel Dufrenne's concept of the poetical, 305–312), etc.

²² Among his several works, published in the seventies and eighties in Romania, unfortunately very few are accessible in translations, such as: *De dignitate Europæ*, whose first edition was published in German one year after his death (Bucharest: Kriterion Verlag, 1989).

and even organizes in 1970, in collaboration with the Romanian emigration, a symposium about the German philosopher, to which he invites scholars from Romania.²³ Despite their scientific quality and the praiseworthy attempt to maintain contacts with the Romanian culture from “home” even in the most precarious conditions, such manifestations unfortunately cannot find a wide audience in Romania, where they pass mostly unperceived.

At the same time, in the 1960s arises a new generation of intellectuals, writers and philosophers, whose “phenomenological investigations” seem to focus once again on Heidegger. Here are a few dates: The poet Ioan Alexandru (later known as a religious poet of the vernacular) writes in an enthusiastic tone about Heidegger’s seminary on the Presocratics, which he attended in 1968, and exercises fragmentary translations from Heidegger into Romanian. In 1967 Nicolae Tertulian publishes an interview with Heidegger, before he emigrates to France. In 1972 Marcel Petrișor dedicates studies to the “phenomenological aesthetics” of Husserl, Hartmann, and Heidegger, the latter being considered by the author as the most important and complex existentialist philosopher of art.²⁴ Finally, a second book on phenomenological aesthetics published in 1974 under pseudonym by Nina Nicolaeva²⁵ confirms the vivid interest of the Romanian intellectuals in phenomenology – this was however, an interest which is compelled to choose the “less dangerous” form of the art theory or, as in the case of Ioan Alexandru, to seek refuge in the Antiquity. Precisely, aesthetics, like also logic and epistemology, is regarded during this period as rather “neutral” ideologically and attracts therefore quite often philosophers who are trying to escape the political pressure of the official doctrine, promising to enable still a free research.

Besides, it is also easier for translations than for original thinking or for critical examinations conceived from a phenomenological, i.e. “bourgeois” perspective, to pass the censorship. As a result, several translations of a high quality are published from Biemel (who gave interviews to Gabriel Liiceanu and Alexandru Boboc and published in literary reviews in Romania), Ricœur, Dufrenne, Sartre (only the literary work), Hartmann, Bachelard, Ingarden, Guido Morpurgo-Tagliabue, Antonio Banfi, etc. Moreover, it is not by accident that the first Romanian translations from Heidegger consist in a selection of his lectures on art and poetry, realized by Gabriel Liiceanu and Thomas Kleininger,

²³The conference papers were published in: *Symposion Heidegger. Omagiu românesc lui Martin Heidegger*, ed. by George Uscătescu, col. “Destin”, caiet 21–23, Madrid, 1971.

²⁴ Marcel Petrișor, *Curențe estetice contemporane*, Bucharest: Ed. Univers, 1972.

²⁵ Nicolae Vanina, *Tendințe actuale în estetica fenomenologică*, Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1974.

a philosopher and a Germanist, both disciples of Constantin Noica.²⁶ In spite of an obviously increasing pressure from the official ideology and politics, a second volume of translations from Heidegger by Liiceanu and Kleininger and containing most of the studies from *Wegmarken*, appears one year before the revolution.²⁷

Gabriel Liiceanu is one of the very few who, in this epoch, claims to belong to phenomenology in his doctorate thesis on the concept of tragic.²⁸ The original interpretation elaborates a theory of the tragic as a theory of limits or, with the concept proposed by Liiceanu, as a “peratology” (from the Greek πέρας, border, limit). The author drafts here a topography of the being on three registers: the nature has only limits and no freedom, transcendence (Being) enjoys an unlimited freedom; between them, the human being experiences both limitation and freedom and therefore is the only one who is subject to tragic. The category of tragic is specific for the finite and conscious existence confronted with its limit; in other words, tragic is the character who assumes deliberately the negative consequences of struggling against the limit. On the contrary, in the history an action is tragic, following Hegel, if it attempts to pass beyond a limit which is absolute for the individual consciousness, but proves to be relative for the mankind; the historical tragic means the lack of definite boundaries, each limit is nothing but an element in an infinite series of provisory limits. The tragic is like a playwright with two characters: the tragic patient (the man) and the tragic agent (the personification of the limit). Put it concisely, in a tragic ontological order who tries to cross a border will be punished, but who does not attempt to go beyond it does not deserve to be called human. The work emphasizes not only the differences between tragic and sublime, tragic and reckless, but also devotes an entire section to the modalities of canceling the tragic and to the conversion of the tragic into sublime. Usually various strategies help us to avoid the awareness of the tragic: we may blur the limit, ignore the existence of an absolute limit and live in the present moment or believe that finitude affects solely the others; some others postulate that the absolute limit is only relative, like in religious beliefs in

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Originea operei de artă*, Bucharest: Ed. Univers, 1982, translation by Thomas Kleininger and Gabriel Liiceanu, with notes by Gabriel Liiceanu (contains: *Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung*, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, *Wozu Dichter?*, *Brief über den “Humanismus”*, *Die Frage nach der Technik*, *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*, “... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch...”, *Die Sprache im Gedicht*, and *Die Kunst und der Raum*).

²⁷ Idem, *Repere pe drumul gândirii*, Bucharest: Ed. Politică, 1988, translation, notes and terminological index by Thomas Kleininger and Gabriel Liiceanu.

²⁸ Gabriel Liiceanu, *Tragicul. O fenomenologie a limitei și depășirii*, Bucharest: Ed. Univers, 1975.

immortality; or we can resign obedient to the limit; finally, we may assume our misfortune as a deserved punishment for a certain guilt.

Among other aspects, Liiceanu stresses on the psychology of the tragic delight and examines several theories on this matter formulated since Aristoteles and till the present. In the end he agrees with the explanation given by Richard Müller-Freienfels in 1923: the specific pleasure in pain produced by the tragic consists in the revelation of a value in the same moment when we risk to loose it; the so-called “law of compensation” which is at stake here says that the deliberate act of challenging the limit provokes a superior satisfaction to the displeasure caused by the breakdown of the consciousness.

PERSPECTIVES OF A NEW BEGINNING

Phenomenology, analytical philosophy, hermeneutics, and postmodernism build the main streams of the Romanian philosophy after 1990. The last decade of the past century begins with a phase of recuperation, in which for the first time are published previous works and authors (such as Mircea Vulcănescu and Emil Cioran), who have stayed under political interdiction before.

The phenomenological studies are concentrated at the Universities of Bucharest (www.fil.unibuc.ro) and Cluj-Napoca (www.hiphi.ubbcluj.ro/~hiphi), and at the Institute of Philosophy of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest, which, however, carries on only research programs. As a professor at the University of Bucharest and, since 2004, executive president of the Romanian Society for Phenomenology, Gabriel Liiceanu develops an almost exclusive interest for Heidegger among his students, and the publishing house whose director he is hosts several translations from Heidegger (most of them realized by his Ph.D. candidates), beginning with the first Romanian translation of *Being and Time*, realized by Liiceanu and Cătălin Cioabă.²⁹ After 1989 are translated for the first time also Husserl, Lévinas, Merleau-Ponty, Villém Flusser, some of Sartre’s philosophical writings, Lyotard’s *Phenomenology*, Pöggeler, Biemel’s *rororo*-monograph on Heidegger, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Haar, Jean-François Courtine, and others. A specialist in Brentano as a forerunner of the phenomenology is Ion Tănăsescu, who translated him and held seminars on Brentano in Bucharest. In the 1990s Gabriel Liiceanu pursued his reflections on the theory of the limit and elaborated an ethical-anthropological conception focussed on problems like liberty and responsibility, decision and guilt, fear,

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Ființă și timp*, translated by Gabriel Liiceanu and Cătălin Cioabă, Bucharest: Ed. Humanitas, 2003.

creation, education, love, and collective destiny.³⁰ Liiceanu is also known abroad through studies on Heidegger published in Germany.

I have held myself for some years courses and seminars on the history of the phenomenological aesthetics at the University of Bucharest³¹ and regard my own considerations on aesthetics as being rooted in phenomenology. My first book examined Kierkegaard's "phenomenology" avant-la-lettre of the nihilistic affective dispositions (irony, melancholy, fear and despair), phenomena both of the individualistic-romantic nihilism of the exception and of the mass-nihilism.³² The theoretical interest in phenomenology became more precise in my doctorate thesis on the ontology of the work of art in the light of the principle of identity;³³ suggestions came mainly from Heidegger's late writings, from Lévinas, Dufrenne, Merleau-Ponty and Noica helped me to propose here a reinterpretation of the tautology which would be more adequate for (modern) art and its theory. The principle "A is A" was freed from its tautological interpretation in the logic and acquired new semantic and non-formalistic dimensions; these refer to the self-sufficiency of the work of art, to the opening of a self-referential world, but in the first place to the dynamic irradiation of an atmosphere (which I called aura) on the environment.

The influence exerted by Heidegger in rethinking the aesthetic discourse in this book is explainable by the other Ph.D. thesis I was preparing in Vienna at the same time and which deals with the concept of relation in Heidegger's late work.³⁴ Although Heidegger did not work out any systematic theory of relation, his late writings contain new types of relation which are no more representational (*vorstellend*), frontal and dual, like modern metaphysics and its aesthetics, but may provide fertile explanatory models for art. Such relations are a complex structured chiasm (like the *Geviert*), the fold, and the "embracing" relation to the surrounding environment (*Um-Relation* with the *Umwelt*). The work emphasizes also other characteristics of the specific Heideggerian relations, such as the paradoxical personification of abstract connections, the dissolution of a bipolar relation in favor of a dynamic and topological paradigm of a field of forces, in which relations turn into vectors,

³⁰ Gabriel Liiceanu, *Despre limită*, Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994; French translation: *De la limite*, Paris: Ed. Michalon, 1997.

³¹ These courses offered the basis for my book *Arta ca fenomen. Contribuții la o istorie a esteticii fenomenologice*, Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Eikon, 2005.

³² Mădălina Diaconu, *Pe marginea abisului. Søren Kierkegaard și nihilismul secolului al XIX-lea*, Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1996.

³³ Mădălina Diaconu, *Ontologia operei de artă în lumina principiului identității*, Bucharest: Ed. Crater, 2001.

³⁴ Idem, *Blickumkehr. Mit Martin Heidegger zu einer relationalen Ästhetik*, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Zürich etc.: Peter Lang, 2000.

etc. In conclusion, Heidegger's thinking proves to be highly relational, in the sense that the entities or terms achieve their signification only within relations. Finally, interpretations of Cézanne and of the Spanish sculptor Eduardo Chillida attempt to demonstrate the viability of applying Heidegger to modern art.

This relational and topological model was continued and developed by the investigations I have carried out in the past years at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and during courses and seminars at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and at the University of Cluj-Napoca. As their result, my book *Tasten, Riechen, Schmecken. Eine Ästhetik der anästhesierten Sinne*³⁵ attempts to work out phenomenological analyses of the experience of the so-called "lower" or "secondary" senses (touch, smell, and taste) and inquires the possibility of an aesthetics of these senses. While Western metaphysics relies on the primacy of the visual (and partially acoustic) experience, touch, smell, and taste were twice "anesthetized" in the modern West: they were considered unable to produce art forms; and the process of civilization was not interested to refine them, which led to their physical underdevelopment. Guided mainly by phenomenological theories, but taking also into account recent studies scattered in diverse natural, social and human sciences, my research sets forth the idea of grounding the art theory on "aesthetics" and on the anthropology of the senses and requires to extend the realm of aesthetics to configurations addressed to all senses. Particularly I stress on the contribution of touch, smell, and taste to the constitution of the personal identity, on their social functions (to ground communities, but also as means of social distinction), and on their ethical implications (tactfulness, flair, *sagacitas* and *sapientia* referred initially to touch, smell, and taste). In spite of various difficulties in working out an aesthetics of these senses, upon closer inspection the distinction *de jure* between "aesthetic" and "non-aesthetic" senses proves to be untenable, and the demarcation line between art and non-art (the aesthetic border) to be relative to the cultural field in which our experience is embedded. Patina, atmosphere and aroma – related originally with touch, smell, and taste – turn out to be relevant also as general aesthetic values. Since their subject is partly pre-reflexive, pre-intentional and collective, such phenomena represent a challenge to the classical phenomenological theory. The specificity of touch, smell, and taste impacts also the theoretical discourse: their tendency to synaesthesia makes inevitable the use of metaphors, while their essential temporality is most

³⁵ Idem, *Tasten, Riechen, Schmecken. Eine Ästhetik der anästhesierten Sinne*, forthcoming in Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005 (coll. "Orbis phaenomenologicus"). An English summary is accessible in English in the entry on "Secondary Senses" I wrote for the *Handbook of phenomenological aesthetics*, ed. by Lester Embree, Hans-Rainer Sepp, The Hague: Kluwer, 2005.

accurately reproduced in a narrative manner. Moreover, the experience of these three senses rehabilitates non-semantic criteria of the aesthetic experience, particularly sensibility as the aptitude to apprehend fine differences in the realm of perception, feeling, and interpretation.

Important steps forward in the institutional coordination of the phenomenological researches in Romania were made in the last few years of the initiative of two young scholars, Gabriel Cercel and Cristian Ciocan, Ph.D. candidates of Prof. Liiceanu: They grounded successively in 2000 the Romanian Society for Phenomenology, in 2001 they edited the first issue of the review of the society, *Studia Phænomenologica*, and they founded in 2002 the Center of Phenomenological Studies at the University of Bucharest (www.culture.ro/srf). The review comes out twice an year, hosts papers mainly in English, French and German signed by well-known phenomenologists from all over the world, and counts with an international advisory board, in which the American phenomenology is represented at present by Parvis Emad and Theodore Kisiel. The editors, Cristian Ciocan and Gabriel Cercel, have co-opted in the editorial board Romanian scholars from both phenomenological centers, Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca and from abroad: Virgil Ciomoș, Ion Copoeru, Bogdan Mincă, Delia Popa, Attila Szigeti, (for some time) Ion Tănăsescu, and myself. *Studia Phænomenologica* dedicated until now issues to Merleau-Ponty, Biemel, Gadamer, the school of Brentano and the Husserlian phenomenology, Heidegger and theology, the early Heidegger, Alexandru Dragomir, *Being and Time*, etc.

One has to mention here with gratitude also the support of Walter Biemel in the revitalization of the Romanian phenomenology. Invited in 1995 by the University of Bucharest to give some lectures on phenomenology and on Heidegger, Prof. Biemel visited a second time Bucharest in 2003, when he received the title of *doctor honoris causa* from the University where he had studied once. Walter Biemel is also from the beginning the honorific president of the Romanian Society of Phenomenology, whose executive president is since 2004 Gabriel Liiceanu.

Equally active is the University of Cluj-Napoca, where the Center for Applied Research in Phenomenology was grounded in 2002 and where a French Philosophy Master functions since the middle of the 1990s. In comparison with Bucharest, the “phenomenological school” in Cluj-Napoca seems to be more open to new currents and more diverse orientated and is represented by the professors Virgil Ciomoș, Ion Copoeru and the younger Attila Szigeti.³⁶ All three made doctoral studies in France with Marc Richir,

³⁶ Actually a certain interest in phenomenology, but especially in Heidegger continued to manifest, like in the previous decades, philosophers and writers who

Françoise Dastur and Éliane Escoubas, and published phenomenological interpretations of Aristoteles (Ciomoș),³⁷ studies on the problem of the constitution in Husserl (Copoeru)³⁸ and Lévinas (Szigeti).³⁹

One example for the development of the international contacts of the phenomenological center in Cluj-Napoca was the First Central and Eastern European Conference in Phenomenology organized by Ion Copoeru in 2002, which was attended by scholars from Austria, Belarus, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, Ukraine and United States.⁴⁰ The conference initiated a regional collaboration between phenomenological organizations, which was continued and deepened by the following Central and Eastern European Conferences in Phenomenology held in Minsk and Warsaw. The Romanian centers for phenomenology and the Romanian Society of Phenomenology were also represented at the Conference organized in autumn 2002 by the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology in Prague, where was founded the international Organization of Phenomenological Organizations (O.P.O.); on that occasion, Ion Copoeru was elected to represent all the East-European countries.

Instead of a conclusion, let me remark that good perspectives for the further development of the phenomenological research in Romania are given by the fact that most of the Romanian scholars interested in phenomenology are very young; apart from the mentioned professors and assistant professors, the majority is still formed by Ph.D. candidates, several of which have studied or are still studying abroad.

are not strictly speaking phenomenologists, such as Ștefan Giugura, Alin Tat, Mihail Grădinaru, etc.

³⁷ Virgil Ciomoș, *Timp și eternitate*, Bucharest: Ed. Paideia, 1998.

³⁸ Ion Copoeru, *Structuri ale constituirii. Contribuții la analitica datului intențional*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2001; idem, *Aparență și sens. Repere ale fenomenologiei constitutive*, Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Dacia, 2000.

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⁴⁰ The conference papers were edited by Ion Copoeru, Delia Popa and Mădălina Diaconu in *Person, Community, and Identity*, Cluj-Napoca: House of the Book of Science, 2003. To phenomenology can be ascribed also some of the international articles edited by Ion Copoeru, for example in *Beyond Identity. Transformations of Identity in a (Post-)Modern World*, Cluj-Napoca: House of the Book of Science, 2004.

Chapter IV

Noica, a Thinker in a Time of Need and the Philosophy of Becoming unto Being

Laura Pamfil

“...What good are poets in time of need?” Hölderlin asked in his elegy *Brod und Wein*. The question still holds good as, according to Heidegger, ours are “times of need,” that is, an age which the gods have abandoned and whence sacred glitter¹ is gone for good. We are living in the epoch of night for, after Dionysus and Heracles left the world, the twilight of the godly day began with the redeeming death of Christ. The time is of such huge need that god’s absence is no longer felt as an absence, and the world has foregone its prime and its prime mover.

Born into a minor East European culture in the dead of the communist dictatorship night, Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica is an epitome of “a thinker in time of need” (*Denker in dürftiger Zeit*), destined to put people and things together under the umbrella of meaning, to whip into shape the troubled history of this part of the world and the life of those of its inhabitants. Often labeled as “the most important Romanian thinker,” Noica and his creation indeed mark a turning point in Romanian culture, a breaking away from the spirit of a village culture rooted in the ancestral and the traditional. In other words, in an unprecedented move, he spectacularly attempted to strike free of his own minor culture. This is the more admirable as his “escape” through a dialogue with the space of free western European culture began and continued at the peak of Ceausescu’s totalitarian regime. It is this founding endeavor, *par excellence*, that we will address here.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CREATION STAGES

Constantin Noica, the author of the last ontological treatise in Eastern Europe, was born on July 24, 1909, in Vitanesti, Teleorman County; he died on December 4, 1987, at Sibiu. During his life, he wrote 21 books, translated and commented on Plato’s *Dialogues*, translated Aristotelian commentators from the Greek and drafted the most complex ontological model of the Romanian culture, as well as a hermeneutic logic of Heideggerian influence (called “the

¹ Martin Heidegger, *La ce bun poetii? (What good are poets ?)* in *Originea operei de artă (The origin of artwork)*, Humanitas, 1995

logic of Hermes”). He spent nine years under house arrest at Campulung-Muscel (between 1949 and 1958) and spent six years as a political prisoner (between 1958 and 1964). His nearly 80 year existence went on in the troubled times around WWII, and the coming to power of the Communist Party in Romania. Steam-rolled by history and threatened by the mediocre destiny of a minor East-European culture, some of the most brilliant representatives of the time left the country — “A man born into a small culture cannot escape having his pride hurt”, Emil Cioran once said, and the entire inter-bella Romanian generation fully felt the truth of this assertion.

After a brief Paris sojourn, Mircea Eliade became a reputed historian of religions in the United States. Eugène Ionesco laid the foundation in Paris “of the theater of the absurd”, to become a member of the French Academy towards the close of his life. Emil Cioran withdrew to Paris where he created the works that were to solidly establish him as the “last true pessimist of the century”.

Besides Mircea Vulcanescu, Constantin Noica is one of the few intellectuals of the inter-bella Romanian elite that chose to remain in the country after the advent of the communist regime. Mircea Vulcanescu died in jail, saving the life of a young detainee. Noica managed to come out of prison alive, after which he attempted to supply his own answer to the identity crisis confronting Romania after the inter-war period and further vicissitudes of history. His solution was, naturally, essentially philosophical.

What singles him out in the Romanian cultural landscape is that he provided an ontological perspective on the question of national identity. Thus, he hinged his ontological works on modulations of the verb “to be”, between 1944 and 1978, when the volume on *The Romanian Sentiment of the Being*, the most accomplished instance of this kind of ontology, was published. Noica’s idea was not new. It had emerged with Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, drawing from the resources of medieval German and French phenomenologists who were feverishly developing a new linguistic idiom, apt to express something about the being, based on the resources of the French language. Something new was also happening beyond the Iron Curtain: a thinker was establishing a dialogue with the ideas of the West, trying to attune a minor culture to the accelerated pace of great culture. Works like *Pages on the Romanian Soul* (1944), *The Romanian Philosophical Apophantics* (1970), *Creation and Beauty in the Romanian Apophantics* (1973), *Eminescu or Thoughts on the Complete Man of the Romanian Culture* (1975), and *The Romanian Feeling of Being* (1973) stand as proof of the way Noica exercised a kind of freedom under the vigilant eye of the communist dictatorship.

For the moment, it was just methodological freedom, which would become one of content in the following creative stage (1978-1987). Then his ontology acquired definite shape with the publication, in 1981, of *Becoming unto Being* (vol. I. *Essay on Traditional Philosophy* and vol. II *A Treatise of*

Ontology). That was a time of negotiation between the Platonist-Hegelian trunk of Noica's philosophy, and the more recent Heideggerian influences. Afterwards, Noica completed *Six Infirmities of the Contemporary Mind* (1978, a small sketch of the philosophy of the spirit, realized with the instruments of the philosophy of culture), *Stories about Man* (1990, an interpretation of G.W.F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*), the already mentioned *Becoming unto Being* (1981, the mature form of his ontology), *Three Introductions to Becoming unto Being* (1984), *Letters on the Logic of Hermes* (1986, an attempt to devise a hermeneutic logic from the premises of the Hegelian-tinged dialectics at the core of his ontology). Then he rephrased the triadic dialectics and a fundamental Hegelian concept, that of reason, by introducing the notion of "ethos of orientation", drawing even closer to Heidegger's phenomenology. This explains why an ontology that had started by accepting the theoretical suppositions of Hegel's dialectics and the categories of traditional thinking came to address the opening and sinking into things of being or becoming as a field of being's opening. A genuine *Kehre* then took place: Noica turned away from Hegelian thinking, and at the same time radically separated from the Marxist ideology of the ruling party, and returned to the phenomenological model which Martin Heidegger promoted in the West. Was that a form of resistance through culture? If so, then the same must be said about his attempt to draw up a logic "of Hermes" pleading against the insubordination of the individual to the general classes on purely formal criteria, against the uniformity of class imposed by the spirit of traditional Aristotelian logic: and about his lifelong obsession with the "rehabilitation" of the individual, crushed under the general sense it serves, and the refusal of "historical cultures", flowing chaotically, in favor of "geometrical cultures" up under one sense, namely of the being.

THE ONTOLOGICAL MODEL AND ITS DOUBLE STRUCTURES

This refined ontological plea "of Hermes" aimed at the assertion of the individual in a totalitarian world that annuls any personal rights and turns the individual into a mass is underpinned by a Hegelian-inspired ontological model. Noica's name for its IDG (individual-determinations-general); its operational pattern establishes that an individual has determinations and tends to the general sense of being. The IDG ontological model is active in things and can never become saturated. (In other words, we can never speak of an absolute being, consummate and stable). The deviations from this pattern give the measure of the real. Thus, any of the three terms can be absent, the other two coupling up in turn. Through excess or absence of a term, there emerge six "precariousnesses" that represent as many "degrees of being" or "stairs to coming into being" of things.

This ontological model with the being far from absolute and incorruptible, accepts precariousness and evinces two-pronged structures, doubled according to an ontological or ontic plan: becoming unto being and becoming unto becoming, regulating time and rotating time, the infinite of reason and the infinite of the intellect, truth and exactness, maladies of the spirit and maladies of the soul, second-instance being and first-instance being, structure naught and first-instance naught, the individual turned *holomer* (an I-D, a part that rises to the power of the entire) and a void individual (things in Parmenides' view, an uninformed vital content), essence determinations and empty determinations (the *daemonia* of determinations that do not jell into a single sense), general turned into concrete universal and void general (Parmenides' absolute being, abstract law, uncovered by a vital content).

Becoming unto Becoming and Becoming unto Being

The two types of Noica's becoming are two different types of infinity: becoming unto being applies to the causal infinity of the intellect, and becoming unto being is the infinity of reason. The two infinities come to reveal the oppositional nature of becoming, and each account for a dialectics: one of the natural processes subject to necessity, i.e. another life of the spirit that does not obey the *generatione et corruptione materiae*. The symbolic expression of each becoming, dialectically upheld, is a circle, but this too is double-structured: the geometrical epitome of the circle and the vectorial circle. All this two-folding of plans tries, in fact, to avoid linear dialectics and infinity which Noica attributes to, and ceaselessly faults, in Hegel.

This accounts for the fact that becoming unto becoming proceeds according to a circular dialectics that reconstructs the circle of the infinite intellect, of the eternal return of things upon themselves, the access to the being of which is undermined by the perpetual return to the same point. This is a vitiated type of becoming, stuck in endless repetition which, at best, can take the form of a spiral, thus betraying its relation with linearity. Such a circle embodies the vicious circle of logic, a regress *ad infinitum* (through a permanent return to the same thesis that needs to be abandoned, and the principle of causality (by return to a causal agent which, although materially different, is still formally the same as the one prior to itself)²).

At the same time, we can speak of a circle of becoming unto being that engenders an infinity of rationales, instead of constantly reopening the circle, it closes it, returning to itself not as to a fresh beginning but as to an end of the road that has congealed in itself all the moments of the trajectory covered. Thus, a typical example of the defeat of blind causality through the dialectics of

² C. Noica, *Despărțirea... (Farewell...)*, p. 291.

becoming unto becoming is given by philosophical thinking through a permanent refusal of the vicious circle, (particularly as regress *ad infinitum*), and the promotion of the so-called “good”, integrating circle of oriented reason. The expression “falling into a circle” is perfectly justified in the case of becoming unto being, because here becoming “falls” into becoming, just as the negative infinity of the intellect fell into finiteness. In other words, the “bad” circle realizes the inadequacy of becoming to be fulfilled the same as “bad” infinity (as the “additive” infinity of the series of numbers; it mirrors their quantitative prolongation but not their transfiguration) accounted for the incapacity of the finite to stay finite.

Rotating Time and Regulating Time

In reply to Plato’s urge, mentioned above, Noica evinced from the very beginning of *Becoming unto Being* the paradox of Greek thinking which, no matter how attached to the idea of contemplation, ended up by seeing how the world is: unconsummated and temporal, subject to an eternal becoming. Yet this movement, itself a symbol of corruption and unconsummation, had a double even in the Greek world: the circular movement of the incorruptible stars. For the Romanian philosopher, Aristotle’s definition according to which “time is the number of movement”³ holds good for all movement with the exception of the circular one, since return to the same point simultaneously expresses something in and out of time. That was the manner of thinking proper to the Greeks of finding a solution to the aporias of philosophy, in a single symbol reconciling movement and immobility, consummation and incompleteness, the temporal and atemporal, Noica believed. Thus, in the Greek world, the circular movement provided the model of intellectual reflection, being its imitation. Endowed with a strong character of *sophia*, in Noica’s vision it would embody the sensible and at the same time intellectual scheme imagined by Kant.⁴

Consequently, in keeping with the Greek model it constantly addresses, the ontology of becoming unto being makes room for real time, whose measure is movement. And since “movement is best ‘counted’ as a turning round in circle,” as it is homogenous and bound to the resumption of itself (the uniform motion of the stars) this type of movement will also give the time unit.⁵ This is *rotating time*, blind movement, mythologically represented by Cronus the tyrant, the one who constantly engenders creatures that he pushes gradually into nothingness. Hence the vituperation of “chronology” and the obstinate refusal

³ Aristotel, *Physics*, 219 b.

⁴ C. Noica, *Încercare... (An Essay...)*, p. 13.

⁵ C. Noica, *Trei introduceri... (Three Introductions...)*, p. 99.

of historicism exercised in vain. Yet, for Noica, the Aristotelian definition is accessible only if the number is not only the measure of movement but also its order. In other words, what is interesting is not the measure of uniformly flowing, clocklike time, but the interior pulse of acquiring a meaning, the pace of becoming unto being that lends temporality something of its vital spirit. This is regulating time, governed by Zeus, the deity capable of extracting the real from its rotating condition, transforming and putting it unto meaningful becoming.

Zeus defeats Cronus only in man, Constantin Noica points out. And this occurs only because man alone can “deform” the circular movement of real time, pushing it out of its rigid, measured and uniform tick tock. Only he can establish a logical time that is no longer an order of succession as with Aristotle, but the other way round: a succession that enthrones itself an order in the world. All this action of “deformation of the temporal circle occurs only within the meaningful endowment in the sense of what Noica’s ontology often styles “the human real”. Just as in the case of the two types of becoming, we are dealing with a circle of mechanical flow and of the homogenous versus the circle of oriented succession. Thus, we can say that the circle of temporality is a particular case of the becoming circle, the latter integrating the former, and both being subordinated to the wider circle of the being.

Moreover, with temporality there is the notable emergence of a new form of de-centration of the geometrical circle: if the time swallowed by Cronus centers on an eternally moving “now” having the role of balancing all past and future “now”, the time Zeus breeds is kairotic, propulsive; it throws the world off balance, completely lacking a present that should represent its centerpiece. If real time filled the world, taking on an infinity of obsolete contents, logical time voids it ceaselessly, populating it with meanings that send one to another. Thus, the inertial force of the present brings on a perpetual flow, an agglomeration of deeds in a purely exterior succession. This is opposed by the vectorial dimension of the future, oriented according to an interior measure and free of all historicism.

THE LANDSCAPE OF NOTHINGNESS AND OF BEING

The Philosophical Parricide

Noica’s ontology begins, in a Plato-like tradition, with a philosophical parricide perpetrated on “father Parmenides”. The twofold motivation of this intellectual parricide runs deep into the thinking of Constantin Noica. This is what it shows.

The Separation Being–Non-being, says the Romanian philosopher, has bred an invisible demarcation line between “here” and “beyond”, perfect and imperfect, corruptible and incorruptible, truth and appearance. In fragment 6 of Parmenides’ poem, the goddess reveals the ways of truth and conviction, the only ones that can be devised. She condemns the opinions of mortals and does not only hold human ignorance for obloquy but also in a way dis-assembles the object of the sensible world which rather no longer exists. Faced with the perfect being of Parmenides, that turned its back on the world, isolating itself in a transcendental and incorruptible “beyond”, the things of this world find their humble countenance of dethroned reality, fallen into nothingness proper. For nothing makes being and naught come together: the being does not recognize itself in individual things, and these do not recognize themselves in the being.

This separation that has imposed the ontology of severed worlds in the philosophical tradition represents, according to Noica, a genuine “curse on thinking”⁶. Parmenides’ mistake, and then the flaw of the entire metaphysical tradition is that of having created a world which, instead of explaining the existing one (the ostensible “nothingness”), does nothing but double it, in its turn needing another to justify it. Noica declares against Parmenides, who purports the absolute separation of the two ways (“is” and “is not”): “The separation maintained is the very non-truth (...). The real separation — not the logical one, obtained by the razor-sharpness of the mind — occurs inside the inseparable. Something comes unstuck from the environment in which it is caught, bringing it all along, or it turns against the environment in which it was caught in order to adhere better. The only ‘possible separation’ is that which takes over the exterior environment and turns it into an interior environment or one active from within.”⁷

This accounts for the fact that, trying to thwart this separation, Noica will conceive as the ultimate substratum of his ontology *the element: the second-instance being*, i.e. exactly such an external environment that becomes internalized. Struggling thus against Parmenides’ absolutism, Noica puts at the other end of his ontology the *being in things*, which claims the right to be for the most precarious and humblest of sublunary realities. Unlike Parmenides’ perfect being that wanted to be “different”, by separating from things, this one aspires to be ‘different’ things (included). Consequently, the objects of the sensible world, previously fallen to the stage of naught, ‘appearance’, non-truth, are now elevated to the rank of ontological, principles in the real, being itself being perceived as a *void* or an *overvoid* inscribed unto things. All the attributes

⁶ Constantin Noica, *Devenirea întru ființă (The Becoming unto Being)*, vol. II. *Tratat de ontologie (A Treatise of ontology)*, Bucharest, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1981, p. 179.

⁷ C. Noica, op. cit., loc. cit.

previously granted it and detached from the real (unity, permanence, eternity, etc) fall from the vantage of the being into things; the only one attribute that is recovered is that constantly refused by philosophical tradition: *co-naturalness with sensible things*.

Noica integrates in the being that specific individual, the τὸδε τι Parmenides incriminated, thus rehabilitating the real and turning being into an internal environment. If in negative theology or even pre-Socratic philosophy, Being appeared as an exterior void, *nihil (totum) negativum*, and in a positive sense it was conceived as *ens imaginarium*, with Noica it emerges as an interior void, in other others. It is *nihil privativum*, an absence from things, a Kantian “non-being” understood as *ens* intelligible, and to that extent it presents itself as naught, a structured one. In Noica’s outlook it is exactly what is not that actually fills the world in guise of “what is not yet, what was, what was not, but was about to be, what would be, what makes it be, what will have been, and even what will be.”⁸ “The same void as being” he says, “meets with the Non-being in the beginning of Hegel’s *Logic*. Just as it was met in the indeterminate or ontological of the Vedas (‘at first there was neither being nor non-being’) or the initial naught or chaos of great chronologies in the history of culture.”⁹ Consequently, the void in things, the so-called naught stops being the cemetery of the being as it was with Parmenides, in order to become its active force, the propelling power that galvanizes the real.

The Thesis of the Simplicity of the Being. The second reason of Noica’s parricide comes from the thesis of the simplicity of the being. If Parmenides’ absolutism was possible, that happened exactly because of the presupposition that the Being, in its central position and perfection, was simple and not composite. That bred what Noica styles “the slothful naught of traditional ontologies, absolute negativity, the counterweight of being.”

Parmenides retains from being only its general term, that which crushes and disfigures the world under the grandeur of its apparition. If absolute being, the general that governs the real, is not, then absolute unfinished nothingness, opposed to the being, is not either. We can talk about non-being only by endowing it with a positive function within the real and conceiving it as a structured non-being, always a non-being of something specific.

A Brief Geography of Noica’s Being

Noica’s world could start thus: in the beginning there was chaos. But not a chaos of non-differentiation, of total homogeneity, of universal lethargy, as

⁸ C. Noica, op. cit., loc. cit.

⁹ C Noica, op.cit, p. 187

traditional philosophy seems to proffer, but one of extreme differentiation, of permanent heterogeneity and activity. This chaos of differentiation will begin all the specific worlds for it contains, “like the brownian movement of particles”, the three ontological terms: the individual, determinations and the general. But in this state, the I, D and G, though distinct, fail to get coupled and do not come together so that becoming may be possible. Not even the tendency of becoming can thus emerge¹⁰. These three terms give structure to the being, and the real comes from chaos by a coupling of the terms. Finally, only when the individual escapes the initial condition and acquires determinations that turn into a general sense can we say that something comes into being. Thus, the IDG ontological movement emerges.

Obviously, this means that the attribute of perfection of the being and its isolation into the transcendental have been thrown overboard. We are dealing now with a precarious being since the model is almost never saturated, and when a certain amount of saturation is obtained it cannot be long preserved. In other words, any of the three terms of the being can be absent, generating what Noica terms “the maladies of the spirit”.

At the end of things, we should think of naught, not a generic one as in the traditional vision, but one that is specific along three lines which function on the ontological tenet in action. Thus, there is 1. a non-being of the individual not yet emerged (nothingness as overvoid), 2. a non-being of the general not yet emerged (nothingness as a possible law) and 3. a non-being of determinations, a thing done and consumed since only a determination is left of it. It must be said that this specific non-being is not really an opposition to being, because things also come into being by what they are not, which accounts for the ontological function. In this sense, being expresses itself by what is not, not in ten ways as with Aristotle, but in an infinity of ways as functions of the naught in action.

The naught described already is a positive one, integrated into the being with a well-determined role in the economy of becoming. Something in the genre of a minus (of) being can be found at the level of the secondary non-being.

Secondary Non-Being

As we have seen, the IDG model by the absence or refusal of one of the terms of being, accepts precariousnesses. These, on the one hand play a positive role as they get the world out of chaos, and, on the other, play a negative role for they lack the strength of elevating it unto becoming. They offer the first and the most extended ontological level, embodying stunted becoming, a level

¹⁰ C. Noica, *Sentimentul românesc al ființei (The Romanian Feeling of Being)*, Bucharest, Editura Eminescu, 1978, p. 68.

where the biggest part of the uncreated material world as well as the vastness of the unfulfilled human world dwell, both individually and socially. “The world can be full of this secondary non-being” says Noica. “And if in the world of lifeless matter it is not striking, since here secondary non-being is the rule and being the exception, in exchange in the world of life and man (...) non-being and non-fulfillment are, in a way, a truly cosmic failure. This means only that the conversion has not occurred.”¹¹ Indeed, when the individual with determination cannot be converted to a general sense, there emerges what Noica dubs a reject being.

Another secondary non-being is pure and simple contingency which gets stuck in statistic and also the so-called *ontological morbidity* that exudes the exclusiveness of a single ontological term. Ontological morbidities can be represented either only by void individual (which is an ontological futility, and with man a spiritual one, too), or by void determinations (that bring ontological disorder into the real), or by the general void (which, for all the prestige of its possibility by itself alone is not capable of expressing being). All this is called morbidity because “in fact, the world *is not*, in the absence of exclusiveness of an ontological term.”¹² It shuts down access to being, while the precariousness already mentioned are not morbid since they couple two terms and can open up to a third.

Finally, it seems that neither this vast field of secondary non-being fails to cover alone that minus (of) being usually indicated by the word. With Noica there is another sense of naught which emerges with the reflection on the consciousness of ontological precariousness within “the maladies of the spirit”.

The Non-Being as a Sentiment of Void

How does this emerge? When the three terms of the IDG model are not coupled adequately, revealing an absence or a refusal of a term concomitantly with the excess of the other, then we deal with what Noica calls a malady of the spirit. These are small deformities, irregularities of the being indicating possible deviations, precariousness that is, from the rule of the ontological model. And since precariousness and not perfection is the rule of the real, these maladies can be found everywhere in the world. They are listed in Noica’s book *Six Maladies of the Contemporary Spirit*, where they are baptized functions of Greek etymologies accounting for the term that is absent or refused by the being. The maladies of the spirit are constitutive (they emerge because being admits precariousness) and positive in themselves (they are ontological stimuli for the real). We can therefore infer that they cannot be “cured”. Still, in the

¹¹ C. Noic, op.cit, p.92.

¹² C. Noica, op. cit., p. 92.

four types of non-being that they abide they can nurture forms of negative consciousness. They are as follows:

Un-wealing Naught is characteristic of the second form of *catholitis*, a malady of the one who is aware that he lacks the general sense that could fulfill him. Existentialism with its inadequate (in Noica's opinion) understanding of "nothingness" and anguish at this provides the best example of this type of naught. There are thinkers, like Kierkegaard, who get stuck in the individual and in determinations, not able to find a way of access to the general (in this case, God) of whom they are, nonetheless, aware. With French existentialism, through Sartre, things are even clearer, since existence determinations go explicitly before those of essence. "The movement, through determinations, from general, so harmonious with Plato, becomes tortuous here, since the individual eventually gets buried in determinations instead of opening up through them; the very meeting with the general, if it happens, "turns into a tremor", as the Danish philosopher puts it, not a coming to order.¹³ Rending naught is felt in the common form of the fleeting or things limited, even if not everybody perceives clearly that it is the absence of the general that makes everything come apart.

What existentialism fails to understand is the very fact that "nothingness is not annoying in a certain field of reality",¹⁴ as in various fields of research, chemistry, biology, etc, it has been proved that a void, an empty space can very well coexist with solids. What existentialism ignores is that it stumbled upon a certain naught, not an absolute nothingness. The void of being with its blocks can give sentiment of nothingness, and this is an unreality subtler than the void for "in the midst of an apparent solid it can prompt you to say: 'There is nothing here, in fact.' Consequently, there is no void but there can be naught (i.e. the sentiment of the void) when conversion to a general sense that gives consistency to determinations is absent."

Suspension Naught appears within *to detitis*, the absence of the individual and the excess of the general. It is a malady of perfection that characterizes, among others, the theoretical disposition of man, confiscated by a general sense that prevents access to the individual. This is the case of the great general entities and of their logical reflections. This naught of the suspension of things in the sensible world is more subtle than the rupture, and it is not by accident that it is a feature specific for Parmenides' being, "perfection stricken"

¹³ C. Noica, *Spiritul românesc în cumpătul vremii. Șase maladii ale spiritului contemporan (The Romanian Mind in the Balance of Time. Six Infirmities of Contemporary Mind)*, Bucharest, Editura Univers, 1978..., p. 268.

¹⁴ C. Noica, op. cit, p. 47.

and lacking in individual. It is the same with absolute space and time, the same with the principle of identity in logic. For if in the past suspension naught sprang from the consciousness of the incorruptible and of supreme perfection, in modernity it is expressed by man's need for exactness, the consciousness of the ideal and of the theoretical nature *par excellence*. Only the divine being managed to escape nothingness and the lack of identity of perfection through embodiment, says Noica.¹⁵

Culture Naught is generated by *atodetitis*, a malady of lucid refusal of the individual. It remains to be seen whether this type of naught is not the same with suspension naught for as that culture can lead, as Noica puts it, to "a musical sense of existence" and a suspension above all individual realities.¹⁶ The cultural naught is one of the *daemonia* of determinations with no anchor in the individual, which leads to a sentiment of loss when faced with the multitude of information we have to acquire. "The more we explore and learn, the more our ignorance grows instead of diminishing", Noica observes.¹⁷ So far nothing negative, yet the evil (and here the term has no negative connotation) arises only when we note that the accumulation of knowledge, be it for naught, has not been accompanied by one of meanings. This explains why there are big cultural trends, general orientations, knowledge techniques that, no matter how refined, say nothing at all or make room for this saying of nothing.

Extinction Naught characterizes contingent reality to the limit. It is generated by *acatholitis*, a malady of civilization that misses the ontological balance offered by the general sense. This is the case when the individuals that demand to be fixed by certain free determinations end up in the instability of particular cases that proliferate *ad infinitum*, trying to give a quantitative answer to the fundamental absence of sense. "Where is not even a trace of a general sense," writes Noica, "everything succumbs to the bad infinity of particular cases."¹⁸ Instead of doing justice to the humble real – a lifelong obsession with Constantin Noica – the result is a true sentiment of naught; this is how extinction naught emerges at the very core of the real, like a vast nothingness or a crude experience of nothing. But even when we do not attain the feeling of naught, at play is a universal contingency that can no longer be the sign of the positive, but at best of the "positivism" so detested by Noica. The negative sense of the contingent springs from the fact that it concentrates certain determinations on an individual situation, closing access to the being

¹⁵ C. Noica, op. cit., p 50;

¹⁶ C. Noica, op.cit, p. 108.

¹⁷ C. Noica, op. cit, p. 121.

¹⁸ C. Noica, op. cit. p. 18.

while the possible gives itself new determinations opening up to being. Thus the contingency of a situation becomes the extinction of its very possibility.

We end here the brief excursion into man's constitutive maladies and possible nullifications, to mention, though, that this does not represent a negative sign either, being "an ontological stimulus," as Noica put it. Sickness in a "bad" sense is only the consciousness of the fleeting, of the perishable and of the futility of any fact, and Noica admits it noncommittally without stressing the fact.¹⁹ "In exchange, the maladies of being, in other words of the spiritual being, have or can have something of a human positive in their deregulation. Man's disorder is his source of creation."²⁰ Unfortunately, at the height of metaphysical optimism, Noica rapidly expedites the question of the vain and of real sickness in man. "Let psychology and psychoanalysis deal with it", he seems to say in a chapter of *Six Infirmities of the Contemporary Mind*, shoving behind this formula his disapproval of anything that deals with "the poor soul" and is not a severe discipline of the spirit.

Preliminary Conclusion. There emerge three senses of nothingness in Noica's ontology that he constantly uses: a) non-being as a void of being inscribed in things; b) naught as secondary non-being in the guise of reject being, of ontological morbidity and contingency, c) naught as a sentiment of void: rupture, suspension, extinction, and culture. None of these senses indicates a converse to the being, something like a non-being but rather serene completion to it. What does then the word "naught" or "non-being" mean with Noica?

Negativity in Constantin Noica's ontology

The first clarification in this sense can be found in *The Romanian Feeling of Being*. Whenever non-being is envisaged at the beginning of things it throws thinking off balance and proves to be a false problem. The truth is that non-being makes sense only at the end of things, for these end in it. By toying with the concept of non-being, traditional philosophy did nothing but devise an arbitrary concept for its own use, just as arbitrary would be that of non-human, which would include in its sphere everything that is not human, i.e. something complementary to man. Just as artificial, Noica gives an example in the same style, was the concept of Anteros with the Ancients²¹, imagined as a completion for Eros. Similarly, the concept of non-being presupposes a complementariness of being, something that is not. As we have seen, Noica's being has no possible

¹⁹ C. Noica, op. cit. p. 30.

²⁰ C. Noica, idem.

²¹ C. Noica, *Sentimentul românesc... (The Romanian Feeling...)*, op.67.

completion, and the so-called non-being is just the cessation of the being and not a reality counterpoised to it. Finally, to make things clearer, we can say in true Noica spirit, that what has the strength of being *is*, even if embodied only for a moment, and *is not* what seems to be and merely presents a semblance of being. Only when we understand that the non-being is not a zero of being is it worth thinking about. First, as with Plato, we are dealing with an otherness in the face of that being (and here enter the already mentioned “adversities integrated in the being”: non-being, temporality, appearance, consciousness, becoming) and not real opposites to them. For “real incompleteness”, says Noica using a term that seems coined after Plato (ὄντως το μη ὄν, *the very being which really is what is not, ce qui est réellement irréel*), “what really is not” (Plato, *The Sophist* 258d-e) is a meaningless concept.

Thus, the question often invoked by the philosophical tradition: “Why is there something rather than nothing?”, a question that implies a zero of being setting out for the given thesis of total disjunction between being and non-being should be replaced in Noica’s opinion by a less nugatory one, namely: “Why is there something that should not be anything?”²² For we find everywhere realities that come into being risking any moment to crumble into non-being; at the very core of the world there can be things that are nothing itself since they lack the strength of being. The task of ontology is to account for and to seek the meanings of all these things with an appearance of being. “Ontology,” says Noica, “is a theodicy which instead of explaining about how a good divinity made a bad world, must see how evil (the deficiencies, shortages of the world) make possible the assertion of a good being and *is* its goodness. For the being sanitizes the real; it does not doom it.”²³

NOICA’S THEMATIC DIALECTICS

Still, more than a theodicy, ontology is for Constantin Noica a true *mathesis universalis*, entitled to reveal the structures on which spiritual life hinges. It begins in the footsteps of a revealing “already found”. This is the reason why the Romanian philosopher turns the Augustinian “You would not look for me if you had not already found me,” into the beginning and end of his philosophical thought, the still enigmatic coil which will unravel to capture the entire dialectics of the spirit. We will now try to review his dialectic approach, the basis of his circularity in knowledge and its progress at the same time with the criticism leveled at Hegel’s so-called linearity.

²² C, Noica, op. cit. pp. 80-81

²³ C Noia, *Tratat... (A Treatise...)*, p. 23.

Movement and Reflection

Noica's Already-Found Knowledge and the Circle of Consciousness. Returning to “You would not look for me if you had not already found me”, the epistemological conundrum seems founded for either you know the thing beforehand and then you cannot speak about something unknown or you don't know it at all and then there is no room for knowledge. “Only the traveler, he who has the way from the very beginning, can seek”, Noica underlines, further increasing the mystery.²⁴ In other words, we know only what we already have – just as on another plane we become only what we are (“*Werden was du bist*”) – and this already known, already been is the condition of all advance, of all possible becoming. In the act of knowledge it is not the external novelty that matters, but what turns thinking into progress towards something else, never ended. To the sophist thesis exposing the circle of knowledge as above (you either do not know, and then there is no seeking, or you know and then there is no unknown), Noica opposes what he calls the paradox of knowledge: thinking, in order to be progress, an advance to the not-known-before, should be able to regress at any moment.²⁵ Consequently, the act of thinking, far from going in a line, presupposes a return, a bending over to the beginning. Following in the footsteps of Plato's dialogue *Meno*, we should accept that we have access to knowledge only because there is pre-knowledge, movement to something else being impelled and at the same time interrupted by it. The vast movement of bending over oneself which is the intimate law of thinking in Noica's opinion, betrays a strange solidarity between permanence and topicality. The same is expressed by Aristotle in his theory of virtuality and actuality when he observed that the spirit actually learns something new by the fact that it already virtually possesses it... Augustin in his *De magistro* deems it the same for he asserts that novelty is possible only through the inner Christ, alien to novelty like permanence itself... Similarly, the rationalists with the theory of inborn ideas. The same happens with the aesthetic act: we are told that you can extract the beautiful from sensitive material only to the extent you have it beforehand.²⁶

For Noica, things are clear: “You would not look for me if you had not already found me”. This is expressed indirectly by the entire Platonist tradition of thinking ; it is the expression of a circle of *consciousness*, of a paradoxical circular search. It is with the circle of conscience that any philosophy begins and ends, if it is brought to account (i.e., if it is not mere disquisition on human knowledge but a metaphysics). Philosophical disciplines do not emerge as such, but at the moment they become aware of their circle and they submit it to the

²⁴ C. Noica, *Încercare... (An Essay...)*, p. 24

²⁵ C. Noica, *Încercare... (An Essay...)*, p.19

²⁶ C. Noica, *Încercare... (An Essay...)*, p.23

bigger circle of being. Cutting across Plato's tradition, Noica finds the same circle of consciousness, transgressing a methodological one-in-one of the authors he avowedly quotes the least: Martin Heidegger. "This seems to happen in Heidegger's conception where there is a circle and where the author himself admits the existence of a circle. He says (*Sein und Zeit*, ed. I, p. 314) that full understanding of the human real will come only from the clarification of the meaning of being; but until then, he seeks the meaning of the being in the human real. If it is a circle, the author implies, it is one he accepts. And what other than our circle is this circle of the being that makes possible the human real in the temporal horizon of which – in the consciousness of whose *becoming* – the being is to be sought?"²⁷ The presupposition lingers here that this philosophical consciousness is unitary and at the same time many-sidedly reflected.

Reflection at the Level of Matter. The Pythagoreans, who considered themselves prisoners in a world seven times fettered under seven superposed celestial vaults, had remarked the motion of the stars and intuited something of the circular motion of the spirit, Noica believes, since they deemed circular movement consummate. In this sense, if the Ancients had to be given any credit, it is for not having reduced movement to a purely exterior sense, but for having connected it more intimately to the nature of things. (So there is then the tendency of things, alive or lifeless, "to their natural place", some down as they pertain to low places, some up, like air and fire which find their natural place from which they had been detached and which they tend to regain.)

The intuitions of the Ancients aside, it must be said that the movement of the inorganic world has been generally perceived as exterior, as a spontaneous effect of a force or as an *open movement*, as Noica calls it, an unruly element that takes things out of their inertia, displaces or accelerates them. No matter how exterior and "open" it would be, it does not represent the first form of the inorganic world in the 27-step picture of the real. This is because in the beginning there was the *state*: first clumsy (solid, liquid or gaseous – like the earth, water and air, in the idiom of the Ancients), then subtle, inertial, with a certain consistency and possessing a fragile, provisional equilibrium. Eventually, the equilibrium is shattered and "open movement" emerges. Thinking, which has already become inured to the constant crumbling of things and places, has started sinking into these "calm strata of matter", finding there something that pertains to its own measure: "strains of order".²⁸

²⁷ C. Noica, op. cit, p. 35.

²⁸ C. Noica, *Douăzeci și șapte trepte ale realului (27 Stairs of the Real)*, Humanitas, 1998, I 2

By this, Noica reconstructs the beginning of the inorganic world, adding that it is the very movement which lends meaning to things. Not the one coming from outside to mingle them in a sort of exterior chaos, but a closed, *interior movement* of matter that barely enters into an orderly transformation. This is movement “wrapped up in itself”, deriving from an initial vibration and which comes to describe the orbit of a circle or of an ellipse, thus resulting in “fulfilled matter (...) capable of defining elements and things.”²⁹ At this level, the spirit reflects the state and its converse, bringing back movement to a state and elevating matter on a new stage in its development.³⁰ We will note only one more thing, namely that Noica distinguishes between the *passive reflection* of inorganic matter and the *active reflection* of organic matter. Thus, each organic individual, closed upon itself, seems to attract to itself in a centripetal movement everything that is other, assimilating and transforming “unto itself” what is difference, and the reflected circuit of organic matter would consist in this process.³¹

The Wave as a Privileged Manner of Reflection. The privileged, because original, form of transmission of the reflexiveness of matter at the level of the spirit is *the wave*. It sets the rule for the real, invading it until it fully becomes “a wrapping and an unwrapping of waves”.³² “The substance and manifestation of the world is given by the wave.” What the wave brings more than movement is the return of the movement on itself in reflexiveness and thus the transmission little by little not only of a content but also of a form of movement. At the level of matter, the wave does not convey anything further: what it achieves is a displacement of displacement, a rolling of the rolling, a pure form.

All this seems to Noica terribly similar to something treated as a rule as an opposite of matter: the spirit. This is, synthetically put, in what resides the transitivity of the wave at the level of the spirit. “The wave crosses all the categories penetrated: it is state and movement and identity and otherness, just as it is at the same time unity, plurality totality. It is true that all real embodiment pertained implicitly to all the categories put together. But the wave unfolds them explicitly and goes beyond them. It is what it is distributed without being divided; it is concentration in expansion; it is the being that becomes; it is One and Multiple alike; it is a way of being and of not being,

²⁹ C. Noica, op. cit., I.3

³⁰ C. Noica, op. cit. I. 3

³¹ C. Noica, II, 36

³² C. Noica, op. cit. Epilog la douăzeci și șapte de trepte: unda

genesis and extinction, transmission of something else which is but transmission of itself; it is the vehicle and the road included.”³³

Reflection in Ontology: The Closing That Opens up. As the phenomenon of reflection that we will take in focus plays a crucial role in the creation of thematic dialectics, we will briefly plunge into ontology to clarify it before we study its operation at the level of consciousness.

So, at the level of becoming unto being, to reflection in the wave phenomenon corresponds the original situation of the closing that opens up termed *semen entis* – a promise of being for the real. How does it emerge?

For Constantin Noica, ontology starts from the bottom, from things. In others words from principles to the real. Which accounts for the fact that the being – not that of Parmenides, the sublime principle *par excellence* – is to be sought in things themselves not in an inaccessible beyond. Things do not express the being but the void of being. The void of being makes room for further advance, it represents an opening and must be understood as a closure that opens up. This is how circularity at the level of being appears with Noica, as a permanent instability from things to being and from being to things. Thus, the reflexivity of being seems to reside in the trait of founding contradiction (actually, Noica also talks about the unbounding one, which impoverishes the real) of this original situation, simultaneously closed (through things) and open (to the being). This closing that opens us breeds a pulsation in the real that leads to being when it is an enhancing pulsation.

Thus, the closing mechanism that opens up is therefore a privileged situation both for the real and for thinking it over ; its *reflexive character* resides in its rationality expressed by:

- the entwining of philosophical investigation with things: “In binding things and thought there crops up a ‘situation’ that ties both things, in their states and process, and the thoughts over them”.³⁴ Thus through the union of the thing to the thing thought of we obtain Hegel’s “end of the road including the road”, already mentioned in the definition of the wave.

- the opening: the real and its investigation send further off, thus facilitating access to being.

- the circle in philosophical research: each moment of a reasonable concatenation turns back on the previous ones to give them purport ; and

- integration of an explanation in the previous system to account for all the already existing ones.

By its “reasonable” character, the closing that opens us leads to the connection of research with things, climbing through a circular structure “from

³³ C. Noica, op.cit, loc. cit.

³⁴ C. Noica, *Tratat... (A Treatese...)*, p.204.

things to their being and from here to being itself with possibilities to integrate other forms explaining access to being.”³⁵

In the table of traditional categories, to the original situation of opening closure corresponds the category of limitation uninhibitedly introduced by Kant (for how can one place limitation close to substance, totality or necessity?) which many commentators do not recognize as such and which Noica elevated to the rank of ‘category of categories’. True that the switch of the limitation category from a Kantian regime of tolerance to a cardinal point of Noica’s ontology is accompanied by a significant change of function: from the new vantage there are limitations that limit (for instance, dogmas, absolute truth) and limitations that do not limit (relative truths which can be integrated in new explicative systems). As this category has emerged in reply to the Spinoza-type observation of *omnis determinatio est negatio*, attracting the adequate Kantian answers according to which negation “does not deny but found”, Noica concludes that we are dealing here with limitation that does not limit. In the opinion of the Romanian philosopher, it is only capable of transposing in the logical register “the apparently irreducible register of quality”, with which begins a sort of presentiment of the dialectical” in thinking.³⁶

Reflection at the Level of Consciousness

By now we are with the opposition being-consciousness in the territory of reflection of things in the consciousness and the creation of a *logos*. Before going into reflexiveness at the level of the being itself, let us see how it emerges in human consciousness.

Quest of the Logos: “You would not look for...”. From the very beginning we must say that, for Constantin Noica, the very act of creation of the consciousness seems one of reflection. For he who lives in nature amidst wild beasts, fear, hunger, Eros and deed are the first dimensions that assert man’s muted communion with the other and with things. Eventually, the logos, as a human action *par excellence* will turn upon the first dimensions, changing them and thus allowing consciousness to emerge. By this reflection in itself of the consciousness circle, the essence of man as the fact-of being-in-another appears. “And yet with him there occurs something unprecedented: he is in another. Nobody was in another so far, everything was reduced to themselves; if they were causally concatenated it was for the very reason of being irremediably different.”³⁷ What makes man, unlike a mere living creature, be

³⁵ C. Noica, loc. cit.

³⁶ C. Noica, op. cit, --. 236-237.

³⁷ C. Noica, *Douăzeci și șapte... (27 Stairs...)*, III.24

reflected nature is his capacity to return to himself through another. For him, the relation with another is at the same time a relation with himself, just as the relation with the world by bringing things closer is also essentially a relation with himself. That is why Noica's category of community as defined in *Twenty-seven Steps of the Real* could be regarded basically as one of reflection. This being the case it is not people who create the community by association but the community as a whole that puts people in the world. Hence the idea of the *holomer* – smacking of Platonicist utopia – underlying the entire edifice of Hermes' logic: the consummate community is that where people as parts can rise through logos to the power of the entire they pertain to, while remaining individuals. This could start, setting out from the category of the community, a genuine history of limitlessness in Constantin Noica's philosophy. For it is from the community that man begins to reflect that stage of matter he himself represents: man.³⁸

But since the *logos* obtained firstly is a fragmentary one, it reveals rather the logical *daemonia* of the irrational, the fantastic jungle of the strangest of contradictory crossbreeds. And this because the *logos* initially obtained does not pertain to reason but to a single reason, incapable of placating the *logos-es*, mutilating the world under the mask of objectivity and logical intransigence. Thus was confirmed, for instance, in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. of the Greek culture, the rather irrational and falsifying *logos* of sophistry, revealing the full anarchism of which consciousness is capable. There cannot be order in this stage of assertion of the consciousness; we are dealing more readily with the anarchy of the *logos-es* among which reason cannot choose, with the shows of partial sense that takes sway over the real. Wishing to find an "objective" sense of the real, consciousness ends up in the anarchy of its own contradictions. This is secondary disorder, for Noica thinks there is no unmediated disorder, and consciousness itself is the guarantee of the order existing in the world.

Here the philosopher brings his personal touch: for reason to have this entire character it should be supported by something other than itself at the cost of its provisional negation.³⁹ This "something else" marks the end of the individual consciousness and the beginning of objectivity, of reason and liberty of a higher rank. Only now, with the resolve of escaping secondary chaos that the apparition of philosophical consciousness is called upon, for "any consciousness if it is consistent should become philosophical".⁴⁰

³⁸ C. Noica, op. cit., loc. cit.

³⁹ C. Noica, *Trei introduceri la Devenirea întru ființă*, Bucharest (*Three Introductions to the Becoming unto Being*), Editura Univers, 1984, pp. 35-37.

⁴⁰ C. Noica, op. cit., loc. cit.

With the emergence of philosophical consciousness there occurs also the re-cognition and consciousness of limitation: consciousness realizes that although the rationale of each previous *logos* had all the characters of rationality (logic, rigor, consistency, etc), still they all missed the universality of reason itself. Missing universality, they operated as autonomous organisms, devoid of the consciousness of being restricted and enclosed in their own fanaticism. The return to the awareness of limit as an expression of the impotence of primeval reason to obtain spontaneously its universality, marks a timid coming to order. Consequently, we have no direct knowledge of order but a re-cognition of it, mediated by the consciousness of the limit and the possibility of cutting across it.⁴¹ This is the privileged moment when freedom and necessity overlap.

...if you had not already found me”: Finding Universal Logos. Whereas initially reason had found a single *logos* present as a “horizon” or “a logical field”, where all the *logoi* are tied together and their assembly results in a logical structure. The universality of reason pertains to this very unification of the *logoi* in a whole, which union will be obtained by their successive integration. *The Dairy of Ideas* says this on the matter: “Man is a being that cannot obtain the good, knowledge, the beautiful all at once. He gets them at a second try. Man is an indirect, reflected being, lacking spontaneity. He must be reset. And with his resetting, things will get better reset too.”⁴²

By obtaining this integral *logos* the initial craving of the individual consciousness is confirmed: covering a circular trajectory, it finds parts from an initial whole, and each found part confirms itself as part and parcel of the whole while at the same time confirming it. Hypothetically, we have started from an ordering *logos* (posed or pre-supposed) felt as an organic whole, then it is found again piece by piece. Consequently, the whole precedes the part and the consciousness of the part, be it partial, makes possible its quest. If we admit this thesis we place ourselves again in line with the entire German idealist tradition in a paradigm that definitely breaks away from all sensible representation. From this vantage, thinking goes as in circles and only such a circle can defeat skepticism in knowledge. “If philosophical knowledge is possible, then it is in

⁴¹ C. Noica, op. cit, pp.40-42.

⁴² C. Noica, *Jurnal de idei (A Dairy of Ideas)*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1991, p. 24.

the circle” we are told in *Three Introductions to Becoming unto Being*.⁴³ In other words, Noica’s circular thinking does not operate by positing an order outside it, because then it would not go from a presupposed order to one found again, and the circle would be “illusory”. At best, in this case, consciousness could describe a linear trajectory from disorder inherent to it to an exterior order. But we could not speak of already established proper order. To describe a full circle, order cannot be a simple result, not even a mere point of departure; it must simultaneously be the “end of the road including the road”. In fact, we cannot be talking of any previously established order, no matter whether it is exterior or interior. Order is not something given, but is established, revealing itself in the act of philosophical cognition.

As regards universality, order becomes universal only after having unfolded, once “it has fully become aware of itself”, as Noica puts it.⁴⁴ Otherwise, “as far as we go, that much road we cover; we have the freedom to start on a journey or not, that is to engage in a philosophical quest or not; but once we started, the road is necessary. Human freedom consists in making emerge in the world what should be.”⁴⁵ To say that the act of philosophical cognition is not possible without this order that nonetheless does not precede it but appears at the same time with it is at least as legitimate as Kant’s creation of an *a priori* that is not prior in time to cognition, yet makes it possible.⁴⁶

Let us stop now to see the status of truth in this outlook. Order, once it has turned universal by the complete closing of the circle, becomes the *only possible foundation of philosophy*. Noica believes that the truth is not something specific, that can be indicated precisely; there is implicit rejection of the position according to which the place of the truth would be in enunciation (in step with Heidegger again), and the question “what is truth?” is considered nonsensical. The truth is in no way a universal principle, but from this new vantage, is an indication of how much order each philosophical consciousness can make emerge in the world. Thus, it is rather whole; it is the order in which we are and towards which we tend simultaneously without looking for it as for something determinate. The truth as a whole is this very order; what it is is superposed on what should be, existence is covered by essence, and freedom by necessity. We could talk about it as an agreement as it has already been addressed in the history of thinking, but for Noica it is not an agreement between consciousness and the object (the case of realism), or between consciousness and law (the case of idealism). It is a subtle agreement between “what appears in *its infinite unfolding* and what is in *its infinite legality*. From

⁴³ C. Noica, *Trei introduceri...*(*Three Introductions...*), p.45

⁴⁴ C. Noica, op.cit, p. 47.

⁴⁵ C. Noica, op. cit., loc. cit.

⁴⁶ C. Noica, op. cit. p. 48.

the vantage of philosophy, the truth is infinity.”⁴⁷ In other words, as much road as one has to cover, so much one manages to cover; similarly as much truth as one holds with it comes so much order. You are in the truth, and therefore in order if you have managed to be yourself, “vehicle and road at the same time”, the whole in all the moments of your unfolding, “living with nothing left out.”

Reflection at the Core of the Being

In the context of *Belonging unto Being* and *The Romanian Sentiment of Being*, the being is constantly turned upon itself, capable of limitation but also of limitlessness, of advance (“what would be to be”) and withdrawal too (“it was meant to be”), pushing constantly towards completion and sending things to one (being unto). The wavelike wrapping of the being around the real thus heralds its dialectic movement of the all-encompassing circle, which gets closer to things while drawing them apart from themselves and subjecting them by being subjected to them.

Dialectical Movement in Noica’s Ontology. Noica’s dialectic, which we have followed in its fundamental act of reflection is built step by step as a retort to Hegel’s, in whose footsteps of it clearly treads. We will try to present now the modifications Noica brought to Hegel’s dialectics, while also pursuing his own thematic dialectics. The purpose of these alterations is to prove the need to pass from Hegel’s linear trajectory of the thesis-antithesis-synthesis type to a circular one, in the theme-antitheme-thesis-theme genre. The change of thesis dialectics into a thematic one can render the wave movement of the spirit (along with that of being) and fully observe, if not the letter, then the spirit of Hegel’s dialectics. Let us now see how, with what means he achieves this change and its *de facto* legitimacy.

When he presents the circular trajectory of his dialectics, Noica takes as model the movement of Hegel’s reason, turning it into his own. This accounts for the fact that reason – which in this case corresponds to the consciousness of becoming unto being and represents the true original synthetic unity of thinking, – will follow, according to the prototype of category movement, the first dialectical circle. The three original terms at play in this circle are becoming, becoming unto being, and the being itself. Consequently, we will see a movement where the being has becoming as its own negative, then gets reintegrated by becoming unto being, while the latter operates as a mirror reflecting back into the being. The return to the term of the being is equated by Noica to the tendency of Hegel’s reason to proceed to the end,

⁴⁷ C. Noica, op. cit, p. 50.

coming to full “self-awareness”, i.e. being entire, *being* in truth.⁴⁸ Starting out from this situation, the first modification we meet is that of the order of the dialectical movements.

Hegelian order starts from becoming to get eventually to being, so the three terms should be regarded in succession: 1. Thesis (becoming), 2. Antithesis (becoming unto being), 3. Synthesis (being), which three terms cover a trajectory – according to Noica, – that is “regressively linear”. From Noica’s vantage the starting point would equally be the being to reach becoming unto being, so the same terms would take different positions: 1. thesis (being), 2. Antithesis (becoming), 3. Synthesis (becoming unto being).

For this succession of terms to pursue the real trajectory of the becoming unto being, becoming, which is thesis (and therefore in the first place) in the first triad will move to antithesis in the second triad; thus it contradicts not only the thesis but also the synthesis. Moreover, the antithetic term in the Hegelian order (becoming unto being) further complicates things as it turns into synthesis (the last place) with Noica. After these observations we have landed in a full chaos of terminology.

In order to escape this, Noica suggests the elimination of the terms “antithesis” and “synthesis” from the entire dialectical process, at the same time changing the relevant terminology. Therefore, in order to show that synthesis (becoming unto being) does in no way represent a situation of “rest” at which the dialectical movement would stop, Noica turns it into the moment of thesis that proceeds further to the theme of the being inside of which the entire process possible. Becoming unto being as thesis represents the affirmative moment of reason, its input, the way in which it asserts itself ‘as becoming unto what is and wrapping everything that is in this becoming, everything that is opened to the being.’⁴⁹ As thesis, this term is at the same time a synthesis (both becoming and being) not between a thesis and an antithesis but between a theme and an antitheme. “The input”, as Noica styles it, that is this very thesis, is in the end and gets asserted as a synthesis: it no longer emerges “neutral”, posits the Romanian philosopher, as Hegel’s synthesis between a thesis and an anti-thesis, both *aufgehoben*. On the contrary, it will direct the movement to the theme. As far as the theme is concerned, it is given by the term of the being; this cannot represent a simple thesis which one leaves and abandons but one from which one leaves but always tends to, the circular motion of the dialectic thus being closed. From this angle being is, *par excellence*, capable of orienting the dialectical trajectory in a sort of “magical circle” into which everything necessarily falls. “When it has started emerging as such, becoming unto being no longer wants to know of becoming pure and simple, of endless plurality, of

⁴⁸ C. Noica *Încercare...(An Essay...)*, p.74.

⁴⁹ C Noica, *Încercare...(An Essay...)*, p. 75.

negation, of simple causality and simple possibility; it tends to the being, that is to necessity.”⁵⁰ Thus Noica’s dialectics gets richer by a stage turning tetradic, instead of triadic, to observe the trajectory presented. Therefore there will be: 1. Theme (being), 2. Anti-theme (becoming), 3. Thesis (becoming unto being), and 4. Theme (being).

The conclusion that Noica himself draws at the end of this trajectory is that we are faced with a dialectic that has an entirely different sense than with Hegel; more precisely the linear dialectics thesis-antithesis-synthesis has turned in a circular one of the type theme-antitheme-thesis-theme. The following lines try to show to what extent Noica’s critique is justified and what thematic dialectics brings.

The Presupposition of the Unidirectional Thesis. We have already met in the repositioning of dialectical terms the presupposition of the thesis as a simple, unsynthetic term from which one departs in a linear trajectory in a neutral manner. Looked at from close quarters, Noica’s entire critique of Hegel’s dialectics seems to have adhered to a series of first-instance presuppositions, which he presents one by one.

The first presupposition to emerge is that of Hegel’s “unidirectional” thesis. We term it thus because it seems to best render the conception of the thesis in the Becoming unto Being. Thus, Noica believes that the thetic means “consent to loss and engagement into novelty”; it is the initial position, the point of departure destined to be abandoned for good, to which one never again returns. “You will sometime remember it, you will return over it and you will be able to say amidst another world and full of so many other deeds: here is where I started from, this is what made this journey possible (...) but you no longer recognize yourself in it and it no longer recognizes itself in you.”⁵¹

This thesis, understood as unidirectional, is opposed to Noica’s theme, capable of bringing along permanent communication between thesis and theme and thus the permanent presence of the theme in each moment of the dialectical development. The new which, thetically, is possible only by the irrevocable abandonment of the initial position now becomes a novelty to be achieved inside the way, in other words within the horizon of the theme. So, the theme “is permanently recognized in the thesis and this is just as constantly mirrored in the theme.”⁵² The role of reflection is that of maintaining in a permanent communication thesis and theme, the end of the road and the road itself, and by this reflection, the theme becomes the beginning towards which the dialectical act, at the end of its unfurling, always tends. Noica’s efforts to go from thetic to

⁵⁰ C. Noica, op. cit, p. 76

⁵¹ C. Noica, op. cit, p. 77.

⁵² C. Noica, op. cit., p. 78.

thematic and thus from the so-called irreversible of the thesis to the manifest reversible of the theme, will have two notable consequences at the concept level.

a. Conceiving the Theme as a Whole, not as a part as it was seen in the thetic. If the thetic brought the thesis to the fore as part in order to reach the whole, in the thematic a theme as an entirety is posited or pro-posed, and inside it the part is sought as capable of leading to the whole. The very approach, unconscious of itself, of common thinking is thematic: first one pro-poses something, a horizon, then one achieves within that initial pro-position. The same with philosophical thinking, only that this will be thematically aware of all its acts. Finally, the moment one has reached the limit of the horizon, one has already passed to another, and a different dialectical circle opens up. Thus, when the old theme is exhausted, a new entire is posed, a new theme. At the level of the immediate, this passage is explained by the fact that once a thing is completed, achieved, assimilated, it is itself plus something else.⁵³

By closing the circle, we have passed from a quantitative entity to a qualitative one, which no longer puts forth a totality of mere subsumption and in-corporation of the component parts but brings a “structured”, organized whole of reality. This presupposition of the anteriority of the whole to the part anticipates dialectically the principle that will underpin, later on, the logic of Hermes, namely, that the part cannot be subsumed in the whole on purely formal grounds, but everything should be thought out the other way round, starting from the parts which themselves rose to the power of the whole (the famous *holomeron*), coming to be part-entity, unitary, non-subsumable. In the end, no matter how reluctant he is to admit it, Noica comes to corroborate Hegel’s conclusion: “*Das Wahre is das Ganze*” from *The Phenomenology of the Mind*.⁵⁴ “But the entire is just the essence that is completed through its unfolding.” Through the thematic, the initial whole is again obtained, but this is new at another of its unfolding, one of fullness.

b. The Setting up of the Being. No doubt, there must exist a reason for which Noica achieves all this movement of pieces inside the Hegelian picture. What he himself declares in *Essay on Traditional Philosophy* is the risk of losing being.

Setting out from the being as from a thesis not from a theme can be the biggest mistake of philosophy since the thesis is doomed to loss, and this would mean the being would be lost

⁵³ C. Noica, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁵⁴ C. Noica, *Încercare... (An Essay...)*, p. 101

(...) in exchange. Here in the thematic, the being does not for a single moment get lost, though neither is it obtained otherwise than as the ideal end of dialectical movement.⁵⁵

Noica reproaches Hegel's philosophy that from the very beginning it *sets up* as thesis a being that is superbly valid and incorruptible, even if prone to unfurling, instead of starting from a "weak being", for only thus can one discover what a consummate being is.⁵⁶ As compared to Plato's variant of dialectics that starts from the individual to get to the being, Hegel's begins with the general; Noica classifies this as a rather "romantic" model, and consequently unsatisfactory.⁵⁷

Is Noica's idea of a consummate being justified? Hegel's prior universality in the concept of beginning is not actually a "fulfilled being," as the Romanian philosopher seems to believe; it refers rather to being as pure potential, not covered with any sort of reality. Hegel's concept of beginning has as a basic characteristic its immediacy, in other words, it is an empty concept from the point of view of content. It is what Noica calls "first-instance being" or "what is rather not"; it has being, but makes you say "here there is nothing, in fact." This immediacy corresponds in Hegel to pure being or to the being in general. It is being and no more, devoid of any other determination or content. Along the trajectory of self-cognition and self-realization the pure being acquires determinations that reveal and turn the content of the being into reality. In this sense, to know equals to realize.

There is no establishment of a "consummate being": in the sense of Hegel, a so-called "thesis" as part, as Noica understands it. It is a "theme" to the very extent it is "entirety," and from the very beginning and by reflection it engenders a turn upon itself in the variant of the "consummate being". Its movement, far from being linear, as indicated in Noica's critique, denotes both progress and even more regress. Progress is progress only because it is the regress of the self-movement of the content, in step with the passage from the less determinate to the more determinate, from the less known to the more known. The consummate being is the background being – the second-instance being or something deeper into the thing than the thing itself", as Noica liked to put it. That *arrière-fond* to which the being or the pure being in its immediacy necessarily directs one.

⁵⁵ C. Noica, op. cit. p. 78.

⁵⁶ C. Noica, *Tratat... (A Treatese...)* p. 267. See also *The Romanian Feeling...* p. 51. : "Hegel's being, the Spirit, is proposed massively and absolutely, and its dialectical role rather explains than justifies it. It is, too, what it is, respectively what it becomes."

⁵⁷ C. Noica, *Tratat... (A Treatese...)*, p. 259.

The Presupposition of Hegel's Linearity. The fact that Noica interprets Hegel's dialectics as a linear trajectory is at least odd, given that as a contemporary of Alexandre Kojève he had witnessed the birth of the most famous circular interpretation of Hegel's philosophy.⁵⁸ It is even more strange as *Becoming unto Being* systematically denounces linearity and proposes explicitly as task the rephrasing of Hegel's logic, with its dialectical trajectory and all: "We are therefore faced with the task of thinking: *how is this logic possible other than through a linear dialectics?* It may appear presumptuous even though no longer nugatory, but may lead to a rethinking of Hegel's *Logic*."⁵⁹

It may be useful to note that the Hegelian method, where being is the concept and bears the name of dialectics maintains the objective and the subjective within the same logical unit, so that no separate context is possible. Method and content are inseparable and not to be separated. Hence the formal circularity of the dialectical trajectory. That is why the Hegelian *Doctrine on the Being* could assert that the ensemble of the method is "like the line of a circle enclosed by itself where what is foremost is also last, and what is last is also foremost."⁶⁰ What Hegel calls here "last" is "the outcome" of movement, i.e. "that something to which movement returns as to its foundation"; which means that what is last can be equally deemed first, the latter being considered a derivative. From the point of view of content, dialectical movement covers the trajectory of the concept from the initial concept in-itself, through the concept-for the self to the concept-in-and-for-the-self mirrored through progressively acquired determinations. Obtaining the determinations proper to the concept requires a return to the initial concept, thus reaching the stage of a reflected concept. The role of Hegelian reflection is return to itself of the content and through it, obtaining a concept that knows itself as concept-reflected-in-and-for-itself.

⁵⁸ Alexandre Kojève's lectures on Hegel at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes of Paris stretched over 1033-1939 and enjoyed if not a numerous at least an extremely select attendance: Georges Bataille, Raymond Queneau, Jacques Lacan, Eric Weil, Raymond Aron, Merleau-Ponty, Jean Hyppolite. As between 1938 and 1939 as a fresh graduate of the University of Letters and Philosophy, University Bucharest Noica enjoyed a year of training in Paris it is not out of the question that he should have attended too the celebrated seminar. Unfortunately, the selection of texts published in Romanian translations (*Introduction to the Writings of Hegel*, Editura Biblioteca Apostrof, Cluj, 1996, trans. Ed. Pasternague) excludes exactly the part referring to dialectics, which would have been most revealing.

⁵⁹ C. Noica, *Încercare... (An Essay...)*, p.100.

⁶⁰ G.W.F.Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik (The Science of Logic)*, p. 53

It is almost certain that the Romanian philosopher had knowledge of Hegel's circular dialectics, since at the end of this rephrasing he expressed doubt that Hegel's dialectics would necessarily look as he presented it (how would reason find itself if the thetic system had been only loss?). Nonetheless, he underlined that this was how dialectics, after Hegel, had often been perceived and interpreted. In addition although it has never operated from a thetic vantage, either in philosophy (not even with Hegel himself) or in history, post-Hegel interpreters openly advanced the thesis-antithesis-synthesis model, but actually also used the thematic one, in four steps, returning to the initial term.⁶¹

Under the circumstances, the question still remains: What did Constantin Noica actually want? To turn thetic dialectics into a thematic one meant to reformulate Hegel's logic or to refute the post-Hegel Marxist interpretations promoted by the then ruling party? The answer is not at all indifferent if we take into account the fact that reason's trajectory, when curved back to its foundations, triggers a fundamental change of the sense of history that no longer advances blindly but makes possible the recovery of memory without which a historical community cannot survive. Thus, Noica's dialectics ceased being a mere philosophical method, actually becoming a living cue at the table of history when the cards were being played...

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⁶¹ C. Noica, *Încercare... (An Essay...)*, pp. 77-78.

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Chapter V

Alexandru Dragomir: Notebooks from the Underground

Gabriel Liiceanu

On 15th June 1944, a postcard from Freiburg arrived at number 45 Strada C.A. Rosetti, Bucharest, addressed to Alexandru Dragomir. On it was a single sentence, followed by eleven signatures: *Lieber Sänduc, verdient haben Sie einen Gruß nicht, darum viele Grüsse.* (Dear Sänduc, you don't deserve a single greeting, so here are many greetings.) One of the signatures was Heidegger's; the others were those of the doctoral students with whom Heidegger customarily drank a beer at the end of each semester in the *Zum Roten Bären* pub – “the oldest in Germany” according to the imprint on the postcard, which shows an imposing bear and above it the year from which the Red Bear pub had functioned without interruption: “erected around 1120”. The card was postmarked 16th May 1944 and had taken a month to arrive. One can easily imagine how it had been passed from hand to hand around the long table of varnished oak, gathering the signatures of those ten young people, some of whom, probably only recently, had reached the age of 25, and their professor, who, at 55, was at the height of his university career. “I wonder what Sänduc's up to?” one of them had called across the table. Or perhaps Heidegger himself, taking out the black notebook in which each member of his doctoral seminar was listed, had asked: “*Und Herr Dragomir? Haben Sie Nachrichten von Ihm?*” (Is there any news of Mr Dragomir?) Obviously there was none.

THE START OF THE RACE: FROM TRANSYLVANIA TO THE OLD KINGDOM AND ON TO FREIBURG IM BREISGAU

Alexandru Dragomir had left Heidegger's seminar, and thus ceased to be a part of the *Zum Roten Bären* ritual, six months earlier, in October 1943. He had clearly been very dear to his colleagues and especially appreciated by Heidegger himself, whose seminar reports (*Scheine*) – carefully preserved among Dragomir's papers as traces of his passage through a world that in time had become unreal – record each time the doctoral student had participated in such and such a “seminar exercise” “*mit großem Fleiß und ausgezeichnetem Erfolg*” (with great enthusiasm and exceptional results).

Dragomir had arrived in Germany, at the University of Freiburg, in September 1941. He was 25 years old, and had already graduated from two

faculties in Bucharest – the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, the former in 1937 and the latter in 1939. He had come to the capital from Cluj, attracted both by the resonant names of the professors of the University of Bucharest, and by the need to get over a certain “provincial complex” which more than a few young Transylvanian intellectuals felt after the creation of the Greater Romania.

Dragomir came from an excellent family of Cluj intellectuals. Both his paternal grandfather, who came from Gurasada, and his maternal grandfather, from the village of Domini, were notaries. The latter was particularly well off. He owned a veritable country estate, with vineyards spread over the hillsides, a large orchard, and a tennis court in the garden. When the young Sănduc came with his brother Virgil (Bubu), his elder by one year – later a professor at the Polytechnic – to spend vacations there, at Domini, a carriage would be waiting for the children at the station. Not long after the birth of the two boys, their father, Alexandru Dragomir, was appointed advocate to the Central Bank in Cluj, and a few years later he became head of the Cluj Bar. Sănduc’s uncle, his father’s brother, was the well-known historian Silviu Dragomir. His mother (“Maya”, as her husband called her in his letters) was heir to her family’s property, so in 1940, when Transylvania was partitioned after the Vienna Diktat and many Romanians from Cluj took refuge in the south, the Dragomirs were well able to buy two apartments in Bucharest: that at 45 Strada C.A. Rosetti (where the whole family, the parents and their two children, were to live for a while, and where the postcard from Freiburg was to arrive), and another at 3 Strada Arcului, in his mother’s name, which was to become Dragomir’s home from 1974.

The young Alexandru, who had received his high school education between 1926 and 1933 at the “University Pedagogic Seminary” in Cluj, where he was graded “exceptional” in Romanian, Latin, Greek, French, German, History, Physical-Chemical Sciences and Gymnastics, arrived in Bucharest at the age of 17 in 1933. He had some difficulty in adapting to the atmosphere of irreverent frivolity that characterized the student community of the Old Kingdom. That Bucharest style of knowing superficiality, as he once told me, put all Transylvanians, at their first contact with this world, into a state of acute stupefaction. Mihai Şora, who knew him at the end of his period of philosophical study, and especially during his military service at Craiova (which Dragomir completed between November 1937 and November 1938), describes him as a reserved young man who was then living through his first important sentimental experience. (Later, in the 1940s, echoes of an agonizing amorous sequence appear in the journal of Jeni Acterian – *Journal of a Being Who is Hard to Please* – where, towards the end, there appears a mysterious “S”, whose dazzling irruptions, followed by prolonged absences, filled the young author with anguish and perplexity.)

1939, the year of Dragomir's graduation from the Faculty of Letters, was also the year of his first call-up. He managed, at the end of 1939 and the beginning of 1940, to pass his examinations for a doctorate in law, but was called up again in July 1940, and remained "under arms" throughout the flight from Transylvania. Realizing that because of these repeated call-ups he would not be able to complete his doctorate, he came to the conclusion that the only solution was an extended period of studies abroad. His first stop was at Breslau (Wrocław), where for four months, from March to June 1941, he attended lectures and seminars in Greek, Latin and German. His aim was to obtain certification of his knowledge of Greek, without which he could never aspire to become a member of Heidegger's doctoral seminar.

He returned to Bucharest for the summer, and in September 1941 we find him a doctoral student of Heidegger, enrolled in the *Philosophisches Seminar* (Faculty of Philosophy) of the Albert Ludwig University in Freiburg, where Heidegger had been giving lectures and holding seminars every year since 1929. On 31st October 1941, he received his "*Studienbuch*", or student record book, in which all the classes attended by the student are recorded, with the professor's signature alongside each subject. His philosophical studies in Romania were recognized as equivalent to four semesters (two years), so he was enrolled in Freiburg in semester five. He lived at number 52 III Schillerstrasse and held a scholarship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

THE PARADISE OF FREIBURG

What did Dragomir study at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Freiburg? In the first place, the lectures and seminars of the "master", as Heidegger's doctoral students called him. In the two years (four semesters) that Dragomir spent in Freiburg, Heidegger delivered a lecture of one hour and held a seminar of two hours every week. Dragomir's student record book records his attendance at the following courses, in order: *Hölderlin's Hymnen* (two semesters), *Parmenides und Heraklit* (one semester) and *Heraklit* (one semester). What were Heidegger's seminars? Winter semester 1941-42, *Einübung in das philosophische Denken*; summer semester 1942, *Hegel, "Phänomenologie des Geistes" I*; winter semester 1942-43, *Aristoteles, "Metaphysik" IX*; summer semester 1943, *Hegel, "Phänomenologie des Geistes" II*. The seminars were particularly useful to Dragomir, as the thesis that he was going to write under Heidegger's supervision was precisely about Hegel's concept of mind.

What did the Heideggerian seminar look like? How many people took part? Were they all trained in philosophy? Did they come from all corners of

the world? Was there any other Romanian in the seminar? What became of Dragomir's colleagues later on?

Neither from Dragomir's archive, of which I shall speak more later, nor from our discussions after I came to know him can we find an answer to all these questions. The truth is that, since we can never imagine our future curiosities, we do not know how to take full advantage of the time with the people we meet. There is in any relationship with contemporaries a sort of inertia fed by the way in which we have become accustomed to spontaneously prolong the present, as if those with whom our destinies intersect are going to last indefinitely. We are basically unable to decipher in the present the consequences of a future absence, and the disaster brought on by the silence of those who depart from the stage before us always takes us by surprise. Sometimes we are even inclined to accuse *them* of not answering our questions and of not fulfilling, in their lifetime, the duty of witnesses, not having written their memoirs *in time*.

Fortunately in our case, one of the leading members of that seminar, who set out for Freiburg almost at the same time as Dragomir, has spoken at length about the period in which we are interested. I have been able to ask him all the questions that, from lack of imagination, I failed to ask Dragomir. The man in question is Walter Biemel. A native of Braşov, Biemel arrived at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in Bucharest a year after Dragomir. They got to know each other only in Freiburg, but the fascination of the adventure in which they shared quickly brought them together. Being on the spot, it was they who made the first translation into Romanian of a Heideggerian text – the 1929 lecture *What is Metaphysics* – which was published in the 50s in a journal of the Romanian exile in Paris.¹ After the war, Biemel worked for some years in

¹ The story of the translation, as Walter Biemel reported it is as follows: As soon as the two had decided to put into Romanian the inaugural lecture (*Antrittsvorlesung*) that Heidegger had delivered in the *Aula Magna* of the University of Freiburg on 23rd July 1929, on the occasion of his appointment as full professor (*Ordinarius*) in the post left vacant by the retirement of Husserl, they began to work at Biemel's lodgings, in a two-room apartment in Dreisamstraße. They had received Heidegger's blessing in advance. What amazed Biemel about Dragomir was his extraordinary feeling for language. It is clear that the two of them, working together, became close friends. When it was finished, the translation was sent to Nicolae Bagdasar, who worked in a Bucharest publishing house, but the response was not long in coming: the publication of a text by Heidegger in Romanian was not possible as Heidegger was *persona non grata* in the eyes of the German authorities. For Biemel, this was no more than a confirmation of what he had already experienced in Bucharest, at the German Embassy, when he was about to leave for Freiburg. Asked which particular professor he intended to pursue his

Belgium as a researcher in the Husserl archives, before returning to Germany, where he became for a time a close associate of Heidegger, and one of the most authorized commentators on the latter's work. In the last year of his life, Heidegger established with him the general lines of the more than eighty volumes that were to make up his famous *Gesamtausgabe* ("Complete Works").

I had the good fortune to meet Biemel in 1971, in Aachen, where he was professor in the *Philosophisches Seminar*, when I was sent to him with a recommendation from Noica. He later agreed to be my *Betreuer* (supervisor) in 1982-84, when I was in Heidelberg with a Humboldt scholarship. In the meantime, I had read his text *The Professor, the Thinker, the Friend*, written in 1977, a short time after the death of his master, for *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* and reprinted in 1983 in the issue of *Cahiers de l'Herne* dedicated to Heidegger. In these pages there was an excellent evocation of the atmosphere surrounding Heidegger's lectures and seminars at the beginning of 1942, when Biemel arrived at Freiburg for doctoral studies, as Dragomir had done the semester before.

Yet I was still missing the details. And so I decided to write to Biemel. I did so as I prepared to start writing about Dragomir, at Christmas time, with dozens of questions in my mind about that moment in their lives that seemed more and more to me to have been the paradise of Dragomir's life, or in any case the place from which the fall was soon to come. Together with that text from the German philosophy journal, the pages of the letter that I shortly received back from Biemel at last opened up for me this world that had begun to occupy my thoughts, and from which, after exactly 60 years, that postcard from the Red Bear pub had reached me as a unique sign. Those eleven collegial signatures, which – apart from that of Heidegger himself – had hitherto lacked any real correspondent for me, were now instantly transformed into beings of flesh and blood, and, by a miraculous reflex, they conferred on Dragomir, isolated in the abstraction of his solitude, that identity that an individual can only obtain through relating to others, and through his particular way of emerging from the communal being in which he resides.

From Biemel's letter, I discovered that Heidegger's seminar was made up of fifteen members, and was a veritable closed community, for express

doctoral studies with, Biemel named Heidegger. "He is very ill," came the reply. "He gives a lecture from time to time, but they have to bring him into the lecture theatre on a stretcher. You'd do better to think of someone else." Great was Biemel's surprise when he arrived in Germany and saw Heidegger entering the lecture theatre with his air of an Allemanic forester (thanks to the appropriate costume), as fit as could be, vigorous and sun-tanned. The translation was eventually published in Paris, where it had, of course, been sent by Biemel, thirteen years later in 1956, in Virgil Ierunca's journal *Caiete de Dor*.

admission and constant attendance were obligatory: occasional participation and sitting in were not permitted. The “fifteen” took up their places around three tables arranged in a horseshoe, while for Heidegger himself there was a small table placed in the open side. Behind this table there was a blackboard, on which from time to time he would write an important word. When Biemel first saw Heidegger, at the beginners’ seminar, the latter’s clothing took him by surprise: “Against the background of murmuring that filled the room, there appeared a man of small stature, with a sun-tanned face, dressed in trousers fastened under the knee, three-quarter length stockings, and a traditional jacket, in other words the costume of the Black Forest, which I was quite unaccustomed to...” The seminars were based on a text announced beforehand, but each time the emphasis was not on previous knowledge and cultural references, but on the capacity of the participants to think for themselves and to express themselves beyond the level of clichés and conventional terminology.

Who, apart from Dragomir and Biemel, were the other thirteen participants at the seminar? First of all there was Heidegger’s assistant, Therese Gisbertz, who was preparing a doctoral thesis on Kant and whom Biemel described as a “sensitive and discreet” person. After the war she became a teacher of philosophy in a high school in Ruhrgebiet. Then there was Georg Picht, the director of the Plato archive in Birklehof Hinterzarten, whose signature appears in Dragomir’s student book for a seminar on Plato in the seventh semester. Picht’s wife, Edith Picht-Axenfeld, a well-known pianist, also attended from time to time – the only exception to the rule. Later, in his evocation of Heidegger, Picht would tell how, immediately after the war, in his “retirement” from Freiburg to Meßkirch, he stopped briefly with the Picht. “At Heidegger’s request, my wife played Schubert’s Sonata in B Flat Major. When the final chords of the music had died out, Heidegger turned to me and said: ‘We, with philosophy, are not capable of such a thing.’”

Perhaps the most brilliant member of the seminar was Margherita von Brentano, who occupies a special place in the letter, perhaps due to the fact that she was the best friend of Marly Wetzl, another member of the seminar and Biemel’s future wife. Thus it was that Biemel himself would remain close friends with Margherita until her death in 2001. Among the papers that Dragomir kept from his Freiburg period are two superb photographs of Margherita von Brentano. Her face, dominated by a smile at once friendly and distant, is framed by her chestnut hair, which pours wildly over her shoulders after it has been prevented by tight clasps from falling on her forehead. Margherita von Brentano came from an elect family. Her father, Clemens von Brentano, had been German ambassador to the Holy See. Sensing already in 1932 the disaster that was about to fall on Germany, he resigned from his post, and was able to return to Rome after the war in the same function and with his dignity intact. Her uncle, Heinrich von Brentano, would become Foreign

Minister. The doctoral student herself, who was working under Heidegger on a thesis on Aristotle, “had an acute mind”, according to Biemel, and “an excellent capacity to formulate”. After the war, she worked for a while as a radio journalist at Südwestfunk, and then at the end of the 1950s she was invited by Weisschedel to be an assistant lecturer in the Freie Universität Berlin, where she made a special study of anti-Semitism and became active in left-wing politics. Biemel describes her as “a fascinating person”, unhappy in marriage, smoking heavily, and living her last years in total dependence on an oxygen tank.

The other members of the seminar were: a Dutch doctor in love with philosophy, Jan van der Meulen, who later published a book about Heidegger and Hegel; a Yugoslav (Biemel had forgotten his name), who remained in Germany after the war as a forestry worker; a Catholic priest, Schumacher; an art critic, Dr. Bröse; a Hellenist; a young assistant lecturer from the Department of Germanic Studies; a philosopher who was preparing his doctorate and later became professor in Vienna; a Japanese diplomat, Takesi Kanematsu; and finally another Romanian, Octavian Vuia.

It is worth noting Octavian Vuia, as a reminder that even Heidegger did not work miracles, that mere presence in the vicinity of his mind could not transform a mediocrity into a genius. Certainly in Paris, where he became a researcher at the Centre National de Recherches Scientifiques, Vuia made much for a time of the capital of excellence with he was automatically endowed by his membership in the Heideggerian seminar. He entertained Romanian émigré circles with his well-told tales of how Heidegger used to ski, how he put on his coat, or how he coughed. His 50-60 page booklet about the pre-Socratic philosophers which once came into my hands was, at best, of secondary school level. He was tall and good looking, and according to Virgil Ierunca, the Parisian Romanians with whom he came in contact nicknamed him “Vuia-the-Majestic”. Heidegger once told Biemel how, long after the closure of the Freiburg seminar, he received a letter from Vuia. Since he liked to follow the progress of his students and to know their destiny, he eagerly opened the letter, hoping that he would learn of Vuia’s development in the philosophical environment of Paris. He was disappointed.

As far as Dragomir was concerned, Biemel confirmed for me that he enjoyed Heidegger’s special appreciation. He was in any case one of the leading figures of the seminar. When a prolonged silence reigned in the room after a difficult question had been addressed to the participants, Heidegger would turn his head in Dragomir’s direction and say: “*Na! Was sagen die Lateiner?*” (“Well, what do the Latins say?”) And “Dragomir the Latin” loved to provoke Heidegger, and, whenever he got the chance, to contradict him. When, for example, the master affirmed, along the lines of the paragraphs on “readiness-to-hand” in *Being and Time*, that there are no such things as pure

objects, but only objects given significance in a context of use – a chair, for example, is “something for sitting on” – Dragomir retorted: “How can you explain then, Herr Professor, that there are chairs in the museum with the inscription ‘Please do not sit here’?”

I often wondered, in his late years when I knew him, why Dragomir almost never felt the need to return, in a commemorative sense, to his Freiburg period, and to tell us stories of “back then”. He was probably afraid that the almost mythical proportions of the moment that had constituted his life might fix him, in the eyes of others, in that single determination of the beginning. He did not want to remain “the one who was lucky enough to be in Heidegger’s proximity for a while”. And yet, how had he felt then, caught in the ray of the personality of a thinker like Heidegger? Once only, he told us with a laugh: “At the start of one lecture, Heidegger said to us: ‘To think means compromising yourself.’ That put me at ease: right, I said to myself, I can manage that, sir!”

Apart from philosophy, students in the *Philosophisches Seminar* also studied art history and European literature intensely, with a special emphasis on Greek culture. In his first semester (Semester V), Dragomir’s *Studienbuch* mentions Professor Paatz’s course of *Kunstgeschichte* (Art History) – four hours per week – and a course of one hour per week on *Don Quijote* with Professor Carvallo. In his second semester (Semester VI), Paatz has a two-hour course on “Roman Art”, and Professor Schuchardt, a two-hour course on classical Greek sculpture (*Polykleitos und Phidias*). The next semester (Semester VII) is dominated by Paatz’s course on German gothic and Picht’s seminar on Plato. Finally, in Dragomir’s fourth semester (Semester VIII), there is a one hour course with Schuchardt on the Greek temple, and a three hour course with Professor Nestle on Sophocles. Apart from Heidegger’s lectures and seminars and the Plato seminar, the philosophy programme also included, in Semester V, a synthetic course of two hours per week on the history of modern philosophy with Professor Reiner. That was all. There were never more than eight hours of lectures and seminars. The rest of the time was devoted to preparing seminar reports (at the start of a seminar, one of the students, *à tour de rôle*, had to present an account of the preceding seminar – in this way the texts of Heidegger’s seminars have been preserved), hours of individual discussion with the professor (*Sprechstunden*),² and reading for one’s thesis.

² Alexandru Dragomir once described to me a *Sprechstunde* with Heidegger. He had gone to the professor with eight questions relating to his doctoral thesis. Heidegger told him to ask them all at the beginning. He did not make a note of them, but after he had heard them, he began to answer each one in turn with a precision, a finesse and a depth that astonished the Romanian student. “I had never before seen, and I have never seen since, such a display of the splendour of the

There was of course, also plenty of free time. And Dragomir loved walking, swimming, tennis, skiing, dancing. Three photographs from the Freiburg period show him in emblematic sporting postures: either in a spectacular turn on the ski slope, or taking a backhand stroke on the tennis court, or in the middle of a trampoline jump, projected into the air, with his arms wide open, his body impeccably arched. One photograph shows him standing at the pool, in a black swimming costume (trunks and tee-shirt in one piece), beside Margherita von Brentano. He is short, extremely supple, with well-formed muscles. In another photograph he is dancing, *très assuré*, with his hair combed back over his temples – he is seen in profile – a high forehead and a prominent nose, looking solemnly and dominantly at his partner, who seems to let herself be completely taken possession of, as though hypnotized. All the photographs give a feeling of something lively and agile, the air of a wild cockerel, a sort of well reined-in frenzy that knows that it must submit to an intelligence sure of itself and ultimately capable of controlling everything. This explosion of proud vitality, spiritually diverted, probably explains the impressive power of seduction that Dragomir enjoyed. If to this portrait we add the gaze of blue eyes with a metallic inflexion, a permanently good disposition (*er strahlte Fröhlichkeit aus*, according to Biemel) and the *witzig* quality of his personality (that ease with which he could always come up with a witty turn of phrase), then we can well imagine what his presence for two years meant in a Germany almost emptied of its male population. Among the photographs are two “artistic” portraits (by *Kunst-Photo, Lemberg, Akademiestrasse 12*) showing a feminine beauty of the Ingrid Bergman type, severe and warm at the same time. On the back of one of them is written in blue ink: *Ich bin immer Dein. Weihnachten '43. Rosita* (“I am ever yours. Christmas '43. Rosita), and on the other *Für Alex, zum Weihnachten '43, von Deiner Rosita* (“For Alex, at Christmas '43, from your Rosita”).

Strangely, for all Dragomir enjoyed participating in the group life of his little academic world, he was quiet and reserved when it came to his own work. They all knew that he was working strenuously, that he was preparing a thesis on Hegel, and that he considered it a veritable godsend that Hegel happened to be the main focus of Heidegger’s seminar just in the period when he arrived at Freiburg. But while other members of the seminar let it be known what they were reading and kept talking about the themes of their papers, Dragomir showed an almost pathological discretion when he was asked how his work was going. He would become suddenly bashful, and whoever had been imprudent enough to ask about the stage of his research would get a vague answer and be left feeling that they had unknowingly penetrated his space of

human mind. I emerged from my first *Sprechstunde* stunned, convinced that I had had the good fortune to meet a genius in flesh and blood.”

supreme intimacy. This particularity, which was to find its theoretical expression in his description of life as a territory sharply divided between the “secret” and the “common” (the “intimate” and the “public”), would last until the end of his life: he never spoke to anyone about “what he did”, and until his death no one could answer the question whether Dragomir had ever practised any of the generally known genres of writing, either philosophical treatises, studies, essays, or simple notes.

FAREWELL, HEIDEGGER! THE CLOSING OF THE WAYS

From this paradise, at once academic, sporting and erotic, Dragomir was snatched in October 1943, when he was recalled to Romania for mobilization. In vain Heidegger provided him on 26th September with a *Bescheinigung*, an attestation that “Mr Alexandru Dragomir has progressed significantly” with his thesis on Hegel’s metaphysics, and that only “a few months would be sufficient for him to bring his paper to a fitting conclusion and to end his studies in Freiburg with a doctoral examination crowned with success.” He was enrolled in the 7th Army Corps, and later in the Battalion of Guards. He was demobilized, with the rank of sergeant, in November 1944, having served, immediately after Romania’s *volte-face* on 23rd August, on the western front from Dumbrăveni to Cehul Silvaniei. He would find the postcard that his seminar colleagues sent on 16th May waiting for him in the house on Strada C.A. Rosetti six months later, as if putting a seal on a period which, as time passed, would become like another life for him.

In 1945, a strange period began for Dragomir, as for most of the Romanian intellectuals who remained in the country, a period in which, cast in a new play on the stage of history, they tried to preserve the reflexes of life that they had hitherto acquired, without having much idea of the sort of world they were heading for. Obviously there was no way back to Freiburg. A letter sent by Walter Biemel to Dragomir on 26th August 1946 from Louvain in Belgium (where he had started working on the Husserl archive) gives a very clear picture of the way in which, a year after Dragomir’s departure from Freiburg, the glittering world that surrounded Heidegger and his students had fallen apart for ever. On the night of 27th November 1944, Freiburg was bombed by the British and 80 percent of the town was destroyed. The 800-year-old cathedral escaped by a happy combination of circumstances. (It was in a dead angle for the bombers, which always appeared abruptly over a hill.) The last seminar, dedicated to Leibniz, which Heidegger had started in the autumn of 1944, was interrupted when the professor was called up into the *Volksturm* (“people’s army”). However he managed to take ill after a short time, and when he was demobilized he withdrew to the castle of the princess of Sachsen-Meiningen, who had been his student. Meanwhile, the university too had moved into a

castle, on the other side of the Danube, where Heidegger went from time to time to read extracts from his works to a handful of students. At the beginning of 1945, Freiburg fell within the French occupation zone, and as a result of intrigues and denunciations set in motion by some of his colleagues, the French occupying authorities launched an investigation centred on Heidegger. The case was to be judged in Paris, and the philosopher, permanently removed from his university chair, withdrew to his chalet in Todtnauberg. In his letter to Dragomir, Walter Biemel quotes some lines that Heidegger had written to him not long before in Louvain: *Ich denke gern an die Zeit unserer gemeinsamen Versuche zurück. Es war ein Teil jenes unsichtbaren Deutschlands, das die Welt wohl nie erfahren wird.* (“I think back with pleasure on the time of our common efforts. It was a part of that unseen Germany that the world may never know.”)

With the way to completing his doctorate with Heidegger permanently closed, Dragomir turned for a while to the philosophical preoccupations that his native setting offered. Noica had opened (in 1946?) a “school of wisdom” at Andronache (the forest that started on the edge of the Colentina district of Bucharest) and he invited him there to give some presentations on Hegel. To this period belongs an essay by Dragomir, *On the Mirror*, preserved in a typewritten copy with notes and observations by Mircea Vulcănescu. There is also a surprising letter sent to Heidegger early in 1947 (the draft of which survives), probably in response to Biemel’s encouragement in the letter quoted above, in which he assures Dragomir that Heidegger remembers him perfectly and asks after him from time to time. Surprising, because Dragomir here tells Heidegger (giving details) that he is working on a doctoral thesis on Plato – but with whom? – entitled *Über das Verhältnis von Anschauen und Dialektik bei Plato* (“On the relation between intuitive seeing and dialectic in Plato”). Heidegger’s reply is dated 7th May 1947. In it he gives Dragomir some indications and references relating to the new theme (with not a single question about the Hegel thesis!), and says that he is glad Dragomir is able to work. He announces that he is no longer at the university and does not know if he will ever be able to publish again, and that his two sons are prisoners in Russia. With the letter is a photograph of Heidegger, with the following dedication on the back: *Für Alexander Dragomir zur Erinnerung an seine Studienzeit in Freiburg im Breisgau, Martin Heidegger* (“To Alexandru Dragomir in memory of his period of studies in Freiburg im Breisgau, Martin Heidegger”).

Heidegger’s letter of May 1947 and the photograph enclosed with it represent the last “item” in the Heidegger-Dragomir file. “The time was out of joint”, and the two men would henceforth belong to worlds that would never again meet, until Heidegger’s death in 1976. The imperatives of the new period of history in which Dragomir had entered required him to forget “his period of studies in Freiburg” and as far as possible to deny it. It would undoubtedly be

the hardest burden to bear in his curriculum vitae, the capital sin to be purged by successively adopting professional hypostases as remote as possible from the philosophy with which he had started. Officially, all his later life would be one long effort to “wipe clean his tracks”, and thus an uninterrupted professional travesty. For the next 31 years, Dragomir would in turn work as an apprentice welder, a sales clerk, a proof-reader, a copyreader, an editor, a quality controller and an economist. In the first thirteen years after the war, he had to change his job seven times. Each time his “personal file” was revised, his employment contract was terminated. Thus from “apprentice welder at the Tilcam workshop at 70 Strada Pantelimon” he became a clerk at Romanian Anchor, and then a welder at Wire Industry in Cîmpia Turzii. Then from “head of sales at Metarc”, proof-reader at Editura Tehnică, “literary editor at Editura Energetică”, and as crowning glory “principal editor” at Editura Politică in the Encyclopedic Dictionary department (1956-58), he ended up as “head of the supply services office” for the V.I. Lenin Hydroelectric Power Station at Bicăz. For the last fifteen years of his working life, until his retirement in 1976, he worked as an economist for ISCE Exportlemn, travelling the world (he got as far as Nigeria!) alongside his director, who needed Dragomir’s knowledge of English, German, French, Italian and Russian in order to settle contracts for the sale of timber with foreign partners.³

It is clear that from 1948, Dragomir knew that in Romania philosophy could no longer raise its head. And in his own case, he understood that he was entering this world in which philosophy was forbidden bearing the mark of his studies in Hitler’s Germany. The Freiburg years, the association with Heidegger, which in a normal life would have propelled him into a brilliant academic career, had suddenly become a curse. Since everything that could draw attention to that past had to be suppressed, nothing could henceforth link Dragomir, officially, to philosophy. And on the outside, as we have seen, nothing did.

³ In fact the Heidegger-Dragomir file finally closes in 1974, when Dragomir’s ex-wife. Ina Nasta (they had divorced the previous year), took refuge in Germany and settled in “Sănduc’s town”, Freiburg. She wrote to Heidegger with the idea of giving him news of his former student, “in the event, of course, that the Professor still remembered him”. A few days later, she received a letter from Heidegger’s wife announcing that he would be expecting her. Heidegger was now 84. Ina Nasta-Dragomir arrived before the venerable figure and so measured for the first time “in the flesh” the whole disaster of Dragomir’s life projected on the monstrosity of history. She started to tell Heidegger what Dragomir’s days were like at Exportlemn, but before she could finish she burst into tears and had to make her excuses and leave.

ENTERING THE UNDERGROUND: NOICA AND DRAGOMIR

But how strange! An authentic vocation cannot be liquidated overnight, just because history claps its hands. And moreover, a philosopher can enjoy the benefit of the discretion that accompanies the vocation of thinking. Unlike a pianist, who is annihilated if his piano and concert hall are taken from him, a philosopher can go on thinking perfectly well without publishing, content to spend his life close to the essential books of philosophy and well able to limit his needs for a few notebooks and a pencil. Driven from the world, threatened, harassed and mocked, could philosophy not become once more “commerce with the dead” (as one Greek philosopher liked to say when he was asked how he spent his time) and withdraw into the intimacy of its essence? Cast out into the incommunicable, could it not become a secret preoccupation, which, far from diminishing and weakening it, would only serve to nurse all the more its essence, its madness and its pride? Thus it is that what might easily have become a disaster was to transform itself, in the case of Alexandru Dragomir, into one of the most fascinating adventures of philosophy in the history of Romanian culture: philosophy as pure solitary thought, as infinite soliloquy, as the joy of thinking all that surrounds one for oneself. For this to take place, Dragomir had to fulfil a single condition: to make cultural clandestinity a profession of faith. And he fulfilled this condition so well that for 55 years nothing was known publicly about him.

As I write today for the first time about Alexandru Dragomir, I am inclined to explain him as the product of a microclimate of history, as a cultural aberration, a “wandering”, a deviation from the mould in which culture takes shape in normal ages and worlds. Arriving in 1831 in the Galapagos Islands, Darwin was faced, as a result of the special conditions which had been created and preserved there, with species that did not exist in other parts of the globe. Darwin in the Galapagos had come upon a biological enclave. In the same way, in totalitarian worlds, when the spirit does not accept the rules that the meteorology of the new history dictates to it, veritable cultural microclimates are born, Galapagos Islands of the spirit that flagrantly contradict the species and specimens of the mainland of official culture. Embarking on a long exile, the spirit is obliged to find strange ways of functioning through which, to the extent to which it preserves its freedom, it also manages to protect itself from the vicissitudes of history. In fact it buries itself, goes into the trenches, disappears from the public surface of culture where there is room only for the display of an ideology with which no negotiation is possible.

However this operation of folding inwards is not without risk: who can guarantee the person who has hidden so well in a cranny of history that his spirit will emerge one day into the light, that he will be recovered, and that others will be able to say of him what Hamlet says about the ghost of his father:

“Well said, old mole”? Who will guard him from the danger that he will disappear unknown, buried alive with the work he has generated in secret, of which no one has ever managed to find out anything? Emergence from assumed clandestinity of culture is possible only through chance, or through the existence of a God who loves culture.

In the underground space that he had entered, Dragomir was not alone. On his return from Germany, with the halo of these two years spent in the proximity of Heidegger, he had immediately been taken up into a “gang” of intellectuals with philosophical preoccupations. He became close friends with Mihai Rădulescu, three years younger than himself, the future music critic of *Contemporanul*.⁴ Then there was Mircea Vulcănescu, twelve years older, whom Dragomir met at the swimming pool in the summer of 1945, the very day in which he had collected his essay *On the Mirror* from the typist. His former teacher, Tudor Vianu, had requested it for a “Notebook” of the National Theatre, where Vianu had recently been appointed director. The next day, Vulcănescu gave him back the text with his observations written in pencil on the back of one of the pages. It was Dragomir’s first (and last) commissioned work.

And above all, there was Noica. The drama of Noica’s life could be reduced to the desire, eternally unfulfilled, to hold a teaching post. He had failed in this when he finished his studies in philosophy and was only offered a post in the Faculty library, and he had recently failed again, in February 1944, when he lost the competition for Gusti’s post (in “philosophy of culture”) to the mediocre Ion Zamfirescu. Noica had three qualities that would have made him an ideal philosophy professor. Firstly, he had the quality of availability, the rare ability to enter into the needs, aspirations and troubles of the other, and each time to propose solutions for their *cultural* transfiguration. In the second place, he had a huge didactic vocation, the gift of being able to make the inaccessible friendly and to convince the other that what he “had to learn” concerned him directly, that his very life was at stake in this learning, and not some abstract book knowledge. And finally, Noica possessed the “magic” quality of investing the philosophers’ thought with his own thought, of appropriating them for himself, teaching the technique of becoming *you* at the end of your journey through the others and how, ultimately, you could take possession of the world by your own one idea. At the end of Noica’s didactic method, the system was lying in wait, and each of his pupils was “prepared” to end up a philosopher in his own right.

⁴ “Picked up” with the “Noica batch” in 1959, Mihai Rădulescu died several weeks after his arrest. For a time after Noica came out of prison in 1964, Alexandru Dragomir refused to meet him, as he considered him directly responsible for his friend’s death.

The problem was that, as I have said, Noica had never managed to get a university post. His thirst to teach others, to take them by the hand and lead them towards the goal of philosophy as he in fact imagined it, had to be quenched in a different way, in informal settings that departed from the usual academic ritual. Hence the “school of wisdom” in which, it would appear, no one studied anything, and all that was taught was “states of mind”. When Dragomir returned from Germany at the end of 1943, Noica was about to send to the press his *Philosophic Diary*, in which the project of the School floated over the world like a restless spirit, impatient to settle somewhere and to acquire a body. The book came out in 1944, and the following year saw the start of the construction of the chalet at Andronache, intended as the “base” of the school, where Noica was to move with his wife Wendy and their two children, leaving three rooms free on the first floor for pupils. From then on, everything seemed ready for the opening of the School. All that was missing was the pupils, or more precisely, those who would have, according to Noica’s scenario, *the vocation of becoming pupils*, of responding fittingly to the vocation of their teacher and the strange requirements of the school. The net that Noica had thrown far and wide had, of course, made some catches: there was Mihai Rădulescu, who, although initially trained as a lawyer, had agreed in 1942 to translate with Noica Augustine’s *De Magistro* (the text appeared the same year in *Izvoare de filozofie*); and the actor Omescu, a complex personality who was open to theatre directing, acting and philosophy alike, and dreamt of a “*kalokagathia*” which Noica systematically censored. There were others, too, for example the actor and theatre director Dan Nasta. But the “big fish”, those with purely philosophical training and aspirations, were missing from Noica’s net. We can easily imagine how Noica must have felt when Dragomir, seven years his junior, arrived from Freiburg with all his panache, with engines fully revved up, with Greek, Latin and German, with a good knowledge of Hegel, with summary notes on Plato and Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz and Kant – the very authors Noica was interested in! God had thrown into his net the golden fish that would grant his burning wish of recent years, by actually offering himself as the ideal disciple.

All the greater was the disappointment! Dragomir was invited periodically to Andronache, where he did all he could to upset the ritual of the “school”. What probably irritated him about Noica, just as it had irritated Mihai Rădulescu, too, at first (as he confesses in *The Game with Death*), was a certain “outward clumsiness” of the master’s, the spats that he wore almost all the time, the affected smile with which he would greet one, the detailed stage-managing of every meeting, the programmed discussion that would only touch on serious subjects, the obligatory “musical moment”, in short the lack of improvisation, of pointless conversation, of gratuity.

As far as discipleship was concerned, Noica had clearly got things wrong in Sănduc's case. Psychologically, in the first place, it is hard to imagine that, after his time with Heidegger, Dragomir would have agreed to start a new period of training under Noica. Certainly, Noica had translated Latin and German texts, and had published five or six volumes. He was "someone", he was *the* philosopher of the younger generation, and his work was already substantial. Dragomir, on the other hand, had not published a single line, his body of work consisting only of the four or five pages of his essay "On the Mirror". However Noica, with his "mild mastery", with his roundabout manner, his smile and his muted tones, implicitly called for a "mild submission". And this hardly fitted the personality of Dragomir, who was disinclined to model his judgements on anyone, and very much inclined – published work or no published work – to think for himself, cutting in his assessments. He was sure of what he knew, using his intelligence sometimes to strike sharply like the end of a whip and sometimes like a scalpel to dissect mercilessly the discourse of the other, exposing their haste, inadequacy and pretension.

Shortly after his return to Romania, thanks to the sharpness of his mind and the philosophical culture he put at its service, Dragomir became something of an adjudicating authority, and often a troublesome one, in any intimidating case. In 1946, to get access to him, Jeni Ackerian resolved "to reread Kierkegaard and to read Heidegger". In the name of the demands of "adequate thinking" (as opposed to "beating about the bush"), Dragomir was tough, hard, even merciless. Mihai Rădulescu gives a superb portrait of him in a letter of 8th November 1956: "You are always 'in things' [...], never for a moment on the outside, illuminating them from within, giving them the foundation of meaning and truth that afterwards seems always to have been in them: nothing conjunctural, circumstantial or 'interchangeable'. The words say this, but behind them lies the guarantee of your being: you do not lie, you do not spare for the sake of comfort; you are strong, often rough, and just."

But above all, Noica and Dragomir were totally incompatible in that they belonged to different ages in the history of philosophy. This meant that their ways of "doing philosophy" and of understanding the mission and embodiment of philosophy in the world were also different. Noica belonged to "traditional philosophy". He breathed its categories, had a prejudice towards the system (of German idealist type), and practised subjectivizing hermeneutics, the opposite of the "ethos of neutrality": at the end of every undertaking of knowledge and interpretation, the thinker was destined to meet his own image. Noica's god was Hegel. Although Dragomir had worked intensely on Hegel, seeking to make explicit the sense of *wir* ("we") in the latter's discourse, he was a philologist in philosophy; when he dealt with the thinking of a philosopher, he wanted to find out what exactly the writer had said in the letter of his text, and when he dealt with a determined "thing" (the mirror, for example), he wanted to

find out what its “is” was, its intimate and irreducible way of being. While Dragomir wanted to *understand*, Noica “Noica-ized” everything; he was subtle inventive and “feminine”. Dragomir would gather up all his strength, philosophically speaking; he was lacking in grace and set out to conquer his objective as if on a tough winter campaign, cautiously weighing every step and every stage of the journey. Since 1948, when the first wave of repression had broken over the country and especially over its intellectuals, Dragomir had been unable to see what could be achieved by “making culture” in the traditional manner; for him, “being a writer” had lost its sense before it had even acquired one. While Noica, in forced domicile from 1949, wrote volume after volume and hurried towards the first form of his system, with the vague intuition that public recognition would come later, Dragomir limited himself to plain notation and rare philosophical commentary, occasioned more by the doings of his friends. Dragomir seemed to “lose his way” in the new world of history, to “adapt”, to give up and “change his trade”, while in Noica’s case, the greater the adversity of the new world, the more philosophically focused he seemed to become, to the point where he would be willing to do philosophy standing on one leg. When Dragomir emerged from underground, the surprise was total, precisely because there had been no suspicion of the “harvest” to come, while for Noica emergence to the surface came naturally, as if Noica had gone willingly into the nooks and crannies of history in order to seek there the form of his future work.

I only understood how dramatic was Noica’s attempt to catch Dragomir in the net of his philosophical model, when, a few days ago, there fell into my hand, as if by a miracle, from a corner of Dragomir’s writing desk the six letters that Noica wrote to him in the first three years (1949-51) of his forced domicile in Cîmpulung. Distance made Noica see his relationship with Dragomir as if projected on a screen, and thus, by this distant contemplation, to evaluate it. Everything is said here.

Noica was at a turning point in his life. His wife Wendy, née Muston, had managed, thanks to her British citizenship, to return to England and so escape the horrors of history. Their two children, Răzvan and Dina, would follow her in 1953. In the meantime, all Noica’s wealth was confiscated. (He had recently inherited a stud farm. “I felt it as a blessing,” he told us later, “when the Communists relieved me of the burden of those hundreds of horses!”) He lost all his “rural castles”, as he would later refer to them (his country house at Chiriacu, and of course the newly built villa at Andronache). Now he lived in Vișoi in the periphery of Cîmpulung, at “Madame Veta’s”, occupying one room in a peasant house with a verandah. He ate what he could get by giving private cramming lessons: milk, a piece of cheese, eggs, maize flour. In this way he was freed from the burden of money. On 8th May 1950, he began a letter to Dragomir, but he interrupted it after a page, realizing that he did not have

enough money for stamps. He picked it up again on 18th May, explaining the circumstances, and warning “Sănduc” that there was no reason to pity him. “You might even envy me. Up to a point, this means being free, that is to say living in the state of nature. Everything I earn is given to me in kind, and this fact of being able to satisfy basic needs directly, and not by the elaborate route of “means” of exchange, may constitute a privilege for the spirit, inasmuch as it is no longer engaged in anything else.”

With his spirit at last free (in fact liberated by the Communists), because of his release from the burden of money, and having met, on the very day in which he reached the age of 40 (on 24th July 1949), the woman who was to become his second wife in 1953 (Mariana Noica) – “In the meantime,” he wrote to Sănduc on 18 December 1949, “I have found a girl to patch my socks and my soul.” – Noica was free to undertake one last siege of the Dragomir fortress. His tone becomes frequently pathetic, and sometimes desperate (“But I want what’s good for you; don’t you believe me?”)

First of all, there is a review of the exceptional qualities of the person in question. Dragomir is, above all, the vocation of philosophy incarnate: “You ‘live’ the philosophical in its purest form and, at least for me, you are the most gifted philosophical mind I have ever met.” This is why, Noica tells him, “I have asked for your hand in marriage (in this case, you are the only person I would really like to collaborate with).” Elsewhere (on 7th October 1949) Noica claims: “You have managed with us – and I see this once again from Mihai [Rădulescu]’s letter – to be both what you are and what you ought to be; and the latter “haunts” us, for you are in a way, our best conscience. It was in *this* sense that I told you before that you are for us a *Begriff*.”

Thus Noica sees in Dragomir what he will and perhaps should become, this final and ideal form that both justifies the others, grounding them deeply (“our best conscience”), and serves them as model. Only that Dragomir hesitates to bridge this gap between “what you are” and “what you ought to be”. And at the same time it is Noica, who stands to profit (together with “the others”) from this “fulfilment”, who can take Dragomir along this still unmade path. On the one hand, Dragomir is declared to be the “best conscience”, and on the other, Noica proposes to be his master. What is it that separates Dragomir from his ultimate fulfilment? Certainly no lack of the power of performance (since he is already what he ought to be, the announcement of future perfection), but the *incapacity* to realize it. In fact, to Noica’s despair, Dragomir, a philosopher to the marrow of his bones, refuses to do philosophy, meaning that he refuses to construct a system. And the “system” means “committed intelligence”. Dragomir’s intelligence, on the other hand, is “free, dizzily free. Somewhere, above you, there is a meaning that attracts you; but you want to climb vertically, instead of believing, like me and like modest Hegel, that the shortest route is the roundabout one” (7th October 1949). This “roundabout

route” is the bypass through your *own* mind towards the being of things. In vain does Dragomir stubbornly believe that metaphysics means “calmly seeing what *is*”. Our mind is not a mirror that moves over things, but one that brings together, integrates and includes its own movement in the image of the final “reflection”. In this sense, the mind is dialectic; it does not fix. Things fall into line – and they always find their order – along the thread that the mind holds out to them. “Without a system, and without dialectic, metaphysics is vanity.”

But entry into this movement of the mind automatically means creation, and creation means *a work*. The written work is not a cultural vanity, but the figure to which, through the intermediary of the system, metaphysics must necessarily lead. What is vanity is to believe that you can fix the world by the verticality of a neutral thinking. Not even the philosophers can be understood in this way, in their presumptive “in itself”. “For, as you, too, know well, after you have understood exactly what each one wants, you have to be able to Kantianize Plato and to Platonize Heidegger, if not actually to Dragomirize the lot. Otherwise how can you make the history of philosophy?” (10th April 1951).

In short, Noica reproaches Dragomir that *he*, as Dragomir, is nowhere, is just a whip, “the whip in itself that strikes everything”. The problem of his own creation appears in the context of this discussion as a direct problem of salvation. Unlike Herod, who was foreseen in the plan of Creation, unlike “all the Herods of today” (the great ones of the Communist world, foreseen in the project of History), you, Sănduc Dragomir, have not been foreseen anywhere, and so you have to affirm yourself through the thought that does not just “mirror” and “reflect”, but thinks by swallowing and integrating everything. In order to begin to be, you have to create. As ordinary people that we are, we are condemned to creation (and – to return to the theme – to the work, the system, to metaphysics understood as it should be, that is to say dialectic...). And Noica closes his last letter, on 10th April 1951, with this terrible summons: “And so I say to you once more, in a different form I say to you the same thing that I have been throwing in your face in vain for almost ten years since I first met you: what are *you* doing, man? Understand once and for all that you were not foreseen in the plan of Creation and that those above will call you to account. And if they find your answer unsatisfactory at the terrible judgement, the Angel Gabriel will take you by one hand and the Archangel Michael by one foot, and they will throw you into the hell where all the analytics and all the exact-understanders of this world lie, with Aristotle at their head! In the name of your good angel, Dinu.”

Dragomir’s letters to Noica have not been preserved. They were confiscated, together with those of Cioran to Noica, on the morning of 12th December 1958, when the *Securitate* made a final search of the house in Cîmpulung the day after Noica’s arrest. And so we do not know how Dragomir answered the angel or Noica. He probably had no answer to give, *then*. To get

the answer, Noica would have to wait for Dragomir's emergence from underground.

THE MEETING ON STRADA ARCULUI

I first met Dragomir at his home in 1976. Some time before, Noica had given him my book on the tragic, *A Phenomenology of Limit and Transcendence*, which had just been published by Univers. I suspect he wanted to show him what was going on in the "philosophical world" of Romania, and probably to show off the achievements of one of his "children". "Dinu, Dinu," Dragomir later told us he said to Noica, "mind you don't land that one in jail like you landed the others!" (He was referring to those who had made up the "Noica batch" at the end of the 1950s.) In any case, he took the book, probably attracted by the daring with which the word "phenomenology" (full of nostalgic connotations for him) appeared on the cover, in a cultural context that was officially defined as "Marxist". One day Noica told me that we were going "to visit Sănduc Dragomir":

Gabi, dear chap, he's a pupil of Heidegger; he's just retired, and he wants to get started seriously on philosophy again; he's been reading a lot over the years, but in a desultory sort of way, just for his own pleasure, without any particular thought in mind. For a while, after I came out of prison, he didn't want to see me, either because he was afraid or because he was angry with me because of the death of Mihai Rădulescu. I asked him through a mutual friend to lend me the Diels-Kranz edition of the pre-Socratics – he was the only person who had it; he brought it back with him from Germany – and he sent me word not to look for him. In the meantime he has softened; I sometimes take him books, and, I don't hide it, from time to time I give him to read the odd chapter of what I'm writing myself, because he's such a ruthless judge that he's very useful to me. In fact he's read your book too, and he has some things to say to you.

We arrived around 6 pm on a winter evening. He lived at number 3 Strada Arcului, in an old 1940s block with seven storeys. It was the very first building on the left-hand side of the street, so that one row of flats opened onto Strada Armand Călinescu. From the one-room apartment on the sixth floor where he lived – which had once been part of his mother's flat, (sold in the meantime) – you could see the little streets that link the former Strada Italiană to Piața Rosetti and the back of the Intercontinental Hotel: Săgeții, Caragiale,

Popa Rusu, Speranței, Constantin Nacu, Batiștei, Dianei... The block suffered seriously in the earthquake of 1977, and as it has never been consolidated, both its facades still bear the scars of that event across the dirty plaster. Being a block of pensioners, its condition gradually deteriorated. The two-person lift, with the eternal dirty cardboard in place of a broken window, struggled to drag itself from one floor to the next, and broke down about once a month. The ancient heating boiler failed sometimes in the depths of winter, leaving the inhabitants to scatter wherever they could. The bins were sometimes left in the stairwell, right beside the lift door, so that you had to hold your breath or keep a handkerchief over your nose while you waited for the lift to come down. I noticed all this gradually, in the course of the hundreds of visits I made over the years to 3 Strada Arcului, as if the concrete carcass was decaying, getting uglier, ageing, along with the discreet and fatal decline of its illustrious occupant.

There was none of this, however, back in 1976. Dragomir, who had just turned 60, received Noica and myself in his minuscule flat with the relaxed manner characteristic of people whose centre of gravity is never *outside* themselves. None of the “great people” that I have met, from Noica and Cioran to Dragomir, gave twopence for their external comfort. All the great deeds by which the culture of a country or an age had been moved from its place had come to birth on an ordinary table (if not on a board supported on someone’s lap), in notebooks of poor-quality paper, scribbled with failing ball-points and badly sharpened pencils. I saw some of them living almost in squalor (Noica at Păltiniș, or Țuța in his one-room flat behind the Cișmigiu park) and none of them ever rose beyond a minimum level of decency in their dwelling place (Cioran in his mansard in the rue de l’Odéon, or Heidegger in his chalet at Todtnauberg, the interior of which I inspected room by room in the summer of 2003, taking advantage of open curtains and, of course, the absence of the owner). Regardless of whether or not they had been in prison, they all had a certain ease in coping with scanty and poor material resources, an ease that sprang not from any impulse to “slum it”, nor from negligence or dirty habits, but simply from their power to separate themselves from the world of comfort in the name of values and imperatives that demanded everything of them and that, were in any case, from the start, very far in the order of existence from what is meant by “ordinary life”. What is strange is that all these people were, in their own way, elegant, which surely resulted to a large extent from their spiritual standing and their belonging to that human category that is best defined, regardless of origins, wealth and historical period, by the word “aristocrat”.

Alexandru Dragomir was an aristocrat who welcomed us into a sixteen-square-metre room – his bedroom, office and living room in one. Next to the wall opposite the door, there was a large bed. At its head, there was a bedside table, and continuing along the wall to the left of the door, a narrow

sofa on which two people could sit. In the middle of the room, next to the foot of the bed, there was a huge sagging armchair, covered with a blanket. Under the window, there was a tiny work table, with another armchair facing it. On the wall to the right of the door, there was a bookcase, with no more than a couple of hundred books, almost all of philosophy: Hegel (the Glockner edition), Plato in “Belles Lettres”, Aristotle, Jaeger’s monograph, a massive Latin edition of Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa*, Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des XIXen Jahrhunderts*, a French edition of Kierkegaard’s *Journal* in four volumes, the Pre-Socratics in the Diels-Kranz edition, Descartes, Leibniz, the *Journal* of the brothers Goncourt, a few dictionaries, etc.

The man himself was thin and short of stature, with a small head and skin like parchment. He had fine hands, which he would run one after the other through his ever-rebellious hair, which formed an eddy right over his forehead. What was impressive was his look, with its metallic inflexion and its appearance of extreme hardness, especially when Dragomir was taking us through a demonstration, concentrating and looking somehow into himself, contaminated by the very severity of the thought he was unfolding. Never before had I seen in someone’s eyes, mirrored with such precision, the sequence of small steps that seemed to make up his thinking. Dragomir’s look, turned inward, took over that hallucinated walk along the unseen corridors of the mind, and then let it be seen on the outside. Because it was transmitted through his eyes, because it became *visible*, there was something unsettling and savage about his thinking. Dragomir was terribly like a “thinking animal”, like a thinking snake or feline. This sensation completely disappeared and his look immediately became mild as soon as he emerged from the world of his reasoning, as often as not “deconstructing” it with a joke or saying that what he had constructed was within the power of anyone that was willing to concentrate – as he had just done – along the (single) direction of their thought.

A Lesson in Thought

Of course in the hour that followed, he demolished my book completely, taking it apart from the foundations, that is to say starting from the very definition of *peratology* (“the theory of limit considered in its relation to consciousness”) on which, full of the philosophical pride of youth, I had raised my entire theory about the tragic. I still recall that the discussion began with the fact that neither “limit” nor “consciousness” had been adequately defined in my book, with the result that, as Dragomir pointed out, I used them indistinctly, as the context dictated. “Consciousness”, for example, was sometimes used in its Pascalian-Kierkegaardian sense of individual-suffering, and sometimes in a Kantian sense, as a property of the human species (“consciousness in general”), or a Hegelian one (the historical consciousness of an age). My tragic hero was

consequently sometimes Werther (or Hamlet), sometimes the indefinite representative of humankind (mortal in their very essence), and sometimes Nicolae Bălcescu or Götz von Berlichingen. Correspondingly, “limit” was sometimes the interior limit of the hero, sometimes corporeality as finitude (“nature”), and sometimes a boundary of history. Dragomir then went on to pull apart a sentence of which I remember I had been very proud, at least in the context, when I wrote it: “The maximum degree of difficulty in overcoming limit becomes, at the limit, a limit that in principle cannot be overcome.” “What do you understand here by ‘difficulty’?” Dragomir asked me. “Stumbling block, obstacle, condition? In the preceding sentence, you speak of ‘the possibility of overcoming’, and then, after all that, we find ourselves in the region of ‘it’s hard, Mum, it’s very hard, in fact sometimes it’s actually impossible’. In fact, limit itself doesn’t have the ‘quality of being overcome-able’, in the sense of being easier or more difficult to overcome, and – at the limit – impossible to overcome. ‘Hard’ or ‘difficult’ come only from the person and differ from one person to the next.” I protested, saying that in my book “limit” is “transcendental”, and thus is only considered in the field of consciousness, and that, in my “peratology” with tragic valences, there is no limit “in itself”. Then he attacked me at another point, telling me that I did not distinguish between “the self-consciousness of limit” and the “self-consciousness of limitation”, and that, in general, I practised a “technique of amalgam” – “The most dangerous thing in philosophy! For example you mix Greek tragedy with modern tragedy, transferring in an impermissible way the categories of modern philosophy into the ancient Greek universe.” His conclusion was that overall it was all right, but as far as “thinking” was concerned I still had a thing or two to learn.

We parted – Noica stayed longer – and I left convinced that the “old men” had set up a plot which, undoubtedly, formed part of Noica’s “paideic programme”. Dragomir had been the “cold shower” that had to be administered to me preventively so that my debut with the book on the tragic would not go to my head. I muttered to myself all the way home, turning Dragomir’s objections around in my head and considering them from all directions. Then at night, before I went to sleep, I kept asking myself what it could mean that I still had a thing or two to learn where “thinking” was concerned.

About ten years passed. From time to time, Noica would come and complain to us that Dragomir had pulled to pieces another chapter of the *Treatise of Ontology* that he was working on. I saw him seldom, generally by accident, and had only a vague notion of how he spent his time. I knew, also from Noica, something about a “paper” concerning time that Dragomir had been labouring on, apparently since the ’50s, but I knew nothing about what results he had produced, or even if he was ever going to finish the task. I had managed to find out that he “didn’t write”, and that his refusal – which could only be perplexing to us as pupils of Noica, raised in the cult of effectiveness,

of publication and of the “work” – had its basis in a sort of egoism of understanding, in the idea that all that matters, if you have landed in this world, is to try to be clear in your own mind about it, “not to leave it like an ox”. Sometimes when I came to his home in the morning with a book he had asked me to bring him, I would find him with a Greek edition of Plato or Aristotle open on the table and beside it a notebook of cheap paper on which from a distance I could make out closely written lines written in ballpoint. “So, you’re writing!” I teased him happily. “No, I’m not writing. I’m confronting those who have looked at the problem before me.” “And why don’t you publish?” I began again. “Because it does not in-ter-est me, can’t you see, Mr Liiceanu?” “But if this lot hadn’t published either – Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz – I mean, your people – who would you have been confronting today? It’s clear that you are a great egoist!” I concluded triumphantly.

This game was repeated dozens of times. Sometimes I would just find a little notebook on the table with a ballpoint beside it. “What are you doing?” “I’m noting down a thought or two. Like Wittgenstein. I mean like me. It so happens sometimes that I think.” As he raised such a screen of bashfulness around the matter, I never asked him to show me or read me anything. And still less did he ever offer to do so. Somehow or other, one fine day his youthful essay “On the Mirror” fell into our hands, the essay that, it was said, had been annotated by Mircea Vulcănescu, and then “judged”, in Noica’s presence, in a meeting at the chalet in the forest of Andronache. Exasperated by so much “Dragomirian mystery”, and happy that at last we had a chance to judge the man who judged everyone else, Andrei and I dived greedily into the seven or eight pages. At last we had a “sample” of Dragomir. We quickly concluded that it was nothing special. Then we took it round to Petru Creția, who was our “mirror specialist” (for the past ten years he had been throwing pieces of paper with notes either “on clouds” or “on mirrors” into two large cardboard boxes): “For someone who hasn’t gone into the subject thoroughly, it’s quite good,” he declared categorically, and that was the end of the discussion. We had been put at ease. Now we *knew* who Dragomir was. It was clear that we had nothing to fear. We had got worked up for nothing. The man hardly wrote, or anyway “didn’t know how to write”. From Noica we had learnt that a philosophical idea had to overturn the usual way of seeing things, to *surprise*. Whatever the cost. The rest was *how* you said it. And so we did somersaults and competed with one another in stylistic pedantries. We wrote *beautifully*. And ultimately that was what counted. We turned our backs on someone who, with an uncompleted doctorate under Heidegger, was unable to tell us anything except that we had to *understand* the world in which we lived and to learn to *think*.

THE LUCACI CUL-DE-SAC LECTURES

And so, as I said, ten years passed. At the end of 1984, Pleșu and I returned home after a long Humboldtian sojourn in Germany. Our Alpine spiritual idyll had in the meantime been exposed: *The Păltiniș Diary* had been published the previous year, and this divulging gesture had itself completed the “rite of parting” from Noica. We were, so to speak, free from the master, and neither of us had much idea in which direction to go next. All that was in my mind was that I had to rewrite the book on limit, but in a different way, “freely”, without being able to say exactly *how*. And then, early in 1985, in a superb ludic episode, Alexandru Dragomir asked Noica to “lend” him his disciples, who had in the meantime become “characters in a novel” (Sorin Vieru, Pleșu and myself), with a view to “using” us as an audience for a series of private lectures. Noica was delighted at the idea, thinking that in this way he was making Dragomir emerge from his burrow, making him *manifest* himself. In a solemn meeting at my home in the Lucaci *cul-de-sac*, Noica “handed us over” to Dragomir. To start with, three weekly meetings were planned, and at the first of them, Dragomir shocked us with the announcement that he was going to present “a Platonic interpretation of Caragiale’s *A Lost Letter*”. (“I hesitated between a Leibnizian, an Aristotelian and a Platonic interpretation, but in the end I have settled for the third,” he began in an absolutely serious tone.) He spoke for an hour, occasionally glancing at a sheet of paper in his hand or reading a quotation from it. We sat in armchairs, and all of us, I think, took notes. We had certainly never experienced anything like this. Dragomir spoke, with that look in which was reflected the pilgrimage of a subtle logos towards a place known only to him; he affected preciousness (“for the misshapen is something nasty, isn’t it? – a ‘pooh’”); he moved from a general overview (“Caragiale’s whole play sets up a relation between *eikôn* and *eidōs*, between periphery and centre, what is comic being simply the fatally skewed form of the *eikôn* – the local, the provincial – in its unhappy relation to the *eidōs* – the centre, the capital”) to juicy hermeneutics of detail (“The reflex response of the subaltern Pristanda – ‘absolutely’ – represents the *echo*, which is simply the empty response that the boss needs in order to hear an amplified version of himself”). Quotations from Plato’s *Timaeus* and from Augustine’s commentaries on the *De Anima* of Aristotle, the “master-servant” sequence from the *Phenomenology of Mind*, details on the configuration of the province in the Roman empire, the Hungarian word *világ* (origin of the Romanian expression *dare în vileag*, meaning loss of privacy, gossip), sentences of Ennius... all were mobilized in the interpretation of Caragiale’s play, together with a huge quantity of intelligence, verve and depth. In contrast to Noica’s demonstrative hermeneutic treatment of Eminescu’s “Lucașfărul” or the folktale “Youth without Age”, made to illustrate (and confirm) his own

ontological model, Dragomir did not seek to demonstrate anything (any preconceived idea or theory or doctrine of his own), but, in a Heideggerian manner, allowed the thing to speak through itself, to manifest itself, to appear in the full light of day, to emerge from the hiding place in which it had hitherto lain. And as for us, how could we not have seen before what Dragomir had “shown” to us? He ended the first lecture (of three devoted to the interpretation of the play) by saying that ultimately he had not communicated anything original, and that anyone who was willing to think things attentively would find there exactly what he had just told us.

It was the first time outside Heidegger’s writings that we had seen phenomenology “at work”, and without any of the epigone’s laboured imitation, but simply in the way that, having once learnt to play a musical instrument, one can choose one’s own melodies to play on it.

At the end of the three lectures, my enthusiasm was so great that after a while I felt the need to give the whole thing the coherence and fluency of a written text. Typed in standard format on the Swedish typewriter I had brought back from Germany, the text came to 30 pages. I was in love with it. I had no idea, of course, that in this way I had brought into the world the pages that, eighteen years later, would open the first volume of the “work” of Dragomir. Several times I tried to give it to him to read. Each time he refused. As for publication, not a chance.

The Opening of the Archive

Our “working” meetings with Dragomir continued at very irregular intervals until the year 2000. They almost always began with a lecture by him, followed by discussion. It sometimes happened that one of us opened the meeting, and on other occasions the discussion was “free”, without any starting point or particular theme. At a certain point I stopped taking notes, as Dragomir agreed to have a cassette recorder on a little table beside him while he was speaking. After 1995, Horia Patapievici joined the team, and, from time to time, when he was back in Romania (he was doing a doctorate in Scotland), Cătălin Partenie would also turn up at my home in the Lucaci *cul-de-sac*. Patapievici unnerved me with the eagerness with which he always wrote down *everything* in a notebook on his knee.

For those of us who for fifteen years had been confronted with Dragomir’s *orality*, it remained until his death in 2002 a mystery whether he actually wrote or not. With the exception of that translation of Heidegger’s lecture *What is Metaphysics?*, published in a journal of the Romanian exile and signed together with Walter Biemel, he never published *anything* in his own name. Whenever one of us asked him if he wrote, the standard answer would always come: “That isn’t important. I just try to *understand*.” That

“understanding” might sometimes involve notes, annotations, a written page or even a few pages in succession, but was, for him, a quite unessential matter. After his death – he had no heirs, and left “everything” to Nina Călinescu, with whom he had shared his life since 1973. I was able to take his whole “archive” home. What did I discover in it?

Notebooks, over 90 of them, each with an air of the years it dated from: some of them were hardback, with the cover bound in fabric, from the Freiburg period; others, the majority, were “socialist” notebooks, some in large “student” format, some normal sized, some thin, with 100 pages, some thick, with 300, in vinyl covers of different colours. Curiously, all had been numbered from the start, by drawing a little square in the top corner of the right-hand page and writing an odd number in it. (Most of the notebooks began with the number 1 or 3.) That the numbering was done from the beginning, and not as the writing advanced, was clear from the fact that not only were the pages of the notebooks not all filled, but as often as not the writing stopped well before the last numbered page. The intention of writing at least as far as the numbered pages went was belied each time by the abandoning of the notebook long before. Thus, as a result of this “dread of the full”, many of the notebooks were almost empty, as if they had been hastily rejected as soon as they were begun, in favour of a new notebook that could then expect to be thrown aside in its turn, with most of its pages numbered. On the other hand, there were various pocket notebooks, of different sizes, shapes and colours, that were packed full of writing. They gave the feeling that the person who filled them had been driven by an unseen hand away from the “big notebooks” to take refuge, bag and baggage, in a minuscule space, in which everything was tightly squeezed and piled one thing on top of another. Here you could find extracts from the Greek, Latin and German philosophers (with exact references to the sources) – sometimes commented, sometimes not – reflections of one or two lines or developments of a thought over three or four pages, notes on current events, families of words, schemas, bibliographies, quotations. Some of the notebooks had titles that acknowledged this inexhaustible bric-a-brac: *Seeds, Odds and Ends, Scribblings...* Judging by the modest dimensions of the pages, Dragomir seemed to have preferred to do battle with the problems that would not leave him in peace not on an open field, but by setting up ambushes, attracting them into scrubland, valleys and narrow defiles.

Some dozens of the notebooks had a well-defined content and a title written clearly on the cover. Among them were those with notes from Heidegger’s seminar, the notebook summarizing Hegel’s *Logic* (also from the 1940s), the book of notes from Nestle’s course on Homer, and an avalanche of notebooks resulting from Dragomir’s reading of the great European philosophers up to the 1950s and again starting from the ’70s: fourteen notebooks on Plato, eight on Aristotle, four each on Descartes and Leibniz, two

on Wittgenstein, and then various notes from reading of Kant, Hegel, Tarski, Russell, Freud, Jung, Lacan and Eliade, some of them with a notebook to themselves, others gathered together in the same notebook. Under the title *I and the Others*, a notebook started in 1986 assembled together quotations from Plato, Aristotle, the medieval logicians, Thomas Aquinas, Galileo, Kepler, Kant, Fichte and Freud – most of them with commentary. Then there were summaries and quotations taken from secondary literature, from Gilson to Koyré or Janik and Toulmin, and other notebooks dedicated to geometry, arithmetic or mathematical logic. It was a huge laboratory, branching out in an endless variety of directions, which extended to the great European dynasties, traditional Romanian forenames that were falling out of use, and the typographical terminology for the principal letter forms.

Separately, in a white plastic bag, there were four large notebooks, all dedicated to the problem of time.

Chronos: The Time Notebooks

The theme of time was evidently a preoccupation of Dragomir's throughout his life as a "thinker". The first notebook had 160 pages (numbered by twos) with writing only on the right-hand pages. On the cover, as on the covers of the others, was written the title *Chronos*, in Greek letters, and below it a series of five years: 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952. This notebook, with its pages turning brown along the edges, and, like almost all the notebooks Dragomir used, of poor-quality paper, was filled with writing in pencil (at one point a blue pencil with a filed point had been used, making the writing clumsy), sometimes in German, sometimes in Romanian, with the date of writing mentioned in each case. The pages written on 2nd March 1948, for example, are dedicated to the clock: "The clock has no past and no future, not even a present. That is because the clock is not time; it just *shows* time. In fact it *shows* only the present. It is easy to imagine – even if it has not actually been made – a clock with a fixed hand and moving numbers..." On 30th August 1948, Dragomir notes: *Was bedeutet "wie"? Was bedeutet "so"? Jedes Vergangene ist immer wie (d.h. so) und nie Existenz. Jedes Jetzt ist immer Existenz und nie so. Was bedeutet aber "so"?* ("What does 'how' mean? What does 'thus' mean? Any 'how' is *always* 'how' (that is, 'thus') and never existence. Any now is *always* existence and never 'thus'. But what does 'thus' mean?") The way of thinking – attacking the taken-for-granted, that which circulates unimpeded and unquestioned in language – and the terminology are Heideggerian; the courage to go to what is most difficult (time, existence, happening, space, etc) is both presumptuous and juvenile.

The notebook, as I have said, extends over five years: from 1948 (when Dragomir was 32) to 1952. This is exactly the period in which Communism

was establishing control in Romania. The principal element of its programme had already been achieved: terror had taken firm root in people's hearts. It is likely that Dragomir, who had already gone into cultural clandestinity, felt that in writing about time he was opening a great philosophical building site in the underground of history. Set against the background of real history, of what was happening "on the surface", the notebook gives the impression of a desperate gamble, almost an experiment performed on himself: how long would the reflexes acquired in Freiburg keep functioning? There is also, in this notebook, something challenging in Dragomir's relation to his own past. Inasmuch as the notebook on time marked Dragomir's renunciation both of the doctoral thesis on Hegel and of that on Plato (mentioned in his letter to Heidegger in 1947), it abolished his status of "student", and at the same time announced his intention and will to pursue original thinking. Moreover, Dragomir was entering ground in which Heidegger had spent almost a decade, thus letting it be understood that *Sein und Zeit* had not "solved" the problem of time... And so, how long would the reflexes acquired in Freiburg continue to function?

The answer is given in the second notebook. It is labelled on the cover *Chronos II*, and underneath, 27th Nov. '78 – 27th Dec. '78; 27 II '79 –... For 24 years, Dragomir had stopped working on the problem of time. This was the period in which he had successively worked as an editor at the *Energetică*, *Tehnică* and *Politică* publishing houses, then as a quality controller at the Bicz power station and an economist at Exportlemn. Now he was retired, and miraculously he found within himself the resources to penetrate once more into a compartment of his life that had seemed abandoned forever. For two years – from 1976 to 1978 – he "warmed up", rereading the classic texts on time by Aristotle, Augustine, Hegel and Husserl. On 27th November 1978, he picked up again the chain of thought in the 1948-1952 notebook, as if nothing had happened in the meantime apart from the passage of those 24 years. The code of traditional metaphysics (*Essentia*, *Substanz*, *Sein*, *Anwesen*) was retained, and the struggle with "thus" (*Sosein*) continued.

The third notebook, entitled *Chronos: Laboratorium*, covers the period 1980-1990, and represents the culminating moment in Dragomir's development of the theme. 395 pages are numbered (as usual, by twos), and as there is writing only on the right-hand pages, the notebook contains 200 written pages, making it the most substantial document in the archive. The "hard" technical language here starts to soften, and the reflection becomes simple, friendly, and reminiscent of the unsophisticated Dragomir we knew at the time of his lectures at Lucaci, who had come to think using mainly the words of ordinary language. The theme, in its turn, becomes supple and penetrates unsuspected corners of existence. The expression "time passes", for example, breaks out of the perimeter of *Dasein*, and goes as far as the "age of trees", which "measure time" by the wrinkles on their trunks, by their rings, by the "marking" of annual

cyclicality, thus bearing the calendar engraved on their “flesh”. Again it is interesting to note how the hypostases of time here take on personality, having “states” and species (at one point he speaks of the “perished past”, for example – which is much more than the past that has simply “passed” – the past that is dead, reduced to nothing, without trace, pure non-being that goes far beyond the preserved past), and how, modulating in this way, they enter into strange resonances and correspondences with each other. The future, for example, is not simple and indeterminate, but has a structure: there is an immediate future, corresponding to what is kept from the past, and which is “passage”, and there is a distant future, corresponding to what is remembered from the past, and which is the unknown. On page 127 there is a striking note with an apocalyptic tone about the past. Might we not somehow grasp better the being of the past, Dragomir wonders, if we tried to find out what would happen if we suppressed it? In the first place the “presences of the past” would no longer exist, that is to say the dead, graves and cemeteries; then there would be no monuments, commemorations or anniversaries. There would be no tradition, customs and habits. History itself would no longer exist. But nor would there be any science or even empirical knowledge, since both presuppose the already-known. All that would be left would be the present of “is”, as an eternal beginning, and the future reduced to a pure unknown. It is now that Dragomir begins to feel the enormous metaphysical charge of banality and the fact that the centre of gravity of philosophy lies in reflection on the banal, that is on the thousands of trivial details that make up our lives.

The discourse on time in the third notebook loses the distant tone with which it began, sheds its “indifference”, and acquires “existential” tones and in places lyrical inflexions. (“The sadness of the consumption of life, and with it the feeling that you are part of something that escapes you, perhaps without appeal.”) At one point on page 127, Dragomir feels taken in and devoured by the very subject to which he has dedicated his life. He writes then, under the date of 28th April 1984, insinuating himself into the text with the entire fragility of his person, the following underlined words: “Because I am afraid that I shall start to forget some thoughts, I shall keep writing, from today onwards, new thoughts in whatever order they come, and – above all – what I have long known but have never put down on paper.”

The fourth notebook, entitled *Chronos: Notes*, has 221 numbered pages (so 110 pages of writing) and is undated. It was most likely compiled in parallel with the third book (rather than continuing it after 1989). The specification *Notes* in the title points to the completely relaxed tone of the discourse which manages to “suck up” thoughts on time from all directions; some are from the minds of classic authors (it is full of Greek quotations) but most are the thoughts of Dragomir himself, all collected with a view to possibly working on them at a later date. The form of the notes likewise varies, from schemas to

discursive texts, with occasional flashes of thought, dazzling annotations. For example: “The lightning-flash present of orgasm is at the same time the procreation of the future.” Or: “The past: the only petrified time.” Or: “The illnesses of the past: forgetting, distortion, error.” Elsewhere the notes concern *themes of thinking*. It is clear, Dragomir writes, that there is a temporal difference between when I *see* a movement and when I *hear* a melody. But in that case, if the three-dimensional seems characteristically anchored in sight, and music in hearing, how is it possible for them to be combined in ballet? Elsewhere he asks: how is it that in the case of the future I can either go towards it (projection) or stop and let it come towards me (waiting)? And what is more important in the future? My desire, the fact that I “tend towards” something, or what the future brings? And again: every “now” is repeated and yet is another. But what is the relation between repetition and passing?

Crass Metaphysical Banalities: The Vinyl Notebooks

After I had gone through the “time notebooks”, which would undoubtedly make up a volume of several hundred pages, I opened the other large notebooks, which I had christened the “vinyl notebooks”, from the fact that they were all covered with green, black or brown plastic sleeves. They were six in number: three of them bore the marks of that *horror pleni* that periodically took hold of Dragomir and had made him abandon them after 17, 21 or 25 pages (out of the 300 in each notebook) and take refuge in pocketbooks and notepads. The other three, however, were more substantial, and gave the best view of what had become of Dragomir’s thought, latterly, up to the year 1997. The “green notebook”, begun after 1986, contained mini-essays of between four and eighteen pages, with surprising titles: *The Morning Awakening*, *The Immortality of the Soul* (with the specification “in plain everyday terms”), *The Land of the Foul and Ugly*, *Wear and Tear*, *Mistake*. The “black notebook” and the “brown notebook” – which was entitled *Me I* – were the most substantial, and contained a sort of “journal of ideas”, recorded by years and days in the case of the “black notebook”. The notes in this book covered twelve years (from 1980 to 1992), and the other, undated, was probably started after 1994.

Both notebooks seemed touched by a sort of restlessness of thought, by a “noetic greed”, by the need mentally to devour each detail of life, to take it from the place where it lay (well-behaved, taken for granted and ignored), to turn it round and look at it from all sides, in order to put it aside (for a time) and then take it back, as if the first examination were not sufficient and a host of details from this essential detail of life had been missed at the first glance of thought. How had this man, who for eighteen years had laboured over the great problem of time, come to meditate, after the age of 65, only on things which in

relation to *Time* seemed mere bagatelles? There could only be one answer: the problem of time itself had put them in his way; *they themselves* were time, the small change into which that great banknote had to be converted in order to obtain thousands of aspects of life. For time *was* life. And the aspects of life poured as from an enormous dish into the lap of the thinker who now spent his time endlessly looking through them, as if they were the most precious treasure: about things said and those unsaid, about clumsiness in communication, about the weight of words, about old age, about the hours of time and the hours of the day and night, about loneliness, about the six movements of the person in space and their symbolism, about the utterance, about the sexual act, about the aggressivity of ideas, about the actor, about “know thyself”, about the meaning of the world, about lack, about sport, about the fragility of life, about what it means to know, about exteriorization, about society without God, about totalitarian regimes, about front and back, about transition, about science, about the myth of words, about life as a consumable good, about history, about my body and me, about forgetting, about the astronomical calendar and the religious calendar, about signs, about the theory of “both-and”, about the body, about laziness, about the secret services, about handling the unforeseen, about talent...

“He is the very devil,” Noica once said about Dragomir. If it was the devil who took control of the tree of knowledge after the fall, then Dragomir was the very devil. What is certain is that in Adam’s place he would have managed to eat from *all* the forbidden fruits. And for all that, in his frenetic desire *to understand everything*, there was something rather of an eternal student, approaching Creation as a class theme and preparing assiduously for the day in which he would be examined by God. Indeed he knew this and said it, on 8th January 1993, in a formidable note in the notebook entitled *Seeds*: “Basically I am doing a doctoral thesis with God.” The most important thing that happened in Dragomir’s life is precisely this: at a certain point he changed the supervisor of his thesis. He simply felt that any thematic content that could be imagined in university terms was too narrow in relation to everything that was to be thought. On 1st September 1979, he noted: “The evening is falling beautifully on my conviction that I do not know how to write (I write dryly, schematically) and on a soul full of joy that there are so many problems that one has to think about and that are lying here, within our reach, like the trees, like the flowers.”

Whose Is the Burden of Thinking?

But what does “to think to yourself” mean? Is there any person who does not think? Is thinking not an attribute of the human being? Are we not all thinking from moment to moment, from the moment we wake up till we lie

down and fall asleep again? Of course we are. Only that this sort of thinking is thinking *around* what we are doing and *according to* our preoccupations. We do not make thinking as such a preoccupation in itself. When we think, which is *all the time*, we think *pragmatically*. We do not stop our activity to think about how the activity is possible. We never take a break from what we are doing to think – *without doing anything else* – about all sorts of things that we habitually do. We do not stop hammering to think about the being of the hammer and what a tool is in itself. We do not wake up in the morning to think about what it means to fall asleep and to return to a state of wakefulness. We wonder in passing at a dream, but we are not so amazed at the fact of dreaming as to start really thinking about our power to dream and the strange reality that a dream is. We consider ourselves, some of us, intellectuals, but we never come to the point of asking ourselves what in fact an intellectual is, and when he first appears in the world in the posture of an intellectual. In short, in order to think you must think of something *other* than what you are actually doing; you must think with *wonder* at the things that you usually do without first interpreting the essence of what you are doing.

This pause, which interrupts our habitual activity and into which the question and commentary of thought insinuate themselves, is not, for the vast majority of people, a normal thing. And even if it so happens that people find something that “makes them think”, they do not do it systematically enough (which most often means following a particular method) to become “thinkers”. And then, in order really to become a thinker it is not enough to have this vocation of the pause. (In that case any shepherd standing leaning on his staff in the heat of a summer’s day while his sheep graze, lazily chewing the end of a straw with his gaze lost in the distance, would be a thinker. For he is undoubtedly thinking “of something”.) To become a “thinker”, you also have to become aware of all that has been done (that is “thought”) by those before you who have transformed their existence into an extended pause for thought and have faced the problems that you are facing. And that presupposes an immense struggle with the thoughts of others, with no one able to guarantee that after all this struggle you will still, others’ thoughts and all, be able to think *for yourself*. Any true thinker must be able to cope with this situation: to avoid being a dilettante, ignoring what others have thought before you, and to avoid the risk of no longer reaching yourself, being swallowed up by the outpouring of the thinking of others. The noise of the others’ thinking must stop at some point, so that in the silence that falls you can hear the voice of your own thinking.

Latin has a remarkable pair of words – *otium–negotium* – whose significance can help us to understand what I have just said. *Otium* is that “pause” of which I have spoken, the repose that intervenes when the “agitation of preoccupation” (*negotium*) ceases. Thinking is impossible in a world of “negotiation”, because negotiation is *par excellence* the world of activity in

which thinking is entirely absorbed – and so cancelled as pure thinking – by *what* you are doing, by the object in itself of the activity. Because it requires one first to *stop*, thinking is, in its very essence, “otiose”, lazy, sublimely indolent.

Well, Dragomir took up this “burden of thinking”, in a time in which in Romania noone was thinking anymore, and in which thinking, in the sense described above, had decayed almost everywhere in the world. We might make play with the fact that Dragomir retired (from *Exportlemn!*) and “started to think” in the very year that Heidegger died, 1976. In any case Dragomir was conscious that the post of “thinker” was vacant. On 6th November 1983, he noted in his “black notebook”: “In our intellectual circles, the essayist stirs ideas, the logician reasons, and the professor or researcher presents papers. But who actually thinks?”

To judge by the meetings a few of us had with him, and by the archive that remained “secret” until a year ago, Dragomir was a thinker, one of the very few, if not the only one, that the Romanians have ever had, if we are prepared to take the following into account: 1) a formidable meeting, *at the source*, with those who had thought about a problem before him; 2) a technique of thinking acquired at first hand in Freiburg and refined by uninterrupted (probably daily) exercise over more than twenty years. This unveiling of the object of thinking by a double operation – connecting it to the history of thinking about it, and then scrutinizing it with phenomenological sight – was the lesson which Dragomir had learnt well from Heidegger.

HEIDEGGER’S LESSON: A TECHNIQUE OF THINKING VERGING ON HUMILITY

If we are to look in detail at this lesson, then we must first stop for a moment to look at the technique of scrutiny and “phenomenological sight”. The truth is that this gaze of special quality was preceded by the *capacity for wonder* that Aristotle had already spoken of in the first book of his *Metaphysics*.

But be careful! In order to be truly philosophical, Aristotelian wonder appeared rather in the presence of objects that *escaped* the sphere of our preoccupations. In other words, the more un-experienced and un-experienceable an object was, the further it lay from our everyday life, the more worthy it became of philosophical wonder. The movements of the planets were for Aristotle more worthy of wonder than the being of the sandal we put on every morning. The “principles and first causes” of the universe: there lay the supreme object of our ignorance and our wonder, and, as such, the one true object of philosophical preoccupation. While Heideggerian phenomenology also starts from the philosophical virtue of wondering, the direction of wonder is now completely changed. And the source of this change of direction must be

sought in a reappraisal of the youthful dialogues of Plato, where Socrates wonders and raises questions about the things that make up our everyday life, but which no one around him wonders at. It is precisely this technique of wondering in front of the taken-for-granted – in front of that which, through excess of use, no longer constitutes a problem for people, and as such no longer merits thought – that is given new life by Heidegger. Heidegger does not ask about “first causes” and “ultimate principles”, but about the things that occur most frequently in our daily lives and expression. He does not wonder, for example, about the verb “to be” in the hierophantic manner of traditional ontology (leading inescapably to “Being”), but only inasmuch as the verb “to be” lies at the very heart of our everyday speech, as we use it in almost every sentence we utter. Heidegger does not question the “*archei* of the world”, but wonders what “to think” means, what is understood by “thing”, what technique is, that is to say exactly that which is represented for us all by the familiar *par excellence*, which determines every moment of our lives. The more familiar something is – meaning the more it is taken for granted, the more it is “passed over” – the more *denkwürdig*, “worthy of thought”, it is.

The result is a considerable democratization of the object of thinking in philosophy: that which is humble, unnoticed, completely lacking in the mark of prestige – at the limit even the speck of dust, rubbish, dirt (the level of “pooh”, as Dragomir would say) – can mobilize thinking just as well (and to more use, as far as understanding the world you live in is concerned) as the traditional sublime objects of thought: the supreme cause, mind, immortality etc. When Dragomir speaks of the joy he finds in “the problems that you have to think about and that are lying here, within our reach, like the trees, like the flowers”, he is expressing precisely this “tropicalization of thinking”, the fact that in its orchard there is a place for all the flowers (and weeds) of the world, and that all of them, subjected to our endless wonder, can provoke the exuberance of thinking. These huge deposits of problems can only be uncovered by paying attention to the evident things that we no longer perceive precisely because they are too evident. The questioning of the familiar, of the too familiar, is the lesson that Dragomir learnt from Heidegger. “To place these taken-for-granted in the light of *raumazein*, of the fact of wondering”, he notes somewhere. In this way *everything* can be *to be thought*, everything ultimately falls within the burden of thinking. Woman is different from man. That is evident. But in what does this difference consist? *A Lost Letter*: an evident text from which we quote all the time when we speak Romanian. Evident, since it has become the spiritual environment for each of us. But if we were put on the spot, could we say what exactly the being of *A Lost Letter* is? We all live in a spatial and temporal environment; we move here and there and are “contemporary”. That is evident, taken for granted; everybody knows it. But what does it mean to be contemporary and to move here and there?

We can already observe that an intimate relationship emerges between this *wonder* (in the face of things that are overpowered by their own familiarity) and sight. For the sight proposed by phenomenology lives off that which has been passed over, forgotten, diminished, ignored. Phenomenological vision is ultimately one that acquires its acuteness from a previous blindness. All the things around us have fallen, through excess of use, into a sort of ontological faint. The phenomenologist gifted with the freshness of the primal gaze is a resuscitator capable of giving a philosophical kiss of life to things that, as victims of our blindness, have become lethargic.

In this context, philosophy certainly `becomes originary: it is an *askesis*, an exercise in the space of the primal gaze. But what is the origin of this “freshened” gaze? Does it result from an exceptional gift that, by divine or genetic grace, is enjoyed only by philosophers and by phenomenologists in particular? Here I might bring into the discussion the fundamental hypocrisy that is characteristic of phenomenology (one that Dragomir liked to indulge in) and on which it proceeds to build its false modesty. Like Descartes’s reason (*le bon sens*), the phenomenological gaze is an equally distributed good that in principle anyone can make use of. We can all, if we like, come to gaze at and see the “is” of each thing. What distinguishes the phenomenologist from the ordinary person is thus a question of will: and of effort, of course. You have to want to see a thing beyond the layers of prejudices under which general opinion has buried it, beyond the distortions to which we subject it every day by our triviality, by our empty curiosity and our ambiguities. The phenomenological gaze is in the first place a liberated gaze, and one that in its turn liberates the thing from the (inevitable) hiding place in which it is kept from one moment to the next by the slippage of language and by routine. The effort is, as we can see, archaeological in nature: the phenomenological gaze excavates, brings to light, washes, cleans. That is all. Ultimately it all comes down to an attentive concentration on the thing that we want to recuperate by looking / thinking appropriately.

From this point of view, phenomenology, being *originary*, does not set out to be *original*. And Dragomir provided the display *par excellence* of this willed lack of originality. For there is nothing original about attention and concentration, is there? It is all, as we have seen, a matter of the need to understand, a technique of concentration and exercise. Dragomir never thought when he spoke to us that he was bringing something of his own to add to the matter under discussion. “You throw yourself into philosophy bare, as into water,” he notes in one of his notebooks. “If you throw yourself in fully dressed, your clothes and your boots will drag you down, even if you know how to swim.” The “clothes” and “boots” are here the ornaments of your own mind, the pride of your foreknowledge and your ideas, and the undressing is the prior ritual that the philosopher performs in order to announce that in the act of

interpretation it is the being of the thing interpreted that must appear, and not the ingenuity of the interpreter. The interpreter interprets only by deciphering, finding the cipher of the thing (its “is”), which people no longer see either because they are no longer looking for it, or because they no longer have a fresh view of it. In short, if you want to get to the being of a thing, you have to let yourself be guided by it.

But then, if everything is reduced to heightened attention, to the focusing of the gaze and to deciphering, it is ridiculous to want to be an author. It is pretentious to put your signature to a “mere” gaze. We have seen that Dragomir used to close each lecture by saying that his ideas were the ideas that would have come into anyone’s mind if they had had the desire or the inclination to consider, as seriously as he had done, the matter in question.

Where in all this is there room for hypocrisy? In the fact that Dragomir knew very well what “labours of understanding” were concealed behind the “mere gaze”. Phenomenological scrutiny – that examination that grasped what no one could see anymore (or had never seen before) in a thing, that “saw” in any thing the hidden part of its own manifestation – was in fact the supreme difficulty of thinking, and as such something far from being available to everybody. And so the character who, in the name of the initial democracy of the “evenly distributed” gaze, had seemingly been definitively expelled from the stage – the author – now reappeared, when this thinking born from the liberation of the hidden was confronted with the supreme test of formulation. Heidegger himself had at one time to leave the road opened up by *Being and Time*, because his power of expression had failed him, the language had been unable to follow the thinking. And for Dragomir, writing had undoubtedly been the great burden of his life as a thinker. In a letter of November 1981 to Noica, at the end of the (unfinished) text entitled *Socrates*, Dragomir writes: “Dear Dinu, I am bored. My fullest admiration for those who can write; they are heroes. But how can you write when you could be thinking? Only women can give birth: we conceive.” That this proclaimed sterility of thought (which is apparently excused the test of objectivization, of “birth” through writing) is a whim, a momentary indulgence, designed to conceal if not a handicap then at least a disinclination, is made clear by another confession that Dragomir lets slip in one of his notebooks: “Where do I have difficulty? I have difficulty in *catching* my own thought. In order to know what you think you have to make an effort. In order to know what you think you have to formulate your thoughts. But how hard it is!”

One thing is certain, however: in these conditions of total austerity, to “do philosophy” ceased to be an “act of culture”. When Dragomir invoked the classic names of philosophy or made reference with spectacular ease to Greek, Latin or German sources, he was not doing it in order to show the solidity of his philosophical training, and still less to astound us or to make a display of

culture. He simply knew that for a professional thinker, at the end of its own solitude, the act of thinking met the thinking of the “great philosophers”. In January 1996, Dragomir shared the following thought with Cătălin Partenie: “Why do you need to read the great philosophers? Because when you look at Aristotle, for example, after thinking on your own about a problem, you see that out of, let’s say, ten things that he says about the problem you have said three, and two of them badly.” Precisely because these philosophers were “great”, precisely because, through them, you can get an idea of how and at what level a philosophical problem can be asked, they become inevitable companions on the road of your own thought. It is natural that when you think of something, since you are not the first to think of it, you should think together with those who have thought about it before you. Thus every author he quoted was for him a form of *mit-denken*, of “thinking in the footsteps of others”, together with them. And here, too, the lesson was eminently Heideggerian. The only non-Heideggerian aspect was that Dragomir had no “code”. Unlike Heidegger, he did not construct concepts, did not create an idiom for himself. Rather, inasmuch as in his lectures and writing he preferred colloquialism and direct formulation, he was closer to the image of Socrates who, according to Alcibiades in the *Symposium*, philosophized in the language of blacksmiths, shoemakers and tanners. The fragmentary character of his thinking (even the discourse on time, pursued and “constructed” over the years, takes the form of a journal of ideas) itself speaks of Dragomir’s intention to totally de-solemnize philosophy.

We may add to all this the *authenticity* of his effort, guaranteed by the very fact that this effort, as such, was not caught up in any institutional cultural circuit. Alexandru Dragomir – let us recall – never set out to publish. More than that, he never set out to write with the thought in his mind that someone would discover his manuscripts later and that they would thus ultimately see the “light of the press”. We might even say that, in so far as writing is a preoccupation attained by way of cultural mimicry and the adoption of a definite intellectual profession, Dragomir never wrote. The thousands of notes scattered through his various notebooks and on loose pieces of paper represent the more or less systematic, more or less concentrated record of *stages of thinking*, in relation to which writing appears in a somewhat accidental, and in any case secondary position. If he had been able to remember everything he had thought, he would probably never have noted anything down. I am convinced that he sometimes dreamt of a paradisiacal thinking, one that came *before the fall into writing*, and that could advance without the crutch of letters.

A FAILED SHIPWRECK

All this translates a sovereign indifference towards the fact that the public exists. Dragomir received nothing and expected nothing from anyone; he certainly did not expect recognition, which, without communication with the other and publication was hardly a possibility. If he had not met us, the small group that he thought might provide him with an opening for some of his ideas and an excuse for thinking aloud, the solitude of his thinking would have been perfect. And indeed his life and his “acts of thinking” would have acquired – as perhaps he had wished – that uncertain state of existence that lost treasures have at the bottom of the sea, existing somehow without in fact existing for anyone. What is now happening to him – these pages, the book that they accompany, the volumes that will follow it – basically represents the story of a failed shipwreck. For once in Romanian history, with Dragomir we find ourselves in the ontology of “it was to be”.

Dragomir’s thirst to *find out everything for himself*, his need, which became overwhelming in time, to be clear about himself and the world in which he had been “thrown”, brings him strangely close to a thinker who lived 2,500 years before him, and who is indeed the only one about whom he wrote recurrently: Socrates. The whole Socratic problematics of “to know” (to think you know, to know that you do not know, to know that it is possible to know or that it is possible to try to know, etc.), on which ultimately depends *the way we choose our lives*, seemed to Dragomir to be the supreme enigma of philosophy, and the thing to which it was worth dedicating one’s life.

Like the story of Noica in his Păltiniș retreat, the story of Dragomir withdrawn into the trenches of thinking raises the problem of the roads that are open to an intellectual when he does not want to follow the only road that is officially accepted: that which ends in an obedient dialogue with the authorities. In other words – and in dramatic terms – Dragomir’s story is an answer to the following question: how can you fulfil your destiny if it is incompatible with the historical world in which you live? On page 14 of the 1997 notebook whose cover bears the title *Odds and Ends*, the following story appears under the heading “Dictation from waking-sleep after lunch, 23rd April”: Three people are talking in the next world. One says: “I didn’t do much in my life, but I did do a few good deeds.” The second says: “I didn’t do good deeds, but I the things I knew how to do I did well.” The third says: “I did good deeds, and things that I knew how to do.” God hears them and says: “What are you looking for here? This isn’t the place for the things you did to be *judged*. This is the place for those who lived the life that I gave them and that was to be lived and cherished just as a gift. I didn’t ask you to put right the world that I made either by good deeds or by making things.” And Dragomir ends the story of his after-lunch dream with these words: “I asked what happens to those who could not live

their life because of circumstances that brought it low and sacrificed it – but I got no answer.”

Now, when the 90 odd notebooks have emerged from the underground of history and are waiting to be deciphered, published and judged (but by whom?), it is time to ask the question: is Dragomir’s destiny a mutilated one? Or is it possible that Dragomir did not know how to interpret his own life? It may be that on that afternoon of 23rd April 1997, Dragomir woke up too soon, and never heard the answer that was addressed to him. Perhaps, according to some higher calculations, it was precisely inasmuch as it seemed to have robbed him of his life’s destiny that the mutilated history in which he lived gave him the chance to fulfil it.

(English translation by James Christian Brown)

Part II

Romanian Philosophical Inquiries into Globalization and Education

Chapter VI

Globalization, Nationalism and Romania's Educational Reform(s)

*Stefan Popenici*¹

This work first briefly defines the rather confusing and misleading concepts of globalization. Considering the vast literature of the concepts and implications, this part focuses on Romanian realities, values and developments in relation to globalization which is analyzed through the prism of a possible use of local lessons in a broader context and for a common future. Second, the study focuses on the opposite of globalization to nationalism and localism and its relation to educational and democratic reforms. Third, it will briefly examine if and how the complex project of educational reform in Romania can use educational imagination in order to re-connect Romanian youths with a world in a globally imaged community.

Why then do we focus this study on globalization and nationalism? First, because it is democracy contrasted to any ideology that can help people “see” beyond boundaries and imaginary borders, beyond anti-minority tendencies, nationalism and intolerance. Second, because public education is the institution responsible – at both formal and informal levels – for promoting social and moral values, and educating people for a better world. In this context, when we talk about globalization, regionalism, progress or social capital it is not possible to exclude the importance of education for any major trend and social development. If Romanian education fuels the sad tradition of isolationism and exceptionalism imposed by the communists, it is necessary to evaluate both the magnitude of this situation and its possible remedial solutions. As Europeans and Romanian intellectuals it is our duty to offer a pragmatic and positive alternative to that disastrous ideology. Romanian education is now

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called to cultivate a sense of humility in the face of the world and its diversity and a desire to understand and to act in the world as a practical condition for everyone's present and future.

GLOBALIZATION AND EDUCATION

What is globalization? This term is surrounded by a haze of confusion: is it a subversive tendency, a phenomenon, an ideology, a reality, a rational hope, and so on. Globalization has been one of the catchwords since the 1990s. The significance of the concept is (like Beauty) "in the eye of the beholder". If we think globalization only in connection with the World Trade Organization, World Bank or IMF and reduce it, then we have a limited and highly controversial concept. In fact, globalization is an "umbrella term" for a complex set of various cultural, political, technological and economic changes. The economic part is related to multinational corporations, internationalization of production, mobility of capital and economic interdependence. This change has a major impact on the mobility of the labor force, expanded financial markets, and rapid relocation of population, production, goods, and so on. Ideological shifts cover liberalization of the market and its continuous expansion, democracy, decentralization and privatization. In this complex context of tremendous changes, new technologies change the concept of space and time with unexpected impact on the social fabric and its cultural foundations. Education is placed suddenly in a fierce competition with other social institutions, like television or the Internet. The general trend imposed by this new reality begins to have a strong echo especially in higher education. This is perceived more often as a major threat for local cultures, and a subversive attempt to impose a "world culture that transcends the nation-state" in a process oriented against local culture.

The present world presents too many disparities and gaps between "haves" and "have-nots" and a series of major threats for the world of our days:

- Global income is more than \$31 trillion a year, but 1.2 billion people of the world's population earn less than \$1 a day.

- 80 percent of the global population earn only 20 percent of global income, and within many countries there is a large gap between rich and poor.

- The three billion people living in the 24 developing countries that increased their integration into the world economy enjoyed an average five percent growth rate in income per capita, longer life expectancy and better schooling.

- Two billion people, living in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union, have been unable to integrate into

the world economy: their economies have contracted, poverty has risen, and education has advanced less rapidly than in the more globalized countries.

- The rise of sea level and global warming are no longer just a grim possibility; some uncertain effects on forest and agricultural systems are analyzed nowadays, and increased variability and volatility in weather patterns are expected to have a significant and disproportionate impact on the developing world, where the world's poor remain most susceptible to the potential damages and uncertainties inherent in a changing climate.

- The digital and information revolution has changed the way the world learns, communicates, does business and treats illnesses. In 2002, there were 364 people per 1000 using the internet in high income countries, while there were only 10 per 1000 in low income countries.

Source: The World Bank, 2004, <http://www.worldbank.org> and United Nations Development Programme, 2004, <http://www.undp.org>

These data represent major challenges for a world committed to look for a common future in an even more interconnected world. However, globalization represents in many aspects a practical solution for the major problems listed above: David Dollar reveals in an outstanding study² that globalization has been a force for growth and poverty reduction in countries affected by poverty and hunger, including such countries as China and India. Opening the markets and integration of economies and societies accelerates development. Looking at numbers and developments it is possible to see that globalization can be a powerful force for poverty reduction. The results are impressive:

It now takes only two to three years, for example, for the world economy to produce the same amount of goods and services that it did during the entire nineteenth century [...]. The number of poor has declined by 200 million since 1980. Again, this trend is explained by the rapid income growth in China and India, which together in 1980 accounted for about one-third of the world's population and more than 60 percent of the world's extreme poor.

Until the 1970s, China had a very isolated economy and the reforms focused on opening foreign trade and investment: the present economic boom experienced by China is undoubtedly a result of this movement:

² David Dollar and Aart Kraay, "Spreading the Wealth," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2002, pp. 124-133

As the Dollar proved, India, China, Vietnam, Uganda, and Mexico are not isolated examples; in general, countries that have become more open have grown faster [...] Contrary to the claims of the anti-globalization movements [...] greater openness to international trade and investment had in fact helped narrow the gap between rich and poor countries, rather than widen it. (Dollar/Kraay, 2002).

Globalization is often seen as an inevitable process, a common source of subversive “dirty” arrangements against local resistance of those committed to different ideals than commercial interests and uniformity of all the “subjects owned by almighty leaders that aim to have this world...”. This can be just a short abstract for the ideas that fuel the anger of demonstrators against globalization. This type of concern is expressed more in Western societies,³ and the conflict can be seen more clearly in Washington DC or Rome than in the “third world countries”. Often, McDonalds’ restaurants are attacked for being a symbol of globalization and aggressive capitalism in countries that don’t have too many reasons to care for the dense of local culture (which is often the source of “mcdonaldization”). Those protesters lack the curiosity to see if the anti-globalization movement does not go too far, and follow theoreticians that strongly reject any good aspects of this trend. Maybe one problem is that too many scholars, who look at “new democracies” or poor countries from the Marriot, Sheraton or Hilton Hotel’s crystal windows do not have the genuine curiosity to break the “specific” routes of their visits, to selected auditoriums (often more autistic than they suspect). Refusing a genuine plunge into the living culture and realities of those countries it is too easy to miss the point: globalization is often the only chance for those affected by poverty, banned by dictatorial regimes or isolated in fear and deprivations. This is another side of globalization and the idea to ignore reality if facts don’t fit into the fashionable or “politically correct” ideology represent the main cause for disastrous approaches of different cultures and political regimes. To live for a while in those countries pinpointed as victims or possible victims of globalization can be a life-changing experience. In 1989 – days of Romanian revolution against communism – Romanian students died in the name of freedom, against a regime which imposed realities of a “national communist state”. This “freedom” includes the reconnection of this country to the international community, along with cultural and political freedom, freedom of movement and a better life. I lived for a while in a society where even a child knew that we were isolated, in the name of our unique and “specific” culture, in order to protect us from “foreign enemies”. This was the so-called national-communist

³ With the notable exception of extreme religious or fundamentalist cultures;

society, composed by a recipe common for all “exceptionalist” or isolated regimes. Based on lived experiences and practical reasons I dare to say that in Romania only a stronger pace for globalization can help our democracy and can offer the young generation what is still so difficult to obtain, namely, a fair shake for a decent future. In a broader competition one can at least have the previously denied chance to compete, to enlarge one's horizons, to cross boundaries. This is both a good and a dangerous path, but as history shows, the local cultures of Greece or Rome flourished when genuinely open to other horizons and connected to the common humanity. As Thomas Friedman says:

[Globalization] can be incredibly empowering and incredibly coercive. It can democratize opportunity and democratize panic. It makes the whales bigger and the minnows stronger. It leaves you behind faster and faster, and it catches up to you faster and faster. While it is homogenizing cultures, it is also enabling people to share their unique individuality farther and wider. (Friedman, 2000)

From a Romanian scholar's perspective, globalization cannot be close to the triumphant universalism which marks “the end of history” or sympathetic to the perspective of “inevitable” process. Unfortunately, it is not “inevitable” and anyone can choose to live isolated. Countries such as North Korea or Iran reveal that great populations can be surrounded with insurmountable walls. After September 11, one finds an increasing group of scholars more circumspect about this optimistic and relaxed view. Different types of exclusive local (we can use even the more restrictive term, “fundamentalist”) ideologies now seduce people in the name of “Nation”, “Religion”, “Holy wars” and so on. This concurrent trend is violently against the idea of openness, shared values or “common humanity”. Reality proves sharply that humanity, shared values or just economic globalization require a long process of education. This process is vulnerable and exposed to many threats that make the “inevitable process” but a shiny possibility, and sometimes in the most unexpected places.

In the process of re-connecting to the outside economy and political international community after the communist era, Romania has achieved major changes. Although some Romanian scholars consider enthusiastically that educational reforms are far ahead of other sectors, the Romanian educational system has changed only on a very shallow level: most changes are exterior to real life, as are its systemic regulations and new structures. Old practices from before 1989 are maintained by the core group of teachers, trained before '89. The same educational myths and parochial organizations are controlled by

almighty “centers of power”⁴. Romanian schools are still marked by traces of nationalistic myths and ethnocentrism. They maintain a focus on local instead of universal values. The facts are a chaotic track for educational reform(s) in Romania after 1989 and lack of interest in a reform of values and practices at the school level. Corruption is another part of this story:

Western officials in Bucharest insist they're not ignoring Romania's corruption, which is said to be widespread, particularly in the privatization of state-owned companies. Romania, which has seven words for “bribe” ranks 77th on Transparency International's latest corruption index of 102 countries,” notes AP’s journalist William J. Kole⁵.

In 2003, a project financed through the Innovation Fund called “Investment in education” was banned with open anger by the Ministry of Education and Research after an official meeting where the promoter of this initiative was accused of being “subversive”, “accusing the educational system of corruption”. Nevertheless, for the last decade all European or international institution reports on Romania underline rampant corruption as a threat for democracy and the country’s development. The fact is that lack of an external audit of educational projects presents the same mechanisms: national pride when local interests can be unveiled and nationalistic discourses aiming to “demonize” those that can interfere in the “cleptocracy”. Corruption is a very good reason for some decision-makers to make a conscious appeal to nationalism and to impose isolationism and exceptionalism. Re-connection of Romanian education and civic culture with the international arena and global trends is much more difficult in this context: corruption proves to be a very serious reason for isolationism in both cultural and economic fields.

Globalization, Education and Romanian Nationalism after Communism

Ethnocentrism and nationalistic movements cannot be separated from education and the university: it is necessary to remember that national identity represents one pillar of the modern university in its German formulation. The modern idea of university derives from the intellectual work of German

⁴ School inspectorates were dominated for 15 years of post-communist existence by political appointees with discretionary power at the local level. These “leaders” are controlled by a concentric structure, with the Ministry of Education and Research in Center.

⁵ “NATO overlooking poverty, corruption to take in strategic Black Sea nations”, 2002-11-15, Associated Press: WILLIAM J. KOLE

philosophers, from Kant and Fichte to Schleiermacher and Humboldt. From the nineteenth century, the rise of national identities and pride lead to a form where national cultures could flourish with new and specific institutional possibilities. In time, society changed and institutions shaped by modernity were under pressure for a profound reform. However, in some states the university maintains the modern foundations as a core-ideology: national culture as foundation for a cultural project related to the nation-state. The university and educational system at large is still dominated in post-communist space by groups interested in using nationalism as a means of access and control of power and influence.

The legacy of the communist regime represents a major pillar for manipulation and for deep confusion between “nationalism” and “patriotism” or between chauvinism and citizenship. Obviously, it pays to use nationalism as a political tool: those responsible for endemic corruption easily turn the attention of the voters to “sensitive” issues other than corruption, poverty and the failure of Romania’s post-communist political projects. Romanians are still fascinated and manipulated with this type of rhetoric because nationalism represents a stable point in a context of insecurity regarding to economic situation and a blurred and confused national identity. Education did not help to change the situation after communism, and reinforced national-myths in a process of inculcations of opposite and anachronistic values. Fondness for nationalism is a natural reaction to the ideologized education and monopoly of a political class interested in maintaining the nationalist and xenophobic spectrum (or option) in a dangerous power-game.

After the Second World War, under Soviet domination, Romania shared the fate of other Central and East-European countries. The communist regime, imposed by force, lasted half a century with disastrous consequences at all levels, especially on education (which has affected the cultural background, social values and behavior). The popular revolt in December 1989 overthrew Ceausescu's dictatorship and his extreme totalitarian communist regime. It opened the long road to rebuilding democracy and the market economy, as well as to Romania's full reintegration into the culture of Europe. The radical communist dictatorship is undoubtedly responsible for present Romania’s drawbacks in comparison with other post-communist societies.

The beginning of educational reform in Romania coincided with the emergence of some democratic elements after half a century of strict and dictatorial alignment to ideological co-ordinates. Romania’s education system was suddenly no longer compatible with the radical changes which had occurred in society and economy. Therefore doctrinal differences did not block political parties from agreeing on the importance of education and making it a formal priority of their platforms in the first free elections (May 1990). However, the Ministry of Education – the institution in charge of the general

management of education and the final authority on school governance – was expected in that context to become the principal promoter of reform in education, closely assisted by other governmental structures. Policy makers openly (but formally) admitted the role of the school and universities as invaluable sources of cognitive and technological innovation and change in society for democratic reforms. Experts and scholars began to draft various laws, ordinances, governmental decisions, and directives aiming to eliminate the old regulations that had turned the educational system rigid and excessively centralized and transferred decision-making to the local level. However, after a period of optimism and enthusiasm, the actors promoting change in education began to acknowledge the enormous difficulties of this task. The Ministry – central administrator of resources and major (sometimes-unique) actor in educational policy decisions – welcomed new ideas, and the educational system benefited greatly from Romania's reconnection to the international scene. By the end of the 90s there was a visible effect, such that reforms in education were ahead of economic reforms (OECD, 1999).

However, despite the wide range of measures regarding higher education and curriculum, the Ministry of Education failed to change the “heart” of the system, the main myths and communist practices, the racial prejudices. After more than a decade of reforms, there is a general agreement in Romanian society about the constant decline of the quality of education, and the lack of connection between educational opportunities and market demands. There can be identified, at the political level (inside) and international levels, impotence to impose real changes in a country which is a NATO member and will join the European Union in 2007.

Higher education is still dominated by the structures and organizational culture established in communism. Monopoly structures block real changes, and it is easy to notice a general dissatisfaction of new professionals in universities in relation to local management or central administrative structures. Without a coherent policy for higher education and without a real network of national universities, international projects in Romania have not substantially influenced the higher education system.

The Ministry of Education failed to implement in 15 years a coherent policy of development for Educational Reform. It is possible to count at least six different projects (mostly opposite and destructive of previous developments and changes) on educational reform connected with different ministers. Each denied and changed decisions in the educational system implemented by the previous ministers, and the result can be seen now: a general confusion, a severe drop in international educational evaluations (IEA and TIMSS), and a body of teachers unmotivated and reluctant to change. Reform and change in education is seen now as a temporary set of initiatives that will be replaced completely by the next Minister of Education. Political

pressures still affect with unexpected results universities and schools: for example, Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj is a multicultural university in a multi-ethnic region, with a large Hungarian minority, along with Roma, Germans, Jews and other minorities. This institution is a good example of a university as a center for mutual understanding, common civic culture and a source for conflict-resolution for civil society. The mentioned example is notable considering the fact that the former ultra-nationalist mayor of Cluj – elected from 1992 until 2004 – has not visited even once the University, and has constantly blocked any support at the local administration level. Although Babes-Bolyai University respects and maintains its multicultural character in different dimensions, a new university maintaining ethnic and language segregation has appeared as a private initiative with political support and some political centers press for segregation at UBB. Nationalism remains a significant part of academic life in Romania, expressed in different forms and supported in open and subtle manners.

NEW LEGISLATION VERSUS LIVING REALITY

In a sense, undeniable progress was made in time in legislation for the protection of the rights of minorities in Romania. International reports underline the fact that Romania does not legally permit any form of discrimination. The situation of minorities in Romania has improved continuously for the last decade, and we can mention that the Hungarian minority has regained all its cultural, political, educational and confessional rights. An OECD report calls Romania a “world leader” in the realization of the right of minorities to be taught in their own language (OECD, 2001). The Roma situation – dramatic and complex all over Europe – is slowly improving in Romania, and it is possible to see practical policy measures and some positive developments and results. Romania implemented “positive discrimination” in universities for Roma students as a part of a coherent policy of support for this minority. Every public university in Romania now maintains a number of places for Roma students (the measure was initiated since the 1992-1993 academic years, extended afterwards by the Ministry of Education, and strengthened by public policy). Different social programs and media campaigns against discrimination of Roma students and workers were begun, and it is possible to see positive developments, even if the situation is far from resolution. As a plus, we can note that Romania's Parliament has by law representatives of minorities, and legislation explicitly forbids neo-Nazi, anti-Semitic or chauvinist organizations or public manifestations.

However, a simple walk in Bucharest⁶ can prove (by simply reading the posters on the walls or looking at the books that are sold unrestrictedly) that there is still a long distance between law and reality. The real problem with Romanian nationalism resides in the effects of communism in education, civic culture and present day political spectrum. The relation between nationalism and politics in Romania is more complex than appears from a simple look at the legislation and demands more subtle and difficult research. The most obvious political sign of a problem in Romania's political and civic culture is that the extreme nationalist parties are represented in Parliament or are popular although they openly use former fascist slogans⁷. On the other hand, such organizations act freely in public life as the so-called "National League for the Combat of Deromanization", the Professor "George Manu" Foundation and others, or publishing houses with an anti-Semitic, xenophobic and extreme-nationalist orientation.

In this context, the new technological environment is used now as a propaganda tool by extremists of all sorts and Romania makes no exception, having no restrictions. Using a classical search engine for Romanian websites, it is easy to find extreme nationalist organizations ranging from youth organizations to political groups, racists, neo-Nazi movements and Holocaust denial sites. Youths, students and adolescents are explicitly targeted: in the "Legionnaire Movement Declaration" from 1990, a main goal is to "inform" the new generations about the so-called "real history" in terms of this Romanian fascist movement. A long list of Romanian websites (as *miscarea-legionara.org*, *noua-dreapta.org*, *sfarma-piatra.com*, *goarna.go.ro* and others) are updated weekly with old extreme-nationalist materials along with new articles with the same hatefilled orientation. Some websites are connected through various links, and it is sufficient to find a single address, and one mouse-click allows visiting a whole network of national and international right-wing extremist websites. A neo-Nazi website based in the USA (*Nazi Lauck NSDAP/AO*) recently launched a so-called Romanian edition on the Internet with different links. By emails or by free advertisement it is possible to find journals ("Permanente" seems to be very active in this space), rock sites, cultural foundations, and youth organizations that are nationalist and right-wing oriented. Extremely manipulative, these sites promote Holocaust denial, neo-Nazi materials and studies, fascist Romanian leaders (such as Horia Sima) and links with other extreme right-wing movements. In some cases, it is possible to see that those sites receive thousands of visits, and every topic attractive for youths is maximally exploited for propaganda purposes ("Noua Dreapta" – a

⁶ Bucharest – Capital of Romania

⁷ Gigi Becali's PNG or Great Romania Party (PRM) represent unfortunate notorious examples in this sense;

neo-fascist organization – uses ecology as a main topic for its anti-Semitic and pro-Fascist agenda). It is relevant to note the fact that none of the above-mentioned list of examples was ever banned in Romania or under judicial or police investigation for their obviously outlaw activities, and hate-content propaganda. Conferences, manifestations, books, publications, websites and public campaigns with extreme-nationalistic, racists and neo-fascist content were undisturbed and are in obvious contrast with Romania's Government Ordinance no. 31/March 2002. Adopted as a law, this act states the "interdiction of symbols and organizations with fascist, racist or xenophobic character and cult promotion of persons guilty for crimes against peace and humanity". The reality shows that even here there is (still) a serious gap between law and reality, as well as a tacit acceptance of the chauvinistic movements.

The political and civic culture imposed by communism is blamable in a significant percent for the confusion that marks Romania's civic and cultural identity. The Soviet effort to replace national loyalties with commitment to socialist universalism was undermined with shrewd and equally aggressive methods in every state of the communist-block. The first bricks in the national-communism foundations were set by the Kremlin's idea to send in such Romanian expatriates as Luka Laszlo and Ana Pauker – members of Romania's national minorities – as *de facto* leaders of Romania. Pauker and Laszlo soon seized the practical direction of the Romanian Communist Party and in the pure Stalinist style, characteristic of that époque, they eliminated any other leader of the party. The reaction inside RCP was to fight back against this faction perceived as anti-national, composed and led by minorities and aliens. Later, Romanian leaders suppressed this sect and slowly changed the leadership in a continuous process of 'romanization' of the RCP.

The reference point for the "communist nationalism" in Romania is a declaration of the Romanian Communist Party from April 23rd, 1964, published in *Scînteia* newspaper: "There does not and cannot be a 'parent' party and a 'son' party, or 'superior' party and 'subordinate' parties...". Later, for the communist dictator Ceausescu, the nation – rather than the working class – became the ideological base and reference point. Ceausescu exploited the anti-Russian feelings of Romanians (common to all the Central European countries facing the Russian-Soviet invasion) and used this in order to build a twisted sense of national identity with a nationalistic, communist design. In his last decades, Ceausescu grotesquely distorted the idea of independence with nationalist myths in order to create in time the most rigorous communist police state in Central and Eastern Europe (excepting the particular case of extreme Stalinist Albania). Ceausescu's reaction, in the face of 1989's Romanian revolution, is indicative of his regime: he accused "foreign agencies" for the so-called "social turbulence in the country" with his usual recourse to the glorious Romanian history, fight for independence and resistance in face of alien

continuous alien aggression. With a form of anti-Soviet Stalinism, Ceausescu changed the communist-party-state into an ultranationalist and chauvinist organization, using every means to implement this ideology; education, media and party propaganda worked altogether to achieve the goals of the “Ceausescu Époque”.

The scars of the communist confusion of values are here, and the alternative story about national pride, citizenship and democratic civil society remain a privilege of a small minority. Nevertheless, no internal or external force helped a new generation of leaders to emerge in order to offer a real alternative for Romania. Former communist leaders transformed overnight into democratic leaders were finding in the early 90s that the cheapest and most efficient tactic to remain in power was to remain under a nationalist umbrella. In 1990, former communist President of Romania, Ion Iliescu, accused university students of being... “Fascist forces manipulated by foreign interests” and ended in blood their protest in University Square in Bucharest. This approach was suitable for leaders with a mentality derived from the old totalitarian ideology.

NATIONALISM AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER CONTROL

The political leader most responsible for Romania’s present use of nationalism as a political springboard is Ion Iliescu. This portrays the “nationalism-power-corruption” relation in a deeper sense than the ultranationalist leader of the Great Romania Party, C.V. Tudor. In fact, in 13 years of democracy and reconstruction after communism, Mr. Iliescu was President of Romania for more than 10 years, with a long story of conflicts and controversial moments tainted with innocent blood. There is no doubt that Ion Iliescu is the most representative politician of post-communist Romania with his unique longevity. He is also the most responsible political figure for Romania’s current situation: endemic corruption, brain-drain, chronic poverty, collapsing healthcare and educational systems, “cleptocrats” in power and social disruption. Iliescu is the “father” of most important political parties in power after more than 16 years after the revolution. We can say that he is responsible in major scale for the present political spectrum of nowadays Romania: Mr. Basescu a former collaborator of President Iliescu and former Minister in the early 90s became, after the 2004 elections, the President of Romania; C.V. Tudor – leader of the Great Romania Party – was in Iliescu’s last term a close comrade and open supporter of his political party, PDSR. Actually, every political leader today in Romania was a colleague or a close comrade of the old communist patriarch, in his post-communist invention: The National Salvation Front. Therefore, Iliescu’s political career is representative

for anyone interested in Romania's present situation from a cultural, political or economical point of view.

Iliescu is still one of the most respected or feared politicians in the Romanian political game. He entered public life in his adolescence, being closely related with communist and pro-Soviet movements. He studied at the Faculty of Electric Technology of the Polytechnic Institute of Bucharest and at the Energy Institute of Moscow, where he was actively involved in the political life of communist students. Between 1967 and 1971, he was minister in charge of youth problems, and then for six months Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR). Excluded from the central body of the PCR on charges of "intellectual deviation," Ion Iliescu became Vice-President of the Timis County Council, in 1971-1974, and President of the Iasi County Council in 1974-1979. In conflict with the communist dictator, Ion Iliescu was seen in the late 80s as the possible successor of Nicolae Ceausescu apparently in the context of "perestroika".

On the evening of December 22, 1989 – the day which marked the victory of the Romanian anti-Communist Revolution – Ion Iliescu was among the founders of the Council of National Salvation Front (CFSN) and became President of this new institution. Iliescu was active in the Romanian revolution as a self-proclaimed new leader of the country. Now, 15 years after the Revolution, he is perceived to be one of Romania's most influential and experienced politicians. Any outsider of Romanian political life would be surprised at this long and successful political career of an old communist leader in a young democracy, in a country which changed its dictatorship and had youths and students in the front lines. Iliescu seems to be the eternal leader of Romania's political post-communist poles, a Patriarch who seems even more efficient, powerful and secure.

On May 20, 1990, Ion Iliescu was elected President of Romania, over the two-year period of the Constituent Assembly. At the presidential elections of October 11, 1992, the first organized under the new Constitution of Romania, he won a new mandate. A large part of the electorate preferred his program "I Believe in Romania's Change for the Better". Obviously, in his time Romania was not changed for "the better," and his counter candidate in the presidential elections of November 1996 outran Ion Iliescu. A new President was in place: Mr. Emil Constantinescu, a former communist activist in Bucharest University. In the early 90s Mr. Constantinescu was an obscure leader of the student democratic movements, becoming in time a candidate for Presidency. In his term, President Constantinescu lost the support of the voters with unprecedented speed. With a disastrous proposal for Romanian public life, Constantinescu wasted the youth support in a surprisingly short time after the 1996 elections. His political performance, the population's poverty and the spectrum of the extremist option were the best propaganda for Ion Iliescu in the

2000 elections. As a Machiavellian and clever politician, Ion Iliescu exploited the insecurity of the Romanians after the ridiculous, corrupt and inefficient governance of the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR, a coalition which was drastically sanctioned by the electorate, which erased them from the political scene with the 2000 elections). Nominated and supported by PDSR, Iliescu got a new term as President of Romania with his program "Close to the Citizens, Together with Them", a brilliant example of populism and so-called "moderate-nationalism". At that time he said: "... I ask you to come with me, under the motto, "Close to the people, together with them". Let's turn a page and let's write a new one in our history!" One of Iliescu's main possible targets for this "new page in our history" was the younger generation! The same generation that rejected him furiously in the early 90s with street demonstrations, with slogans related with his anti-democratic formation, communist past, populism and alleged connections with corrupt people voted massively for candidate Iliescu in the 2000 elections.

Drugs, violence, lack of opportunity in their own country, poor schools and the low quality education, corruption and identity crisis; all those were recalled in his 2000 electoral messages, along with a shrewd exploitation of the anti-democratic and extremist menace of The Great Romania Party. As populist polarized propaganda, familiar for a former member of the communist elite, Mr. Iliescu set for his traditional electorate a paternal image and a message structured on the deepest economic fears. At the same time, Iliescu's message for liberals underlined the real threat of the extreme nationalism of his former collaborator! For the first time, Ion Iliescu was not only elected by the majority, but the same students which years ago demonstrated in Bucharest University Square against him and what he represents in Romania's history. Youths, former political opposition and civic associations certified at that time that he is the defender and first representative of democracy, freedom and new chances for Romania. This irony is a living expression of a lack of real alternatives for a very weak civil society.

The last obstacle for a perfect political career was removed: university students, young people and the so-called "intellectual elites" (along with their pathetic political experiments) accepted that democracy can be saved if and only if everyone votes for President Iliescu. Democracy was saved for the second time after the anti-Communist revolution when a former communist leader realized a dangerous goal: social consensus, achieved with a strategy based on a permanent attempt to nullify any other political force or possible initiative. Romania again wears communist clothes with fashionable democracy style; a second-hand democracy.

This was another lesson in the practical use of nationalism as an instrument for capturing political power: manipulating a twisted sense of patriotism and that extremist risk, Mr. Iliescu and his group managed to bring

together the vast majority, and Romanian society was forced to recognize him as the only decent possibility for democratic leadership. Internal and external observers applauded his success at that time, overlooking the fact that the nationalist and extremist poles in post-communist Romania were Mr. Iliescu's responsibility. Youths seem to accept the fact that the Romanian political class is unprepared, corrupt and with no concern for public well being. The major option for youth is now to emigrate: since 1989, Romania is the second nation in the world whose citizens claim asylum in the industrialized countries. According to records published by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNCHR), until January 2002 over 400,000 Romanians claimed asylum especially in the EU states, USA and Canada. The official numbers do not include the number of those who claimed asylum in other countries. An entire social class has left Romania after the continuous leadership of the former communists. This social class would be capable of being a "pressure group" for effective reforms, local development and real democracy. Of course, such a group would not be very popular with so inefficient and corrupt a political class.

Iliescu and his own creation of Romania's political spectrum use the manipulative power of nationalism as a political platform and a way to take out of public interest the Romanian drama in the face of rampant corruption and poverty. This is a key for understanding the purpose of the repeated 2003s "Holocaust denial" governmental communiqués, ubiquitous official discourses with nationalist sentences or anti-American and anti-Western presidential remarks, which often stunned international observers. A play between local discourses (nationalistic, oriented against the "outside" enemy of the nation) and statements for international community still present some advantages for local politicians, regardless of their ideological orientation. Holocaust denial represents here a practical example of this type of play.

Although Adrian Nastase's Cabinet condemned the wartime persecution and crimes against Jews⁸, the same Romanian Government released, on June 12, 2003, an official denial of the Holocaust in Romania in its weekly press release. Nobody explained why Prime Minister Adrian Nastase and his Cabinet suddenly changed their view. At that time, President Iliescu criticized the Government's Holocaust denial, saying it reopened "a useless debate". Just a few months later, President Iliescu shocked Israel and Romania's Jewish community when he said in an interview with Israel's Haaretz newspaper that: "The Holocaust was not unique to the Jewish population in Europe. Many others, including Poles, died in the same way" (Rabinowitz, 2003). Holocaust and Romania's responsibility for the anti-Semitic movements and crimes during WW II is one of the most sensitive points in Romanian public debates and at

⁸ Romania's pro-Nazi dictator Ion Antonescu was responsible for hundred of thousands of crimes against Jewish population.

the core of extreme nationalism in political life. The communist propaganda distorted history for its own purposes and now, 16 years after the communist breakdown, the “official history”, which remains a succession of glorifying moments and national myths, is dominated by academics with controversial profiles. This maintains the confusion, lack of responsibility and denial in a space without debate on this sensitive issue. Academics politically nominated to important positions in education and cultural life represent an influential group that manipulates and provides nationalist propaganda when necessary.

Facing mounting international criticism regarding the unprecedented corruption, Romania’s leading political circles revived the nationalist populist themes in an obvious attempt to redirect public attention to emotional issues. This recourse to nationalism and stereotypes proved in time to be useful for politicians, but in this game of hidden interests and populist rhetoric Romania wasted for years many opportunities and human capital. As former U.S. Ambassador to Romania, Michael Guest, noted:

Romania needs a national dialogue on the ethical dimensions of corruption. [...] It really boils down to an elementary principle of equal justice for all. Whenever I think about the cost of corruption to this country, I think of the talented young Romanians who have told me they want to leave Romania in search of a better future. Many of them tell me it’s less a question of salary levels than a feeling that they’ll never get a fair shake here. Romania can’t afford this hemorrhaging of young talent. Don’t those who are pocketing the cash or rigging the decisions ever stop to think what they are doing to their country? (Guest, 2002).

In May 2003, attending the release of his latest book, Ion Iliescu said:

In my discussions with Western officials I tell them they should not have this kind of patronizing, arrogant, imperial attitude towards Europe’s alleged outskirts that we used to be. What right do the Americans have to judge new and old? Their state is only two hundred years old or something like that. (Sorescu I., 2003).

An official response of the U.S. Embassy to President Iliescu’s remarks emphasizes the fact that corruption is no longer a “Romanian internal affairs problem”. More than that, in May 2003, during a short visit in Bucharest, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense, Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, stated again in a press

conference that Romania's two most important tasks are building a solid market economy and annihilating corruption.

The Romanian story moves directly into the issue of nation-state and globalization: internal and external pressures now force Romania to regain a place in the European and global market, in the international community. But the necessary step in order to break the monopoly of former communists and kleptocrats and to have a strong and genuine democracy is to change the approach and pay more attention to values in education. This is the next and ineluctable step necessary for positive and long term changes, for future positive developments.

Exalting the historical past of the nation, its mythical continuity and different national symbols representative for its "Herderian" nationalism, Iliescu again diverted attention from the current social and economic disaster and international accusations of rampant corruption. Traumatized by the paranoiac communist dictatorship, Romanians work now to rebuild social institutions in a tremendous effort. Without a realistic and efficient reform project for education⁹, economy and public life, with international involvement and local empowerment, Romania will face the specter of increasing instability and the extreme right. The first step is to rebuild trust and to reopen the economy and culture to the world. Putnam notes that "when trust and social networks flourish, individuals, firms, neighborhoods, and even nations prosper" (Putnam, 2000).

According to recent studies, Romania has the lowest scores on trust (Halman, 2001), far below the European average, and this is relevant for the dynamics of the political scene and represents an important factor for the future. In 2003, the Gallup Organization published on a national poll that 55 percent of Romanians consider that they cannot trust other people, and only 37 percent do trust people (IPP/Gallup, 2003). The same Gallup opinion poll shows that 35.8 percent of respondents agree with the idea of isolating gypsies from the majority (57.7 percent disagree) and 17.5 percent consider that Jews should be encouraged to emigrate Romania (59, 4 percent disagree); 10.6 percent think that Jews destabilize society (58, 0 percent reject that) and 12.4 percent agree to the idea that "real Christians should avoid any contact with Jews". An astonishing 30.4 percent of respondents agree with the idea that Romanians should avoid "mixture" with any other nation.

Education is called since 1989 to change mentalities, to build a human capital that is open, democratic and proactive. The present situation allows a corrupt political class to run an entire country in its own interests. The Heritage

⁹ For the last 15 years Romania's educational system tried six different projects for educational reform, with unbalanced, controversial, and far from the expected results;

Foundation revealed in “2005 Index of Economic Freedom” that Romania ranks 125: its main problems being rampant corruption, the fiscal burden of Government, and so on. For a country with Romania’s potential, something must be terribly wrong at the foundations to have such poor scores on an international comparative scale. A necessary and realistic reform needs to be implemented¹⁰. But the Romanian example represents the main characteristics for a mechanism common for various formulas of manipulation of nationalistic and/or religious beliefs for political and resource control. Authoritarian, semi-democratic regimes or corrupt governments use these mechanisms all over the world.

IMAGINING THE FUTURE: ROMANIAN EDUCATION AND GLOBAL ARENA

For various reasons we have focused previous chapters on the main blockages for a positive development of the Romanian educational system and culture. First, because of the practical implications of this factors with all incredible loss of resources, time and potential. On the other hand, specialists in education are conscious of the future implications of these facts and about the importance of real and profound reforms in this vital sector of society. However, it is obvious that Romania is on the right track for changes: joining the Euro-Atlantic structures, Romania has opted for one of the most important changes in its modern history. This option already has been an impact on cultural values and cultural reconstruction after the nefarious communist experience. Education will be compelled as an E.U. member to change not only economic and internal affairs, but education and civic values. The permanent contact of Romanian citizens with Western countries already shows, as a side result, an incredibly profound and major change in mentalities and shared values.

Education actively shapes the imagined identities for future generations, either as isolationists, nationalistic and ethnocentric individuals or as people oriented to the world and the common values of humanity. Part of the community in a restrictive or broader sense – according to the educational background and dominant values of the civic culture at local level – youths build the future for a country or a region depending on the “imagined community”. The concept of imagined communities was introduced in the early 1980s by Anderson, with his book “*Imagined Communities*” (1983). With this he opened a new approach for nationalism, turning the attention to the subtle

¹⁰ Source: Marc A. Miles, Edwin J. Feulner, and Mary Anastasia O’Grady, *2005 Index of Economic Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation and Dow Jones & Company, Inc., 2005), available at www.heritage.org/index

mechanisms of imagination that govern national identities, borders and territories. In this new light, European nationalisms reveal the imagined quality of nation and the power of imagination in history. Anderson explains the idea of the nation in the following terms: "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". Based on indirect social relationships and imagined social identity rather than direct experiences, the imagined community shapes the territory and the borders for a person or a local community. The imagined community is now a key for the appearance and reproduction of postmodern societies. The disruptive situation and apparent incompatibility between the Muslim world and the West has revealed a surprising imagery which is strong even in moderate Muslim groups: there is a Muslim nation insulted by cartoons considered to be offensive for their religion. It is a strong example of new imagined communities based unexpectedly on religion in the 21st century. Education can expand the imagination in such a way that future generations will see the borders of humanity instead of seeing the nation or religion as against other nations or religions beyond the imagined border. This is the major challenge for education in the 21st century. Romanian education is also challenged now for many reasons to change its paradigms in order to offer something new for Romanians as young citizens within the European Union and the global community.

When we talk about global issues or theoretical globalization in education it is necessary to expand the common perception and to go beyond a simple inclusion of this issue as part of the compulsory or school-based curriculum. A formal change of mentalities and vision is not enough: in order to go beyond the formal and usual boundaries, we are challenged to find ways to stimulate emotions and genuine interest in global issues. Through imaginative learning scenarios we can build learning experiences where every student can 'feel' empathetically the basic human values and his or her own responsible affiliation with the human race, regardless of color, religion or ethnicity. We consider that education should pass the remote paradigm of pure theoretical structures and rationalistic ideologies in order to be able to teach students as responsible global citizens, oriented by human fundamental values: freedom and democracy, solidarity, equity and equality, ecology and respect for nature, tolerance and mutual understanding, citizenship and responsibility. So far, globalization and its economical and cultural mechanisms has been poorly managed and has failed to show its potential. Capital market liberalization imposed by the IMF and other international financial institutions has been a source for social disruption and increased poverty in many developing countries. At the same time – and maybe for the same reasons – failure to understand cultural differences and local specificity in the context of global arena has

created a very tense international situation, characterized often as “clashes of civilizations”. Projects for education along with the courage to approach “out of the box” the complex problem of globalization and cultural and religious differences are the necessary solution against naiveté and blunt political approach for our common future.

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Chapter VII

Global Processes: What Has Education to Learn from Globalization

Ciprian Fartusnic

Primary good that we distribute to one another is membership
in some human community.

– Michael Waltzer, *Spheres of Justice*

Since 89, the Romanian educational system has faced the complex task of initiating and implementing an in-depth reformation aimed at enabling students to adapt to new political, social and economic conditions. Vague and highly controversial, the process of globalization has had, so far, little influence on curricular reform. Graduates seem to have a limited capacity to understand and respond effectively to present global challenges, non-state international interests and the new perspective of statehood. However, global forces are unprecedented resources and should be taken into account by education. Considering a definition of citizenship that goes beyond the boundaries of nation-state, the present article tries to demonstrate that preparing the students for global civil society is an investment worth making.

GLOBAL PROCESSES AND SPECIFIC UNDERSTANDINGS

An impressive amount of work has been done since the '90s inside and across different academic fields to explore the concept of *globalization*. Together with *civil society*, this concept appears to have the most important influence today in the political and economical debates and has managed to reshape the way we formulate fundamental questions. In a rather short period of time, the social sciences have cast light on the processes in the real world related to globalization.

Globalization is creating a new potential and a new limit for the nation-states, as unprecedented influence of external factors is exercised upon internal policy-making processes. Even for those that are under-playing the importance of globalisation, it is difficult to ignore, as Marginson (1999) points out, trends that have appeared in the last years. Among them, the most easy to observe are:

- an increase of global corporate financial power (finance and trade dimension);

- an increase of ICT usage and the creation of internet (communication and information technologies);
- an increase in the number of persons travelling to different countries for the purposes of tourism, work and migration (international movements of people).

Besides these observable processes, many social scientists are stating that in recent years there has been a mix of cultures and fading of traditional norms and values. The core of national identities (language, ideologies) are converging more than ever before and at the same time with key symbols which are associated with different products or services. However, the public awareness of the meaning of globalization tends to be low, despite the important efforts made by social scientists to understand and to introduce the concept in public discourse.

For Tomlinson (2001), this situation can be observed in the oversimplification of the meaning of the global economy or global communication in public debates. I would go further and state that a better indicator of this low public awareness is the anti-globalization movement and its double standard policy of denying at the same time the reality of “going global” and the positive impact of this process. Riots and disturbances provoked on many occasions hide a lack of real understanding of the dimensions of this process from the supporters of this social movement. As many observers have noted, even the anti-globalisation group soon became a global movement. “Constructive” criticism is not possible without a minimal common understanding of basic assumptions and an agreement on competing values.

Unfortunately, the public debates rarely focused on the foundations of globalization, constantly being concerned only with questioning the impact of this process on local/national/regional level. The conspiracy theories abound while in-depth analysis of concrete activities lying behind the concept (from trade and financial flows, information and communication technologies, movement and migration of people and labour to cultural interferences and divergences) are left aside.

According to Canclini (1996), globalization is more than a mobility of goods, services, investments and technology across borders; it is more than a world-scale market. The source of this reductive understanding lies in the constant mercantilisation of social life. Public debate and public opinion are less and less able to distinguish between competing values, to balance the cost/benefit analysis with other types of evaluation and to go beyond efficiency in defining effectiveness. With rapidly developing influence, the professional fields and media (governed and conditioned by the profit requirements) seem to have succeeded in rendering public opinion incapable of recognizing the

plurality of spheres underlying our society, as defined by Waltzer (1983). The economic perspective becomes a serious barrier for tracing limits between different spheres in order to avoid the benefits acquired in the market domain to be illegally exchanged in other domains. The art of separation, of operating with different criteria and values for different spheres in our complex societies offers new meanings and new understandings of this process.

The process of mercantilisation of all aspects of life is an error that even social thinkers have not managed to avoid. Amartia Sen (2000) proved that in considering the well-being of a society we should go beyond the mere possession of goods or the satisfaction of desires. The goods are important only if we are taking into account first the performances of humans. In deciding the well-being of someone, it matters if a possession belongs to a poor person or a rich one, just as it matters if the person is living in a difficult period of his or her life. We conceive desires and we have expectations; however these are not fixed, but depend heavily on particular circumstances. Sen demonstrated that what is important in evaluating well-being is what a person is capable of doing with his possessions. In a similar way, he proved that the evaluation of societies and their level of development could be made not by taking account mainly of economic performance, but by analysing the existing positive liberties. However, a large number of policies are still based on the presupposition that a developed society is only one that is economically efficient.

Understanding global processes from a strictly economic point of view entails a generally pessimistic view on the significant power decrease of the states to influence macro economic policies and national economic developments. However, more and more evidence defends the idea that the impact of external economic pressures on national economies and public policies is linked directly with the power of the internal institutions and the synergy of state agencies with the key economic players. Weiss (1998) uses the concept of co-ordinated interdependencies to define the transforming capacity of a state to guide and coordinate the economic change. Taking the example of such countries as Japan, Germany or Taiwan, Weiss points out that contrary to common thought regarding globalization, states are far from powerless and passive when confronted with global economic forces. Both in principle and in reality states initiate many actions assuring social welfare and constantly adapt the policy instruments used to address emerging challenges. A correct understanding of these new challenges entails adapting the traditional state roles and re-questioning the state's roles in economic policies. It is necessary that some of the roles be left out while others should be reiterated: there are many areas where the state still has a vital role in the economic development of a nation.

That crisis is as an opportunity for revival, reconstruction and reorganisation is the optimistic message that is passed on by the defenders of

the globalization. Critics, however, interpret the major turmoil on international markets as sure signs that the time has passed for state capacity to influence national economic growth. Economic globalization received an important input from the financial market difficulties faced today by countries around the world. While the economic crisis affected only particular regions on the globe (i.e. South East Asia), neither argument can prevail. In the future, an unwanted event such as a generalised crisis, affecting at the same time the national economies and the global financial market, could clarify the winner in this debate.

LIMITS IN UNDERSTANDING GLOBAL PROCESSES

Theories denying the novelty of processes specific to globalization (i.e. arguing that it is a mere technical discussion on international financial flows) are less popular today. However, as already pointed out in the opening section of this article, there is little agreement on the *structure* and *impact* of global forces.

Garcia Canclini (1996) proposes escaping the narrow limits of the economic approach and thinking globalization as a paradigm created by cultural industries realigning, without dissolving, cultural differences. Using an insightful and powerful concept in his analysis, *hybrid cultures*, the Mexican thinker demonstrates convincingly that the domination of cultural industries creates and disseminates various cultural models, in many cases opposed.

Arguing the necessity of developing new interdisciplinary research tools to approach and understand this process, Canclini raise the question of the dimension of cultural globalization: are all cultures and populations “affected” or will globalization include only a part of the world, while the rest is *a priori* excluded? This question remains open; however, any future investigation should take into account the idea that globalization is a collection of processes that homogenize and fragment at the same time, “creating a new order of differences and inequalities” (Canclini, 1996). From this perspective we can try to oppose, fight against, but not to deny the existence and the growing influence of external influences on our cultures. It is a time when the most productive and enriching attitude is to open the sense of identities and cultures towards the experiences and knowledge of the others taking advantage of the global networks and interdependencies.

Political culture is no exception within this process. Culture and politics seem to have found a new space for inter-relating and enlightening each other. We have described above briefly the process of mercantilisation of our societies. From a different perspective, Taylor (2004) raises the question of the present ethnocentrism and secularization: the social imaginary of modernity tends to think of a just society only in terms of the material security of its

members and a fair and balanced share of goods among them, while leaving aside the recognition of the value, identity and dignity of all members of a society. Globalization processes are, paradoxically, making this idea more and more popular today: the societies are admitting generally that they are offering a distinct combination of basic principles and values for their members, and this plurality is best advertised within global movements.

On the other hand, there are scholars stating that there is a dangerous idea behind globalization, and the apparent diversity is leading in the future to a unique model of governance. The globalizing forces and the uniformity of reactions to change are seen by many social scientists as entailing the risk of creating an “ideal” (neo-liberal) model of governance or cultural colonialism (i.e. Americanisation). These theories, however, ignore the fact that human nature can be represented not only as an unchanging but also as a variable and constructed entity.

Taking into account a concept of justice that offers a space to differences between nations and individuals, globalizing forces are not erasing but enhancing cultural differences. By annexing the global into their own practices, by local adaptation of external ideas, values, attitudes and practice, individual nation states are proving the heterogeneity of globalization processes. Weiss (1998) points out that the enthusiasm linked to the idea of globalization was not matched by clarity in the way this term is used. Today it is difficult for anyone to ignore the global movement of capital and investment, in an era when the search for a cheap labour force is a key to the impressive growth of the major players in the world. At the same time, it becomes clearer that the translation of knowledge into a salable commodity has a direct impact on the public policies of a state. However vaguely defined and with a large variety of meanings, the discourse on these processes continues to be an obsession at a *global* scale.

Before questioning the impact of globalization processes on education, it is important to try to analyse the limitations in understanding globalization. As Marginson (1999) highlights, “When the heterogeneity of globalisation is recognized, its partial nature also becomes more apparent. Empirically, globalization is radically incomplete. Even the globalization of the financial markets, rally only extends to the nations in the ‘Triad’, and a fully integrated world economy – let alone a fully integrated world polity or society – is a long way off. Global societies are tiny, and global citizenship is an idea that has not yet come into governmental form, although the new subjectivities infused by global relations have a much wider spread”.

It is therefore worth asking ourselves: Are we in a new historical stage? Is this the end of the capitalist nations? Is this impressive flux of human and physical resources across borders leading to a general convergence of national

institutions? Are the politics of the nation-state and the nation states themselves entering a new stage?

According to Weiss (1998), the existing evidences are not entirely sufficient to answer these questions or to reject any of the following basic assumptions that could be identified in different theories about globalization:

01. There is a strong globalizing trend, and the state power is significantly decreasing.
02. There is a strong globalizing trend, but the state power remains unchanged.
03. There is a weak globalizing and a strong internationalisation trend, and the area of the state power is restrained.
04. There is a weak globalizing and a strong internationalisation trend, and the power of the state and the diversity will be enhanced.

The novelty and the unprecedented radical changes in the economies of the world are clearly signs of a process that cannot be ignored: commerce, finance, investments and international production are visible indicators of this process. However, as presented above, there are clear signs that this process has a larger scale in today's societies or even that there are *parallel* processes of globalisation, that could be identified in different supra-national political institutions, in the world development of new communication technologies, in cultural convergences etc. Far from being a myth, as presented by some analysts (i.e. Ruigrok and van Tulder, 1995), globalization is undoubtedly a real process and, from the research side, a powerful tool in analysing a variety of aspects of our contemporary societies.

The political implications of the global processes are perhaps the most difficult to predict. However, this exercise is a necessity since all national policies (including educational policies) depend entirely on the underlying assumptions of governance. Globalization should also be considered in relation to the process of internationalisation. This concept captures the idea of large-scale changes, different varieties of capitalism and, subsequently, a variety of internal strategies for adjusting to change. Hirst and Thompson (1996) clearly presented the differences between the role of national policies, highlighting that globalisation is a *trans* or *supra* national process that entails, as a core idea, the diminishing role of nation states and their policies while internationalisation is limited to bi-lateral or multi-lateral relations between different nation states. Internationalisation considers the nations as the basic units of analysis, while globalisation challenges this almighty role. In the global era government continues to be largely national in form and education remains in the strict boundaries of government power.

GLOBALIZATION AND CITIZENSHIP

In understanding globalization it cannot be ignored that it is not the only process relevant for the nation state politics. Marginson (1999) identifies also the trend of universalization of citizenship and participation in governance, civil affairs, education, labor markets and consumption.

Societies and governances are developing at the same time as is the meaning of the citizenship (Heater, 1990). In the early 90s, as Bîrzea (2005) points out, we can speak of the rediscovery of citizenship, yet with important historical changes: post-communist transitions, the crisis of the welfare state and erosion of the nation state. It is not a mere coincidence that the interest in citizenship has developed at the same time with the interest in globalization: both engage the democratic project in itself, both are instances of a symbolic reality that it is constantly revisited and revised.

Citizenship is the engine giving reality to a political system, making the members of a society assume the subjacent values and embrace the practices specific to democratic life. It is not just a status, created by a range of rights and responsibilities, but also an identity, derived from participation in a political community. Active citizens, participation in political life and political institutions, and a reasonable level of trust in the political class are conditions *sine qua non* for any democratic governance.

Although encouraging, the global evolution of democratic processes shows the signs of important differences in different parts of the world. Moreover, there is a democratic deficit proven by the lack of interest in political life that cannot be ignored. Distinguishing between formal democracy (the symbolic structure) and substantive democracy (the concrete way of realisation), it is easy to observe that today a significant number of citizens all over the world are challenging substantive democracy.

The theory of citizenship is, as in the case of globalization, closely linked with the role of the state in a modern society. As already presented above, the traditional role of the state is challenged in practice. The members of the society represent one important direction of reconstruction and thus the necessity for elaborating a theory of citizenship. Any system or political theory, as pointed out by Bîrzea (2005), has in its very structure a reference to citizenship. However, there is no exhaustive theory of citizenship, covering all the aspects, but only pragmatic approaches or partial models or theories difficult to integrate in more general political theories. It is a situation similar to the difficulty in harmonizing theories on globalization with those on the state.

Another important convergent point with the theories on globalization is the recent understanding of citizenship as *cosmopolite citizenship*. According to Delanty (2000), it is the right time to see unbounded citizenship as a different model than one based on nationality or bounded citizenship: civic action is

taking place in a global society and is legitimised by rights and liberties that are universal (i.e. Universal Declaration of the Human Rights). The nation state continues to be organised and governed through political interplay of power, but citizens have the option of participating to a global civil society. Birzea (2005) draws attention to the fact that this understanding of citizenship is for the time being only a principle, an identity option derived from the interdependency and globalization of political communities. Therefore it is impossible to find explicit references in national or international legal systems or institutions (i.e. Constitutions, International Law, etc.), being only a subject of academic debate and policy analysis. It is important to observe that the nation state is no longer able constantly to refute and ignore external influences on domestic policies, to “sustain indefinitely a zone of economic and cultural isolation” (Marginson, 1999). It is no longer the one and only agent of modernisation, but only a partner in a worldwide range of actors.

Citizenship is one of the key areas for aiding the nation state in remaining viable in the global era, and walking with confidence among global linkages. Global citizens and global civil society could significantly reduce the difficulties and the challenges raised by the existence of a polycentric policy-making process, with “states as merely one level in a complex system of overlapping and often competing agencies of governance” (Hirst and Thompson, 1996). The double determination of citizenship (national and global) makes possible the reconciliation of the global cultures and economies with the overwhelmingly national existing policies. However, as Marginson (1999) points out, national electorates remain subject to a “democracy illusion” in which politics lags behind globalisation, since national policies claim that by exercising citizen rights within the nation state they gain at the same time a purchase on global markets and cultural flows. By constantly rejecting the inter-dependence and influence of external forces on domestic affairs, the nation state introduces instability, confusion and disincentive.

The message sent today to citizens is in many cases altered and short sighted, focusing on the *limits* and ignoring the *potential* of globalization processes. The social structure of tomorrow is endangered, and without a careful examination of response to these challenges the polarization process of societies will be sharpened. A division between a globally connected elite and a subordinated social layer connected to the global dimension only through consumption could be the reality of tomorrow. There is a large debate today on the social implications of the globalization processes. Beyond different definitions and assumptions on global processes there is a variety of interpretations and predictions. In the early ‘90s, one major implication was considered to be the creation of a new global social class structure. Reich (1991) stated that, following the model of the national social structures, globalization entailed new categories of work. Distinguishing between the work based on

symbolic analysis, service worker and routine production workers, he drew attention to the potential risk for the highest paid group to “no longer inhabit the same economy” and to isolate themselves, as an elite, from the rest of the society. More than a decade after Reich’s analysis, the prospect of polarization of society is still a concern, even if the globalizing powers are not seen as the source of all evils.

Education could play a major role in avoiding or, on the contrary, in expediting this process. The responsibility of nation state to become aware of these risks and to decide to take appropriate actions is immense, while at the time, the constraints are stricter than presumed. States create citizen identity in a multitude of ways, from participation in national defence to administrative regulation. As Green (1997) points out, most of the states created the nations of citizens by education, a highly efficient tool for creation and guarding the national identity and culture.

GLOBALIZATION AND NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICIES

World systems creation, including finance and trade, ICT, migration, cultural and ideological convergences are processes that inspired the theorizing over the question of globalization. Beyond the field of economics, political theories have investigated the questions of national sovereignty and autonomy, the control by the nation-state of own defence policies, international relations policies and the welfare services provided to its citizens. Moreover, according to Green (1997), many social scientists argue that national governments are gradually loosing autonomy to a new range of supranational organisations, regional (EU, EFA, NAFTA, ASEAN etc) and international (UN, IMF, ILO, World Bank, OECD, etc.).

Education researchers have for years struggled to identify in the globalizing trends the direct and indirect consequences for their field. Questions like, “Is there a fundamental shift in the nature of how the policy making process in education is structured?” or “Are the traditional educational institutions or learning processes subject to a Copernican revolution?” Green (1997) points out that there is no doubt that the new communication technologies (using satellite, fibre-optic, information highways) open up new possibilities for education. Mastering the right expertise and equipment we have gradually transformed the virtual schools and universities into established institutions. Important barriers have been broken, and the global web has already produced millions of graduates. The control on learning processes is weaker than ever and cannot be imposed just as it cannot be imposed on keyboards, hard disks, software or displays. This process affects not only adults or higher education students, but is more and more opened to secondary and even primary education. We would have been extremely surprised to find out

only 15 years ago how much information a seven-year-old child could obtain from the Internet in only a few hours. We are not arrived of that point where there is a substantial decoupling of learning from institutional spaces. However, as highlighted by Green (1997), already university distance learning courses are conducted within and across many of the advanced nations, with a positive impact on the flexibility and quality of higher education programs.

Student mobility is another (symbolic) way to de-institutionalize education, since the receiving institutions offer not only a new knowledge but also a (totally) different institutional culture in comparison to the institution of origin. The policy transfer and international dimension of curricula could be seen also as significant challenges to the traditional control that nation-states have so far exerted over education. With highs and lows, policy borrowing is now a major source of innovation. There is general agreement that the last 20 years have been an exceptional period for international traffic in educational ideas and the proliferation of international peer review method in evaluating national policies of a specific state is one of the best recent examples in this respect. This phenomenon is highlighted by Green (1997):

Virtually every educational reformer in Europe and America has been influenced by Pestalozzi, Montessori or Dewey, or has borrowed some policy from somewhere [...] There are a number of reasons for this, including the work of international agencies such as the OECD, CEDEFOP, the World Bank and the EU, and also the proliferation of educational exchanges among staff and policy-makers. It has now advanced to that point where reform proposals are rarely presented without reference to foreign precedents and where thousands of international publications are devoted to explaining the structural intricacies and comparative performance of each national education system to policy-makers in the other countries (and possibly their own).

We can observe that global processes are undoubtedly at the core of the important challenges affecting the educational field. The social and economic problems faced by nation states are significantly similar. However, the variety of solutions produced and their innovative capital is a proof that the convergence of educational systems across the world is still ahead us. Among the important areas of divergence between the educational systems of different countries across the world could be mentioned: resources, knowledge traditions, institutional design, governance, quality assurance, accountability. International tests (i.e. TIMSS, PISA) have also proved that there still exists a huge difference between educational performance and outcomes across the world.

Nation states have so far paid little attention to globalization trends in setting the general goals for education. Even the research dedicated to this topic is still under developed. Social scientists are supporting the idea that the majority of countries see education through the lenses of nation-building processes. The main focus is on producing graduates that are fit for their professional roles. Education is however far more than preparation for a job, and the issue of global outsourcing, even if it is putting pressure on national education systems, is not the only consequence that should be scrutinized.

The focus on free market policies was not balanced by an in-depth analysis of the impact of globalization on the traditional role of the schools to fulfil their social, political and cultural responsibilities. Educational systems are still national institutions that see in their students only future citizens of their own countries. Little evidence could be found in curriculum analysis of the adaptation of the educational systems to global challenges. The analysis of the civic culture curriculum of European countries, for instance, highlighted the fact that students are prepared mainly for their roles and responsibilities as national citizens. While lately there was impressive progress concerning the preparation of students for European citizenship (Bîrzea, 2005), these are superficial efforts if one takes into account the global dimension of citizenship.

Today's students learn in school only incidentally of the global civil society and its potential impact on national development processes. On the other hand, most are acquainted with the projects and outcomes of international NGO's from Green Peace to Freedom House and some of them have a direct experience of interacting with these organisations. The rapid development of economies in many parts of the world with low cost labor force has made the states focus exclusively on creating competences, skills and motivation for a high value-added and knowledge-based economy. Governments are frequently calling on education to promote national values and culture to assure social cohesion and solidarity. From a global perspective, forming the national identities of the citizens is a primary function of education in many countries. The nation states are aware that they are providing a public service and exercise a strong control over it. But social vision, neglected responding to global trends, and ignored the vision of nationhood and citizenship in multi-cultural democracies (Green, 1997).

GLOBALIZATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND ITS IMPACT ON NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICIES

Romania's new generation seems today far away from an authoritarian government which assured the basic needs for its citizens and created a frightening dependency- culture. In an era of democratic reforms and impressive development of new communication technologies, the main

beneficiaries seem to be young people. Implicitly, many observers assumed that the new generation of students would be actively involved in decision-making regarding the commonweal and create a new space for debate and action on democratic governance.

Civic participation is seen as one of the most direct and effective methods for combating social exclusion and creating a society governed by justice. The young generation had the highest potential not only for reviving the drained energies of the civil society organizations but, moreover, for creating a new relation between civil society and the state. Unfortunately the growing importance of the global civil society movement is still little taken into account at policy levels in the Romanian education system, both at the primary and secondary education level.

In only a decade, the NGOs active at the global level experienced an impressive growth. As could be observed in Table 1, according to the statistics presented in the Human Development Report (2003), all major fields (except defence and politics) have experienced a multiplication of initiatives and action.

Purpose	1990	2000	Growth (%)
Culture and Recreation	1169	2733	26%
Education	1485	1839	23.8%
Research	7675	8467	10.3%
Health	1357	2036	50%
Social Services	2361	4215	78.5%
Environment	979	1170	19.5%
Economic Development, Infrastructure	9582	9614	0.3%
Law, Policy Advocacy	2712	3864	42.5%
Religion	1407	1869	32.8%
Defence	244	234	-4.1%
Politics	1275	1240	-2.7%
Total	31,246	37,281	19.3%

Source: Human Development Report 2002

Many observers have confirmed that the growing importance and legal recognition of the activities of NGOs is indicative of a changing paradigm in the international system and in international law and that within the international system, the state is losing its formerly dominant position. According to Hobe (1998):

Nongovernmental international organizations (NGOs) have established themselves as important actors in international relations. NGOs such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace affect states by monitoring state performance or advocating new policy agendas. Nongovernmental organizations such as these represent the nonstate sector, and their increasing presence is indicative of the growing need for states to recognize nonstate interests. This development, which has been described as the emergence of international civil society, may affect statehood from a legal perspective as well.

The recognition of at least a partial subject quality of international NGOs is a good indicator of the important challenge to statehood posed by NGOs, which are about to become competitors with the state not only in factual but also in legal terms.

Civic education in Romanian education system is a subject that should offer to students the necessary information about these recent developments and also create the competencies and attitudes necessary for participation to the global civil society movements of tomorrow.

In the case of compulsory education, a model of objectives-based curricular design is used to draw up the national curriculum, including citizenship education, while a skills-based model is used for high school education. The adopted structure of curricular design comprises a common core (compulsory curriculum) and a school-based curriculum. School curricula are drawn up by workgroups organised by school subject or curricular areas (including specialists and teaching staff).

The formal curriculum includes two specialised school subjects meant to convey knowledge and develop skills and values related to democratic citizenship:

- Civic education (grades II-IV), with a curriculum focused on the fundamental principles and values of democratic citizenship;
- Civic culture (grades VII-VIII), aimed at developing democratic citizenship skills.

This structure offers the opportunity to educate the young generations, taking into account not only a model of *multiple governance* but also a genuine symbiosis of state and civil society within the public sphere. This is a perfect timing for taking into account not only the process of Europeanization but also the process of globalization. We have to focus on the capacity of students to be a part of a *multiple civil society* as well, an actor who will be equally dedicated to projects at national, European and global levels. The liberties promoted through common market and institutionalised supra-national rights has created an important milestone of the participation and civic action of national NGOs.

A careful examination of the process of inclusion in the Romanian civic education core curriculum of the Europeanization has issues demonstrated that this should be only a first step towards a citizen for new types of public spheres. A global civil society is escaping the functional dualism at the national level between the state and the civil society and like Europeanisation, offers a new perspective on public life, detached from the framework of territory and national state. The new measures for the revision of the national curriculum (in view of the move to a 10-year compulsory education) propose the introduction of these particular school subjects for all grades of compulsory education, as well as the introduction of cross-curricular activities for grades II-IV, containing elements of EDC. Other extra-curricular activities (focused on inter-ethnic education, education for tolerance, etc.) are aimed at EDC and should be officially encouraged at the policy level.

A good example is the civic curriculum for grade XI developed by a group of trainers within a Ministry of Education programme, in partnership with USA Department of State. Even if the curriculum is offered to students only as a part of a school-based curriculum, this initiative has demonstrated that policy input is essential for development of partnerships. Civil society organisations and schools can close the existing gap in the core curriculum and have demonstrated a high interest in education for democratic citizenship. According to European programmes *Socrates*, *Youth* or *Leonardo da Vinci* have proved to be a real opportunity for schools in Romania to develop educational policies in the area of education for democratic citizenship

CONCLUSION

For decades Romanian teachers focussed all their efforts on the creation of new cognitive competences for their students but rarely did these competences entail a deeper understanding of the reality in which we are living, of the inter-relations with others and with ourselves. Many efforts were made since '89 to get rid of the rigid culture of reproductive learning and teaching. Romania experienced several national and regional programs aimed at changing the training programs; new methodological resources are now available for

teachers. However, Romanian students graduating pre-university institutions are severely lacking in the knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant for a global civil society. A systematic future research in this area is needed to detail this issue.

Green (1997) warned that the major dilemmas for governments and educationists in the coming decade will revolve around how to reconstruct cultures of citizenship and nationhood taking into account the modern conditions. The global processes are irreversible and have lessened the division between communities. Investing today in all disciplines that have a potential for developing student's preparedness to become citizens of a global civil society is one of the wisest investments in education. As many social scientists have pointed out, the difference between modern education policies and those in the global era is that government should take into account more than its strict interests in order to broaden and deepen democracy and, at the same time, to strengthen the social solidarity of its citizens.

There are optimistic signs for the coming years since curriculum development was sensitive to issues of European citizenship and proved able to transcend the traditional focus on the nation-state form of the concept. The convergence of major reforms with the recent policy developments in Europe at all levels of the educational system has direct and major impact on students. Today students are more capable of constructing their identities and negotiating loyalties and of cultivating key skills for participation to public life, not only at the community and national levels but at the trans-national level as well.

European citizenship could become more than an excellent example of the power of education to promote democracy, an inclusive society and multiculturalism. It could be the first step for the Romanian education system to develop a civic identity for students that best corresponds to a diverse and more homogenous world than ever. To be ready for this step, the educational policies should continue to be open to question the basic values – ethical, political, economic and cultural – that are guiding the educational policy, making process in support, not control, of the adult life of future generations. As Winch and Gingell (2004) point out, since education plays a crucial role in all liberal societies, any suggestions for educational initiatives must always be approached with the utmost care and critical spirit. The need to *discuss* rather than to *impose* a satisfactory conception of education marks the road ahead.

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Chapter VIII

Education and Globalization in Pseudo-Modern Romania: The Issue of Difference

Catalina Ulrich

Current education in Romania, as elsewhere in the world, is struggling for social balance and post-materialist values under the pressure of globalization; it brings together different models of the knowledge society and associated strategic challenges and “deliverable goals”, UNESCO-driven lifelong learning paradigm, equity questions that are raised by decentralization versus centralization, uniformity versus diversity or curriculum development issues, the issue of educational quality insurance, the debate of standards and good and effective teaching.

Amongst different definitions of the globalization process, in this article we are going to use an operational approach to globalization as an inevitable phenomenon that is transforming the world economic system, including nearly all aspects of production, distribution and other business processes, which deeply affect the educational arena. Globalization is affecting all of the social, political and economic structures and processes that emerge from this global restructuring. One critical issue that emerges from all of these restructuring processes is the central role of knowledge, education and learning for the success of the global information society and the global information economy. Knowledge is becoming an increasingly important factor of production, even more important – some analysts would argue – than land, labor and capital.

The core of this study is represented by the idea that Romania faces inner contradictions and tensions, generated on one hand by globalization and European integration and on another hand by its internal social, cultural, economic, politic and educational development. Although partially modern from the cultural point of view, Romanian society faces simultaneously an economic crisis and influences by the postmodern cultures and the globalization pressure. A substantial part of this article argues that Romania could be labeled as being pseudo-modern; based on this label, we are going to illustrate the level of readiness for globalization and postmodern values amongst educators. In order to reach these aims, we are going to develop a three-step approach. First, we are going to use some international comparisons in order to see some correlations between economic performances and human development profile. Second, we identify and comment on examples that reflect challenging

mixtures of tradition, modernity, communist heritage and post-modern influences within the educational field. Third, assuming that the concept of “difference” in the current education context is crucial, we will explore teachers’ perceptions on it.

ROMANIA WITHIN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Transition Processes

The United Nations Millennium Declarations: Placing Human Development at the top of the Policy Agenda excerpt stated: “We believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive factor for all the worlds’ people. For while globalization offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are very evenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed. We recognize that developing countries and countries with economies in transition face special difficulties in responding to this central challenge”¹.

Within such a context, using common indicators could be of great help in assessing what happened in Romania since 1989. Human development in post-communist Romania has been analyzed in the last years from different perspectives, such as the transformation of “hard” structures (institutions, social groups) or soft structures (values, orientations), the level of social polarization (differentiation) of the population, the impact of Western structure (like modernization or frontier expansion) and the consensus of social conflicts theories, to name but a few. We are going to use such frames in order to identify crucial aspects and relevant examples for the evolution of the educational system.

In more than a decade of transition, Romania has made strides towards creating an economic system that combines efficiency and sustained growth with an equity and a system of governance based on a pluralist and decentralized democracy. However, many challenges like poverty and regional disparities persist today. This suggests that “making a transition, from a centrally-planned governance and economic system to a more democratic and market-oriented model, is a lengthy and arduous process. Moreover, establishing such markets and legal and institutional mechanisms where they are absent, making them work better and ensuring that people have free and fair access, are all difficult tasks.”, stated the National Human Development Report in Romania in the frame of the United Nations Development Program. (2005, p. 2)

¹ Source: United Nations Development Programme, New York, 2000

Since December 1989, Romanian society has undergone five transition processes: 1) from a closed to an open society; 2) from a member-nation of one military pact (Warsaw Pact) to a member-nation of another military pact (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO); 3) from an all-embracing state economy to a mixed economy, where public and private interests are now beginning to compete; 4) from a one-party based society to a pluralistic one; and 5) from a society tightly linked to the CARICOM to one pursuing accession to the European Union. The above mentioned NHDRS report indicated that all of these processes, currently ongoing, have generated phenomena of no less importance from a human development perspective; such phenomena could help us in labeling Romania as pseudo-modern. For example, the gradual disappearance of the mentality that the central State should always guarantee employment; the appearance of a culture of competitiveness; the gradual emergence of a renewed civic and ecological consciousness; and an increase in public awareness of international and European institutions and issues, such as NATO, the European Union and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Islamic fundamentalism and global terrorism. During the last decade, the Romanian people also seem to have acquired a sense of citizenship, and are gradually learning about the rights and obligations that are required when living under a more democratic system of government and are beginning to demand less centralized approaches to government-decision making and a move towards self-government.

Human Development Indicators – International Comparisons

In 2005 Romania finds itself at a critical juncture, both in terms of opportunities and new challenges. The main challenge is linking and promoting synergies between economic growth, governance and policies to improve people's lives. Since 1995, the National Human Development Reports has highlighted key issues for human development, such as: transparency, participation, responsiveness, accountability, the rule of law and decentralization. Since 2000, there has been steady progress in human development indicators in Romania. However, poverty persists and is still widespread. Disparities among and within regions are sustaining themselves, and in some cases growing. Long term unemployment rates remain high, particularly among young-urban professionals and in rural areas. The private sector has not fully benefited yet from economic growth, and there are still many bureaucratic barriers preventing the evolution of small and medium enterprises.

Human development can be simply defined as a process that expands capabilities to enlarge choices for people. Choices such as enjoying political freedom and being able to participate in community life; to be knowledgeable,

educated and free to express oneself; to be able to survive and enjoy good health; and to enjoy a decent standard of living.

In the 2004 Global Human Development Report, Romania was ranked 69 among 177 countries based on its Human Development Index² value of 0.786. Directly above Romania in the 2004 HDI ranking were a diverse group of countries such as Panama (ranked 61 with a HDI value of 0.791); Belarus (ranked 62 with a HDI of 0.790) and Tonga (with a HDI value of 0.787 ranked 63). Directly below Romania in the HDI ranking were Ukraine and Saint Lucia (ranked 70 and 71 with a HDI value of 0.777), Brazil (ranked 72 with a HDI value of 0.775) and Colombia (ranked 73 with a HDI value of 0.773).

Romania is ranked as a medium human development country. From 2003 to 2004 the human development profile has changed slightly. Its HDI increased from 0.779 to 0.786. The 2004 HDI value of Romania is above the world HDI average (0.729). Similarly, when compared to other regions across the world the HDI value of Romania (0.786) is above the HDI average of the Latin America and Caribbean region (1.777), the HDI average of East Asia and the Pacific region (0.740) and the HDI average for the Arab region (0.651). However, Romania's HDI value is below the average HDI (0.796) for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region and below the HDI average (0.911) of the OECD countries. During the last four years, the HDI for Romania has shown a steadily increasing trend, although that trend has been slightly below the regional average.

As far as the three different components of the HDI, Romania shows a higher rate in life expectancy at birth (71.2 years) than the world average (66.9 years). Romania's life expectancy rate is also higher than the average life expectancy rate (69.5 years) in the CEE and CIS region. However, its life expectancy rate (66.6 years) is slightly below the OECD average (78.3 years). Romania is above the world average when it comes to the educational component of the HDI, which includes the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrollment ratio. Nonetheless, its educational component of the HDI is below the average in the CEE and CSI regions. The economic component of the HDI uses the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (in US\$ Purchasing Power Parity – PPP). In the 2004 GHDR Romania had a GDP per capita (PPP) of US\$6,560, which is below the world average of US\$7,804. Moreover, Romania's GDP per capita (PPP) is below the

² Since it first appeared in the first UNDP Global Human Development Report in 1990, the Human Development index (HDI) has been rather successful in serving as an alternative measure of development, supplementing economic indicators. It has three distinct components: indicators of longevity, education and income.

average (US\$7,192) of the CEE and CIS region. Romania's GDP per capita (PPP) is nearly 4 times less the OECD average (US\$24,904)³.

What exactly has changed during the last decade? Data reveals that three components of the HDI for Romania have consistently increased since 1995. Nevertheless, there are differences in the shapes of change among the three components of the HDI (education, GDP and life expectancy). The education component has shown a steady increment, albeit small, from one year to another, which could very well reflect the tendency Romania has had, even before 1990, to invest in human capital. There has been more progress in adult literacy than in gross enrollment in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Life expectancy and the GDP per capita saw a period of slight decrease between 1995-1999, but started to increase again after 2000. The improvement in the HDI from 2000, in great part is based on the GDP per capita and educational components, as the life expectancy rate has remained relatively unchanged.

There are other complementary components of human development, which reveal significant gender discrepancies, for example, the active participation in political activity, in the decision making process, and in economic activity. Data shows that women's participation in Romania corresponds to the regional average, but when compared directly with other countries in the region the gender empowerment measure (GEM) is much lower than most European countries. When it comes to the GEM, Romania is above only Ukraine and Turkey.

The change of political regime in 1989 required a reconsideration of education's role. Education had been recognized as a priority in terms of its impact on the whole society and especially for the future. The reform of education has been stipulated as a priority of the transition period. However, the first three years of transition were characterized by a lack of coherent policy in the field of education. This was followed by systemic reform. This was aimed not simply at relieving timetables or programs but at global reform, which modifies the whole education system according to the significant democratic changes that occurred in Romania after December 1989. In this perspective, especially after adoption of the new Law of Education in 1995, the goals and objectives, as well as the managerial structures, programs, textbooks, assessment and evaluation and training system for teaching staff has changed. The definition of new educational policies, involving co-financing and changes in the legislative settings and restructuring of the education system represent the main elements of the reforming process. While theoretically accepted and legally stipulated, these aspects must be seen in connection with society as a whole. The reform process and democratization require social learning

³ For more details see Global Human Development Report 2004, pp. 13-14

processes as well as individual and collective emancipation whose main dimension is psychological and moral. The real reform process is related not only to financing and political structures and policies, but also, mainly, to the human resources field.

PSEUDO-MODERN ROMANIA

Modernization in Romania

Inside the general picture of the 'modern world', we are going to point out some key elements of the educational system in Romania, as well as some characteristics of the society as a whole. The synchronic as well as the diachronic perspective are expected to bring to surface attributes on which the pseudo-modernity of Romania was built. Although different, the developmental stages followed by Romania and other European countries shaped similar trends and features. Modernization and industrial development of the Western countries in the second half of the 18th century had effects on the Eastern part of the continent. Even if the Western countries were more advanced, economic activities and cultural influences made it possible for Romania to gain comparable development in the first half of the 20th century.

For the purposes of our study, we are going to describe synthetically the main characteristics of the modern society. According to Krishan Kumar (1999, pp. 89-90) modern industrial society uses the economic criteria as most important for all its processes. The individual's position in the labor market makes possible his or her classification inside a class or a group. As commented by Inkeles (1996), Sandu (1996), and Voicu (2000), within modern society the social mobility increased, society is less hierarchy-oriented in comparison with previous stages. The destiny is less grounded on the religious factors and has become more and more connected to the whole society's efforts towards progress and welfare. Most families have become nuclear and school has become more responsible in children's socialization and education. The state is crucial for social welfare and bureaucratic apparatus is expected to insure efficiency and fair administration of the common goods.

At the individual level, rationalization is reflected by new experiences, decreased authority of the tradition, careful planning, investment in education, more interest for and participation in political and social life. Innovations and changes have made possible the technological progress and its massive diffusion inside the society. As an effect, the growth in productivity and efficiency has made possible the accumulation and improvement of life standards. Accordingly, in most of the developed countries economic development has guaranteed the fulfillment of basic needs. Consequently, in the

end of the modern period of history, people have begun paying more and more attention to self-realization and self-expression needs.

The system of public education was introduced only in the first half of the nineteenth century, although the first educational establishments within the present day boundaries of Romania existed for many centuries. A number of state-supported schools were established in the municipalities, while the opening of the schools in rural areas was still subject to the approval of the local nobility and the priests of the local Orthodox Church. One of the main consequences of this system of public education was that it gradually reshaped the function of schools by transforming them from ecclesiastical institutions into state-supported institutions offering secular education.

The period 1864-1918 is considered the period of the constitution of the modern education system. The historical context in which the educational system was instituted was dominated by the ideals of the bourgeois Romanian revolution: modernization, independence and unity. In this period capitalist relations matured, parallel to the emergence of the bourgeoisie liberal doctrine. From a political point of view, this orientation was materialized in the accomplishment of certain national aspirations: the Union of 1859, real independence in 1877 and a democratic constitution in 1866. The characteristics of this historical context can be found also in the first legislative measures – education and culture representing an important preoccupation in the period. There were also different conceptions – conservative, liberal and socialist – whose confrontation led to democratic legislation. The first law of the modern Romanian state had a democratic character, especially in decreeing the general, compulsory development of all levels of education; “Romania was therefore among the first countries in Europe – after Sweden, Norway, Prussia and Italy – that proclaimed the compulsory character of primary education” (Stanciu, 1977, p. 332.). However, despite its democratic character, there were many gaps that prevented its uniform and integral application.

Another important stage of the Romanian education’s history is represented by the European synchronization. In 1898, the Spiru C. Haret Law on Secondary and Superior Schooling made possible that the two levels of education closely related to the interests of the liberal bourgeoisie gained a new organization and content more relevant to the needs of the national economy. The law reflected an understanding of the requirements of the period-mainly the development of industry-through the affirmation of a practical education and the creation of conditions for orientation towards a certain professional education around the age of 15.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Romania, after several decades of capitalist development and gradual extension of its economic relations with other European countries, remained economically a weak country with a strong agrarian character. The peasantry represented almost 90 percent of the

population. In 1918 the Great Union with the territories under the occupation of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire took place and opened a new period in the history of the Romanian education.

The First World War resulted in substantial territorial gains for Romania. It also brought greater ethnic diversity for its population. The processes that determined the character of the resulting education were: unification of the political-administrative structures (accomplished through the Constitution in 1923 and the afferent laws), the introduction of certain democratic reforms which provided a framework for exercising citizen's rights and liberties (the agrarian reform, the right of properties, the introduction of universal suffrage); the economic crisis of 1929-1933 and the state's intervention in the economy. Generally, the goal of education was the formation of individuals able to act freely, creatively and responsibly in the democratic framework. While significant progress was made, Romanian education at the time was elitist, academically oriented in secondary and higher education, and rather loosely linked to the economic and social needs of the country.

THE COMMUNIST EDUCATION – A 'MODERNIST' PROJECT

The communist project of the second half of the 20th century was, basically, a modernist one. It was based on industrialization, urbanization, rationalization (bureaucratization) of the administrative structures, promotion of scientific values and explanations and planning. However, from an economical point of view, political command replaced the role of the markets. The government strongly and frequently interfered in social and even private life. Lack of trust and political arrangements destroyed the civil society, associative life and trade-union activities. Religion was labeled as the enemy of communism and rapid secularization occurred. The State made most of decisions, and so far initiatives were not welcomed.

From 1948 until 1989, Romania had a Soviet-style command economy in which almost all agricultural and industrial work was state-controlled. During those years, its economy was based largely on heavy industry. Romania remains one of the poorest European countries. Industry contributes over half of the country's gross national product (GNP) and accounts for one third of the labor force. Running a neo-Stalinist police state from 1967-1989, Nicolae Ceausescu had no the iron curtain tightened around Romania, turning a moderately prosperous country into one at the edge of starvation.

Taking into account the previous period of time, we could say that the incremental approach of the development of education came to an end in 1948 when Romania came under control of the communist party, the Romanian Workers' Party. Based on a decree adopted on August 3, 1948, all levels of the educational system were transformed. The new law declared that education

must be secular, conducted only by state institutions and based on the scientific as well as ideological principles of Marxism-Leninism. The new vision of the educational system moved from the French-inspired model towards that one based mainly on Soviet educational concepts, policies and practices. Synthetically, the communist education had the following basic features⁴:

- The aim of education is the collectivist-type socialization based on the egalitarian utopia and the paternalist premise of providence-state, the sole owner and beneficiary of the educational system;
- There is a sole universal truth, the one guaranteed by the ideology of the governing party;
- The Marxist-Leninist ideology is the foundation of knowledge and social action;

Because man is firstly a production force, education has to be organized in such a way as to provide the necessary qualified staff imposed by socialist planning, mainly in hard industry, the energy branch and in agriculture. Education is a form of superstructure, so it depends permanently on the structure's evolution (the means and the mode of production). Forms of social consciousness (education, science, art, conception about world) are subordinated to the level of development of social existence.

Altogether, the educational system was to be uniform and centralized, aimed at the needs of the socialist economy and the new social order. The social objectives of the 1948 educational reform, such as the formation of a "new" socialist man, were presented as one of the objectives of the "cultural revolution" which the communist party carried out in the years 1948 – 1952. The law of 1948 is associated with the educational developments in terms of quantitative progress in Romanian education, as well as an attempt to enhance the geographically balanced provision of education. This reform sought to combine the genuine interest in the development of Romanian education as a precondition of its economic and social development. The educational system's founding principles and operational structures were rejected and replaced, in many cases, by slavishly adopting "solutions" coming from the Soviet educational model and practice.

The communist regime succeeded in introducing an all-embracing and totalitarian vision of the educational system. There had been hardly any area of

⁴ For more details see chapter IV "Romanian Education - Evolution and Reform" in Calin and Dumitrana (eds.) *Values and Education in Romania Today, Romanian Philosophical Studies I, Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change*, series IV, Central and Eastern Europe vol. 14, 2001 Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington

learning, teaching, designing research plan, administration of physical infrastructure, as well as appointing, promoting, transfer or dismissal of personnel, which did not require approval or prior consultation with the communist party and state administration. As regards the social system as a whole, the predictability was low because of the arbitrary character of the political decision and the lack of transparency. Society became 'closed', due to the political control and interference in social and private life. In the late 1950s, Romania, unlike other socialist countries, reacted mildly to the local forms of dogmatic Stalinism. The de-Sovietization of the political and social life had effects on education. At the beginning of 1960, in response to a new program of accelerated industrialization, decisions were made to increase the number of students in vocational, secondary and higher education institutions, particularly those in engineering studies.

A new stage of its development, designated as the construction of a multilaterally developed socialist society was announced at the beginning of the 1970s, trying to fit the existing rigid system of political control and communist ideological principles to the system of Western-style management and economic efficiency. The international connections, especially with the West, became more frequent. The Education Law of 1968 brought a number of far-reaching changes to the country's educational system directed towards its expansion and modernization. The key word for the reform of higher education was "training highly qualified manpower", while its role as an agent of social transformation was less frequently emphasized. In the mid 1970s, the emergence of the party and government bodies responsible for education became more obvious, accompanying a growing concentration of power in the hands of Nicolae Ceausescu. A new doctrine appeared: education, research and practice were seen as unitary process. The Law of 1978 formalized, on the one hand, a nominally prominent role in educational matters for bodies representing so-called direct socialist democracy, and, on the other hand, placed a concentration of actual legislative decision-making power in the hand of Ceausescu, particularly after he became the president of the country.

The deterioration of the political and economic condition in which education had to function in the 1980s was statistically confirmed. With the exception of the generalization of compulsory ten-year education, it was a period of stagnation, rapidly followed by overall contraction. The last educational goal formulated by the communist party and approved by its congress in November 1989 to introduce, in the course of the next 10 years, a 12-year compulsory primary and secondary education, only confirms the idiosyncrasy of the regime and its failure to see a growing discrepancy between its political objectives and the reality created by its previous decisions. Overall, the educational policy of this period failed to bring the expected modernization of education.

During the communist regime the social mobility was possible, but limited and somehow formally conditioned by the adhesion to the official ideology. The economic decline of the 80' increased the incertitude level, combined with the arbitrary lack of transparency of the political decision.

Post-Modern Values in Post-Communist Romania

After December 1989 a radical change took place in Romania, while the developed countries were labeled as living the postmodern condition. As we did in the previous chapter on the modern society, we are going to describe synthetically the main characteristics of the postmodern society. Inglehart (1997) asserts that post-modernization process means the replacement of the materialistic values towards those post-materialistic. This process brings a strong accent on strengthening individual identity and accomplishing one's own way of living. Tolerance of differences of any kind (cultural, ethnic, sexual, racial, etc.) became basic principles of the society, as long as somebody's personality does not have negative effects on others or on society's development. Traditional "universal" normativity is gradually replaced by the extensive promotion of differences between individuals and social groups. So far we are going to identify main features inside the Romanian society and educational system, in order to see the degree of synchronization with worldwide processes, globalization included.

The postmodernism enlarged and modified the sense of rationality, through new norms of tolerance and acceptance of differences. People are no longer presented in a standardized manner; by contrast, they are presented as very different. All equal, all different became the guiding principle both for educational and social life. Consequently, the acceptance of difference became crucial for the social balance and for the uncertainty control. Contrasting to the modernist societies being organized through centralized and highly specialized structures, in postmodern societies the needs and welfare shape very distinctive forms amongst groups (living in the same geographical area) and for different communities. Foucault's vision about the state's attitude on governmentality expressed very clear this change: the state, as a form of social organization must be reshaped and a new vision imposed. Arise in material security allows the acceptance of risk and requires active behaviors for controlling them, as well as a high degree of accepting all kinds of differences between individuals or groups. In parallel, the globalization and trans-nationalization gave a strong input for the emptiness of the "national state" (Bob Jessop, 2002).

In Romania, the 90s represents a period of economic regress, generated by the decline of economic productivity, poor investments in technology and the existence of a large agricultural segment, ineffectively exploited. Ioan Mihailescu (2000) comments that during the transition period, the nuclear

family shaped the characteristics specific to the passage from the traditional society to the modern one. As showed by statistical data in the previous chapter, poverty became the main difficulty faced by the population and is placed in the top of the most challenging issues inside the social arena.

Gradually, social mobility increased, as well as the development of the civil society and political participation. The development of technology and IT improved the access to information; consequently, communication, globalization, legal or illegal migration brought into Romania – through imitation and contagion – postmodern behaviors. External political pressures expressing tolerance and respect for differences did create the framework for changing social and educational policies towards postmodernist values. The principle of respecting differences induced in people the awareness of an increasing complexity and higher and higher unpredictability within the social space. As a result, Romanian society could be characterized as pseudo-modern. According to Winiecki's characterization of a pseudo-modern society and taking into account certain features identified by Bogdan Voicu, we could label the actual society as pseudo-modern. Although partially modern from the cultural point of view, Romanian society faces simultaneously an economic crisis and influences by the postmodern cultures and the globalization pressure. Synthetically, the pseudo-modern Romania is challenged by both internal and external tensions from economical, social, cultural points of view. We are going to demonstrate that by reflecting on teachers' perceptions on the issue of difference.

Pseudo-Modern Romania – Key Issues

Bogdan Voicu (2001, 2004) identified a series of key aspects of the nowadays Romanian society: authority of the religious explanation, general attitude towards risk, tolerance, orientation towards superior-level needs, ecological preoccupations, trust in technological development, fatalism (the belief that people cannot control their own destiny), politic and civic participation. Using statistical nationally relevant data, Voicu underlined the following important characteristics of the pseudo-modern Romania: more than 70 percent of the population consider that the church provides the right answers to family problems; 78 percent trust the church's capacity to meet the spiritual needs of the people; 71 percent believe that that church is a good adviser in respect to moral problems or individuals problems; 43 percent think that the church provides people with the right answers for the social problems confronting the population in the country. (Voicu, 2004, p. 230) Lack of material security and the lack of alternatives potentially considered as generating the welfare, inhibit experimentation and the re-production of knowledge and generate risk-free, traditional behaviors. (Idem, p. 237) 62

percent of the population prefer the old habits instead of new behaviors and 68 percent consider habits as the leading principles in life. Avoiding the risk represents a rational attitude as long as the people face material insecurity inside a highly complex (perceived as such) environment that is hard to control. This attitude generates a vicious circle: people and society as a whole lack the courage to make changes, invest very cautiously and, consequently, the material growth is very slow and limited. As a consequence, material security is low.

As referring more specifically to postmodern values, Voicu identified interesting features⁵. The tolerance is low: 72 percent reject adultery, homosexuality is completely rejected by 80 percent and considered as possible by only nine percent; abortion is groundless for 70 percent of the interviewed people, 40 percent reject the abortion regardless of the circumstances and 68 percent reject divorce. In conclusions, the data place Romania among the most intolerant 3-4 countries in Europe. The highest level of intolerance is about homosexuality. 40 percent consider themselves as being able to operate a distinction between good and bad. For most of the Inglehart items regarding post-materialist values the scores are low. Political and civic participation are low, as well as are ecological preoccupations. Different developmental paces and the gaps between different segments of Romania made possible such a tensioned and uncertain picture.

Globalization and Post-Modern Values in Education

We do not intend to examine concepts or phenomena associated with globalization. There are confused and often conflicting definitions and conceptions of those phenomena. We are going to use as an operational definition that globalization, as an inevitable phenomenon that is transforming the world economic system including nearly all aspects of production, distribution and other business processes, deeply affects the educational arena. Since new development models emerge (particularly in the highly industrialized economies) knowledge and information take on increasing importance. Thus, the era of globalization has tremendous implications for knowledge, education and learning.

Within such a context we are going to approach the main changes that have occurred since December 1989.

From 1990 to 1995 we can speak about the beginning of the reform. At the middle of the school year, under the impact of the political changes which occurred in December 1989 and of the action of the various pressure groups, the main tools of the communist education i.e. political indoctrination, polytechnic education, excessive centralization, abusive control of persons and

⁵ Comments refer to data collected in 2003.

institutions and rigid planning were eliminated. The education ideal, as an essential part of educational policy and a regulative element of the new curriculum, is no longer represented by “labor force formation”, but refers to the free, complete and harmonious development of the human individuality, of the autonomous and creative personality. New educational goals have been formulated, as follows:

- The guarantee of basic education for all citizens of the country in the form of some minimal competencies necessary for life and work in a democratic society;
- The promotion of an open and flexible education able to answer the most different interests, abilities and aspirations;
- The formation of conscious and responsible citizens, preoccupied with the evolution of the society they live in, and willing to engage in the realization of the different reforms of the transition;
- The formation of new professional abilities, of managerial and trade skills, of economic and financial behavior, of the attitudes and social relations required by the market economy;
- The development of interest in education and permanent emancipation through an educational process centered not on the limited needs of a profession, but on the incessant interest for knowledge and action, for cultural and moral perfection, for social reflection and critique, for adaptation to a changing social context.

During the second half of the 90s, it became obvious that after a slow and difficult start, the reform processes had improved significantly. The introduction of a coherent National Curriculum Framework and a new examination and assessment system, the continuous improvement of the textbook provision, the restructuring of teacher training, the school inspection, the management and financing of the system represented major steps towards such needed reform. The main assumptions concerning the systemic changes to be implemented in Romanian education’s new millennium have reached a consensus on the following aspects:

- the building up of an open and flexible education system that consequently adapts itself to the continuously changing world and individual needs;
- the decentralization of the system in terms of management, financing and decision concerning the teaching-learning process at local level;
- the development of an open mechanism that encourages school based processes as well as the design of a new status of the school, seen as the core institution of the system, with a large conceptual and decisional autonomy;

- the development of a system of national education standards and quality indicators that are highly correlated with the international ones;
- the development of a clear national strategy as well as local strategies concerning medium and long term human resource and professional development of the educators;
- the stress put on the humanistic dimension of education (developing critical, creative thinking and judgments that will allow each individual to make sense of the complex and discontinuous change that characterizes twenty-first century societies);
- the building up of an education system that develops the values, skills, and knowledge needed to live productively and harmoniously in a society that values democracy, diversity and ethnic and cultural pluralism.

Despite the “global” and European-tailored trends, the implementation process engendered many difficulties. Such challenges have been even more stressed by the pressure of EU integration and globalization; some international issues and models deeply influenced strategic changes in Romanian education. We can exemplify by the OECD (2001) model of the knowledge society, and associated strategic challenge and 'deliverable goals', UNESCO- driven lifelong learning paradigm, equity questions that are raised by decentralization versus centralization, uniformity versus diversity or curriculum development issues, the issue of educational quality insurance, the debate of standards and good and effective teaching. We can exemplify by the following difficulties:

- National curriculum principles (marked by postmodern values) and the quality of teacher pre- service and in-service education;
- National policy for equal opportunities and the low level of the community involvement and school-based approaches in education;
- Quality insurance preoccupation and poor educational settings' infrastructure;
- Global knowledge society and insufficient development of an advanced information and communications infrastructure, (based on a network of telecommunications, broadcasting, computers, and content providers);
- Decentralization, subsidiarity and the lack of clear mission description for local key institutions and a lack of a serious networking among them;
- Global communication and global interaction and the feeling that cultural identity (of peoples, nations and local communities) is threatened and at risk.

PERCEPTIONS ON DIFFERENCE*The Issue of Difference*

Difference represents a key value of the postmodern society. The concept of difference expresses in a synthetic manner the challenges of the postmodern world under the pressure of globalization, the tensions between atomization and the global world, between identity, distinctiveness and solidarity. Changes occurred after 1989 brought genuinely into focus the issues of being different or what is the meaning of difference. Building democratic institutions and strengthening the civic attitudes, the mechanisms of market economy and the principle of competitiveness, the recognition of various minorities meant in the same time embracement of the European and international norms and standards, as well as raising completely new issues for public debate and analysis.

Although nowadays homogeneity is perceived more and more as a theoretical construct and less as a characteristic of social life, perceptions on difference in Romania are very much grounded on the communist policy of forced uniformity. Various studies point out that most of the people lack a culture of difference and perceive it as being negative; statistical data provides interesting insights on this issue. For example, the extremist potential of the Romanian society is very high: a national study conducted in 2003 by the Gallup Institute (requested by the Institute for Public Policies) shows that although 40 percent of the Romanians live in an environment / neighborhood diverse from an ethnical or religious point of view, bias, pre-judgements and discriminatory attitudes are widespread. Approximately one out of ten people express racist attitudes: they express that the “Black people, Chinese and Roma should not live inside Romania.” (2003, p. 33) Aggressive potential is also high – 31.4 percent of the population considers that Romanians should not mix with other nations.⁶ About one third of the population would exclude and punish diversity, and the majority shows in one way or other intolerance. (2003, p. 55). Anomy, social frustration and orientation towards authoritarianism are specific features of the current national context; diversity and tolerance do not represent key values.

⁶ The study shows interesting data about the respondent’s opinion regarding some groups, which “should not live in Romania”: homosexuals (40.2 percent of the respondents), lesbians (39.7 percent), Jehovah witnesses (24.7 percent), Muslims (19.3 percent) and Roma/ Gypsy (13.3 percent). In addition, respondents considered that the death penalty should be approved.

The Issue of Difference in Education

Nicholas C. Burbules, in “A Grammar of Difference: Some Ways of Rethinking Difference and Diversity as Educational Topics” emphasized the changes that occurred in the field of education as regarding the term of difference. The difference has in the same time a positive and a negative potential. It refers to various aspects, such as: social and psychological models of identity and subjectivity, personality development and social actions. The difference embodies both an opportunity and a difficulty, depending on the perspective. Anyway, there is not a neutral concept. The difference could be seen as a paradigm and as an ideology- framing both for the social and educational arena.

The tension between different and alike is typical for the modernist paradigm. Educationalists see the difference mainly as a difficulty; likeness is much easier to operate with, and the modernist traditions has stimulated a homogenous approach in education and standardized assessment tools for teaching and learning. Education represents an opportunity to cultivate the similarity/resemblance: national curricular standards, national professional standards, standardized tests for various groups of the school population or stages of the school career, citizenship-related habitus, cultural literacy, etc. In the work *Thinking Again – Education after Postmodernism*, the authors demonstrate that teachers are more interested in ”ability level differences” among students and less in the differences generated by the students’ background and personal histories of the learners. (Blake *et al.* 1998, p.33).

The difference was also used as a vector for “the hierarchical structure inside the modernist project of schooling. Psychology stressed skills and abilities differences among individuals, putting the intelligence as the fundamental. As a fixed entity, intelligence has been considered correlated to all the psychic functions. Intelligence became the differentiation vector among individuals and the role of heredity was stressed. Howard Gardner added nuances to the general notion of intelligence and developed the theory of multiple intelligences; Daniel Goleman, in *Emotional and Interpersonal Intelligence* demonstrated that those types of intelligence are as important as the IQ in influencing someone trajectory.

Postmodernism brought a certain relaxation towards the concept of difference. However, it was not very effective in solving old dilemmas regarding the difference, fractures and educational change. Although quite ineffective in the practical revival of democratic life, postmodernism is very useful for educators: it helps them be aware about the relationships between culture, power and knowledge. (Aronowitz, Giroux 1991, p. 81).

The constructivist approach interprets the differences, heterogeneity and diversity, as more productive in learning than consensus, homogeneity and

identity. Learning requires the perception of differences, of the “Other”, of various perspectives. Horst Siebert, (Siebert, 2001, p. 216) comments that “teaching itself could be a kind of discovery of the other”, while learning requires all kinds of comparisons: between old and new knowledge, between personal and the other’s experiences and observations, between scientific knowledge, etc.

Regarding social relations, difference is an important resource for solidarity. In *Otherwise than Being*, or *Beyond Essence* (Levinas, 1981, p. 23) develops the idea that we recognise the other as being alike, but external. The relationship with somebody else represents a mystery. It is a condition of our ethical responsibility towards the others. The difference becomes the non-indifference towards the other; the solidarity is consequently accessible to individuals and communities, who are no longer perceived as crushed by the modernist social structures and macroprojects.

Postmodernism did anticipate what recent history has demonstrated: the power of rational thinking is no longer enough. Democratic values, due to their general and universalist character, do not reflect enough the particular and do not contribute to democracy’s self-sufficiency. In *Naming Silenced Lives*, McLaughlin și G. Tierney demonstrate how despite the multiple faces of the ego, ideologies (through institutions) “silence” different people by using the “norms of our culture”. (McLaughlin, Tierney 1993, p.128) Instead of silencing the differences, the authors claim to listen and hear them. The conditions for social dialogue are created; simultaneously, the moral dialogue between individuals could revert the difference as a source of conflict into a source of solidarity (Baumann, 2000).

Perceptions on Difference

Taking into account that the concept of difference is a key factor in dealing with the contradictions between transnational and identities, global trends and local processes, we have appealed to some empirical sources. We have collected data regarding the teacher’s point of view on the concept of difference. Among the data collection instruments, we used a questionnaire completed in by 100 teachers. Three of the items were designed to cover a large area of personal and professional associations. The item “When I say difference, I first think at ...” it was used to stimulate free association, regardless a field of reference. Another item was more focused on the educational field: “The significance of the difference in education is...”, while the third one “Differences amongst students refer to...” narrowed the teacher’s comments towards the students they currently work with. The answers provided by the respondents show interesting aspects that we will present in detail further on.

Although difficult to condense the various answers into specific categories, some characteristics can be emphasized. From a quantitative point of view, the most frequent comments cover the issue of individual characteristics (60 answers). Responses are formulated in a very general and abstract way. They sound like headings of the general pedagogy manuals or education fundamentals' manuals: "individual" and "age-related particularities"; on the other hand, more specific ones refer to 'cognitive aspects of the individuals' (21).

Discrepancies represent the second ranked category (31 answers). Teachers made comments on discrepancies between "objects", "persons", "students" and "students' level of knowledge". Another 29 answers cover broadly the issue of environment: "social class", "social status" (13), "financial situation" (4), "living standards" (4), "family environment" (5), "education provided within the family" (6).

Out of 19 answers regarding the teaching process, ten answers are about "teaching in class", "differentiated instruction", "gaps in students' learning" (3) and two for "cooperative learning", "working load per student", "active methods". Another 20 answers refer to negative connotations, such as "discrepancy" (8), "discrimination" (7), "inequality" (3), "handicap" (2). "Religion" was mentioned by three respondents, while "gender", "opportunities" and "choices" were mentioned each by two teachers. three teachers approached the mathematical meaning of the term, as "mathematical operation", result of subtraction.

The answers for the item Difference in education means... could be grouped into five main categories, namely child-related issues (62 answers), differentiated instruction (52 answers), educational principles (47), equal opportunities and non-discrimination (7) and others. Although more narrowed, this item was accompanied also by general and abstract answers.

The first-ranked category (62 answers) reflects child-related issues. It is noticeable that 23 comments refer to "heredity" as a relevant issue; 16 responses refer specifically to "intellectual characteristics of the child". A correlation is visible with the previous answers, where 35 percent of the comments under the category individual characteristics showed intellectual cognitive characteristics. 11 more comments mention "child's development", while 18 comments cover issues related to the "learning process", e.g. "level of knowledge" (5), "child's behavior" (4), "misbehavior" (3), "motivation for learning" (2), "education provided within the family" (2), "talent" (1), "cognitive skills" (1).

Under the umbrella of differentiated instruction (second ranked category) 21 answers expressed methods, in general, while other comments referred to "individual learning assignment" (3), "different assessment methods" (3), "use of multiple intelligences theory" (3), "tailoring the content

to the students' needs" (2), "didactic aids" (2), etc. It is noticeable that only one answer focuses on "providing extra support for students".

Third-ranked category – educational principles shows 47 responses. As in the case of the item When I say difference, I first think at ..., 13 respondents mentioned the "knowledge of the individual and age-related particularities" (answers did not even reflect if related to children, in general or students, more specifically), an other seven answers refer to "psycho-individual" and "physical characteristics", while 4 answers expressed "to treat each student differently or three comments claimed "to base the educational action on the psychogenetic stages defined by the psychological theories".

Seven comments cover various aspects, e.g. "lack of equal opportunities" (2), "children from disadvantaged groups" (2), which are connected either to access issues (such as "access to internet, computer, access to a quality education and qualified teachers") or to non-discriminatory practices ("remove obstacles", "respect equal rights"). "Ethnic background" and "religion" are mentioned each by 3 respondents; similar frequency was reflected by the comments for the first item.

The third item – "Differences amongst students refer to..." reflects some changes in ranking main categories. 99 comments refer in general to the environment as being the main source of differences amongst students. More specifically, the comments illustrate "social and cultural background" (45) and "family background" (39), "neighborhood" (6), "living conditions" (2), "peer group influence" (2). "Heredity" is ranked in second place (36 answers), while "family" is mentioned by 32 respondents. Medium-ranked categories are "developmental level" (23 answers), "education" (22) and "child-related issues" (22). 10 comments refer to the "teachers": "mentality" (3), "quality of the teaching process" (2), "professionalism" (2), "attitude" (2), "non-observance of learners' individual particularities". As regarding other aspects, the only variables highly ranked in comparison to the previous items are "ethnicity" (6), "parents and teachers' prejudices" (4).

Besides the main categories of answers presented above, individual answers refer to common sense comments such as "every child is unique" or contrasting comparisons "how different we are as educators, how different are they, our students, as a "working material"; "instruction and education provided by state institutions compared to private institutions".

CONCLUSIONS

Within a global context, education faces both inside and outside challenges. Pressure of EU integration and globalization make it possible that international issues, trends and models can deeply influence strategic changes in Romanian education. The OECD (2001) model of the knowledge society and

associated strategic challenge and “deliverable goals”, UNESCO-driven lifelong learning paradigm, equity questions that are raised by decentralization versus centralization, uniformity versus diversity or curriculum development issues, the issue of educational quality insurance, the debate of standards and good and effective teaching are welcomed but difficult to implement. Social, economic and cultural context issues are mixed up as in the profile of a pseudo-modern Romania and raise tensions among:

- National curriculum principles (marked by postmodern values) and the quality of teacher pre- service and in-service education;
- National policy for equal opportunities and the low level of the community involvement and school-based approaches in education;
- Quality insurance preoccupation and poor educational settings’ infrastructure;
- Global knowledge society and insufficient development of an advanced information and communications infrastructure, (based on a network of networks of telecommunications, broadcasting, computers, and content providers);
- Decentralization, subsidiarity and the lack of clear mission description for local key institutions and a lack of a serious networking among them;
- Global communication and global interaction and the feeling that cultural identity (of peoples, nations and local communities) is threatened and at risk.

Exploring teacher’s perceptions on the issue of difference made possible to reveal similar tensions from a professional and personal point of view; common features of the collected comments shows the followings:

- Teachers have a very abstract approach of the issue of difference; comments are very general;
- While formulated in a more specific manner, comments about difference reflect some negative connotations;
- Sources of difference are mainly placed in the social environment (based on the social and economic status of the family) and are seen as a background for inequity;
- Individual characteristics gravitate around learners’ cognitive potential and skills;
- Perceptions on difference are far from considering difference as a learning opportunity;
- Differentiated education refers almost exclusively to a few teaching methods and assessment methods.

It is noticeable that the teachers' answers do not stress the cultural heritage and personal history of learners as vital aspects of individual learner identity. The values, world views and different languages of the school's community cultures have not been mentioned explicitly⁷. We can assume that respondent teacher's awareness and knowledge about providing a culturally differentiated curriculum, developing a differentiated classroom or delivering supportive methodologies are at a very incipient level. Consequently, coping with difference and globalization will remain a difficult job.

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⁷ A part of the sample is represented by teachers working in a school implementing a PHARE project, aiming to improve the access to the education of disadvantaged groups – focus on Roma. Most answers of those teachers reflect the project' concept in a politically correct way.

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Chapter IX

Romania: A Developing Country and the Challenges of Globalization

Paul Blendea

ROMANIA FACING THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION

The Independence War against the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19th century, and the German Monarchy which reigned after the conflict began the process of the European integration of Romania. Culturally and socially, the German Monarchy period saw many changes. Unfortunately, this process was stopped in 1945 by the newly installed communist regime. The down fall of communism offered Romanians a new opportunity to join Europe and “global village”.

Despite the two periods of accelerated industrialization, the first between 1900-1940 and the second between 1965-1985, Romania is still a developing country. There is an economic, social and cultural gap between urban and rural areas. The rural area covers 89 percent of the country’s territory, and is inhabited by 45 percent of the country’s population. This area is underdeveloped: the main problems of this zone being related to the poor infrastructure of the public utilities, the infrastructure for the development of human capital, and aspects related to economic development. It is not simply a metaphor to speak about a quite medieval living standard (81 percent of inhabitants do not have running water, 88 percent have no bathroom, and 86 percent have no sewerage system)¹. Newspapers do not exist in the countryside because the farmers can not afford to spend the money.

Poor economic development in the rural area is mirrored in the living standard of the population. For example, 40 percent of the rural population lives in poverty, compared to 29 percent of the urban population. The occupational structure of the rural population is naturally different from that of the urban population and has remained practically the same for the past ten years. Most of the labor force is concentrated in agriculture (70 percent), while industry and services have sixteen and fourteen percent respectively. The main causes of this situation are to be found within both the rural and the urban environment. On the one hand, the rural economy continues to be quite exclusively based on agriculture, while off-farm activities have only a small share and consist in the

¹ *Romania’s Statistical Yearbook 1990-2003*. Bucharest, NCS.

exploitation of the natural resources in the regions. Most of the population is concentrated on farming and other seasonal activities, there is a lack of opportunity and poor diversification of economic activities; therefore the rural labor force has to cope with underemployment, which impacts on incomes and living standards. On the other hand, there is a trend to restructure industry, which unfortunately is accompanied by a low capacity of the economy to generate new jobs, a migration of the labor force to the countryside and underdeveloped services.

The potential of the human capital is another element that significantly differentiates the labor force resident in the two areas. While in the urban area 44 percent of the active population have at least a secondary education, more than half of the population of the countryside (57 percent) have less education. There are multiple consequences of the low education standard, starting with poor agricultural performance, barely diversified economic activities, unsatisfactory sanitary conditions that have a direct impact on development opportunities, living standards, and the quality of life. According to recent polls, the completely different way of life in the rural and urban areas mirrors in the Romanians views of the current situation of the country. Almost half of the population considers Romania to be going in the wrong direction, while the other half considers it to be going in the right direction.

The discourse on globalization appears to be predominantly narrative. It is the kind of narration or myth by which what has been heard is accepted unquestionably and passed on to others. Globalization is essentially an encounter of cultures. A critical scrutiny of globalization leads to the vision or the thinking that sustains it. Globalization refers to the interconnection of human activity on a global scale, to the unprecedented flows of capital and labor, technologies and skills, ideas and values across state and national boundaries, but in a way that neither states nor nations can adequately control. According to many economists, globalization is a natural process, which is greatly increasing prosperity around the world. According to other analysts, globalization is deepening the economic disparities, widening the gap between rich and poor and fostering lopsided development. Briefly, globalization refers to the increased integration, across countries, of markets for goods, services and capital. The current wave of globalization, apparently begun in the late 1970s, has not been an autonomous phenomenon. It has been stimulated and facilitated by widespread and sustained changes in government policy. This has been accompanied by widely diffused technological progress, particularly in transportation and communications. More specifically, globalization has

been created, and continues to be maintained by liberalization of economic policies in several key areas.

Many governments have undertaken various deregulation, privatization and liberalization activities. These have included the lowering of cross-border impediments to the flow of financial services, trade, transportation and communication. These policy changes have central importance in sustaining the trend toward globalization, which, in turn, also has substantial influence on policies. Clearly, deep integration requires a certain degree of policy harmonization across countries. Thus, globalization would appear to place a considerable premium on sound policies that are also globally harmonized. Globalization implies changes in the way production is organized as required by the general dismantling of trade barriers and the free mobility of financial and productive capital in the context of accelerated technological change. Rapid integration of national economies into the global market is another especially conspicuous feature of the process. In particular, technological development in the sphere of information science has been one of the basic vehicles for speeding up the process.

Globalization has many faces, impacts and interpretations. Its spread will undoubtedly bring changes to the countries it reaches. But change is an essential part of life and does not mean the overnight abolition of traditional values. Capitalism is essentially diverse, as the traveler will discover. For example, it is argued that one of the consequences of globalization will be the end of cultural diversity, and the triumph of a single culture serving the needs of transnational corporations. Hence the world drinks Coca-Cola, watches American movies and eats American junk food; American culture is seen to be dominated by monetary relationships and commercial values replacing traditional social relationships and family values. The United States' cultural exports are strong and influential. That reflects the success of the US economy and the quality of its products. Globalization implies exchange, influence and integration of cultures, which may be not a bad thing for Romania or any other country. An example is postwar Japan where, after a brief American occupation that brought a new Constitution, Japan experienced a rapid and fundamental transformation in its political culture, and a liberal competitive multiparty system took roots, which shows that fundamental cultural change need not take too long. There is therefore hope for Romania, too, as the new century unfolds, and globalization takes another step forward. Despite the benefits, in some ways globalization has not been a smooth process, but disharmonic, asymmetric and inequitable within and between countries. Globalization imposes new

demands and new opportunities, as seen in the rapid expansion of knowledge in industrial countries and the plethora of its possible applications. This calls for knowledge networking as a means of accelerating the sharing of information about technologies which are more effective, cleaner, and less costly, in order to enable developing countries to “leapfrog” and attain their development objectives. The process of globalization has given rise to new systems of global governance, engendering many implications for participating countries. Collective solidarity provides a framework to expand lateral as opposed to vertical forms of development cooperation.

Knowledge is a critical driver for social change and plays the most important role in a global “knowledge society”. Judicious uses of communication, information, electronic connectivity, and related systems can enhance the applications of knowledge. Less appreciated is the importance of knowledge networking in various forms and modes - for accelerating access to relevant knowledge, and to information about technology choices. Before reasonable individuals (government, firms, or institutions) in a decision-making capacity can be asked to do something, they must have access to basic data, robust information, and coherent knowledge about the issues at hand. Effective networking has three preconditions. First is reliable connectivity and communication, in terms of basic infrastructure. Second is robust content in terms of the availability of core data, information, and interpretation. Third is effective institutional, as well as individual capacity, to perform essential tasks. There are many gains from knowledge networking, but the following are crucial: identifying “best practices”, eliminating technology barriers, facilitating “leapfrogging” in information technology, protecting quality controls, retaining access to knowledge frontiers, and obtaining knowledge of practical experience.

With improved communication, the diffusion of information on “best practices” would be improved in the new “knowledge society”. Access to “best practices” enhances prospects for implementation where they are most needed. With improved communication, economy, education and other systems could obtain a better understanding of the nature and urgency of the problems in the system. And, by enhancing access to knowledge about action, experience and expectations between the supplier and receiver of goods and services there will be greater transparency in the exchange, whose overall quality will be upgraded. Two-way and real-time information and communication capability expands potentials for participation of stakeholders.

For example, Romania has no access to the *Global System for Sustainable Development* (GSSD) which is an electronic knowledgeable-networking and management system for strategic decision-making. It is

designed to overcome obstacles created by the explosion of information, difficulties in tracking advances in science and technology, and the prevalence of technology “gaps”. To this end, GSSD provides an integrated approach to sustainability issues, improves access to advances in science and technology, provides the basis for expanding knowledge for new accords, and enables “two-way” communication. GSSD is a system designed to provide a coherent knowledge base bearing on the multiple dimensions of sustainability – in all contexts and levels of development. It is also a system which facilitates the effort to engage research and policy communities in different parts of the world in “sorting out” the complex elements of sustainability and providing some intellectual order, analytical coherence, and directives for decision making. GSSD users are of two kinds: those searching for knowledge or wanting access to it, as “normal” users do all over the world; and those seeking to provide or input information, such as industry, governments, research institutions, etc. Unfortunately Romania has no access to this powerful system, and this is a handicap in facing successfully the globalization process. There are many additional serious barriers blocking the rapid development of the nation. In 2004 Romania allocated 0.21 percent GDP for research and 3 percent GDP for education; three quarters of Romanians (74 percent) are not using a computer.

According to S. Huntington, the most significant distinctions between people are no longer ideological, political or economic, but cultural. History indicates that rapid and impelling movement across cultural boundaries provokes introversion of values, particularly of those bearing on behavior and morality. Today as globalization widens the social and political horizon across all boundaries, people could react by withdrawing into narrower confines where values cannot be shared. With no common terms of reference for mutual communications and understanding, the very solution of conflicts becomes problematic. For instance, it is very important to know whether the value determining the prevention or solution of a conflict is social integration or social innovation. Social integration is suggested by the idea that society is fundamentally a properly structured whole into which the parts, including its members, need to integrate to preserve society. In this case, conflicts endanger the system; they are negative events which must be prevented or eliminated. On the other hand, if society is considered to be a system in constant need of reform, conflicts are part of the system; they become instrumental to social innovation. Hence, depending on the value assumptions, conflicts endanger the system and the conflicting parts must be integrated into it, or conflicts develop the system and produce innovation. The journey from conflict to reconciliation, and then to cooperation, is one from individual interests to shared values.

Today “globalization” is thought of as predominantly economic, i.e., as being principally focused on trade and investment, and, particularly, global competition and deregulation. In this sense, globalization is a process of

increasing economic activity towards integrating national economies into a single world economy. Globalization produces changes in the economic, political, social, and religious environments – though not all of these are affected at the same time and to the same degree. According to many scientists, the underlying rationality of globalization is “instrumental rationality”, its underlying principles are “universal” principles, and the mass culture it entails seems not to respond to, but merely to replace the cultures it encounters. “If a global outlook be evolved in which unity is promoted by diversity, then the progress of world unification could be, not at the cost of multiple cultures, but through their deployment and interaction. Strategy could move beyond the dichotomy of business and begging to the true megaproject for the new millennium, namely to develop a global community in which all are looked upon with appreciation, and progress is evoked by mutual respect.”²

Culture should also play a much larger role in explaining the Romanian failure in democratization and setting up a market economy between 1990-2000. Romanian values emphasizing the primacy of order over freedom, family and community interests over individual choice, and economic progress over political expression were largely responsible for the unfortunate public and private sector policies and actions that resulted in a temporary dead end.

EDUCATION SYSTEM AND GLOBALIZATION IN POST COMMUNIST ROMANIA

At the end of the Cold War Romania’s education system was one of the most highly centralized in Eastern Europe. The Ministry of Education determined national and local school curricula, secondary school entry and graduation examinations, and budgets, to which private sources contributed only negligible amounts. Regional administration included School Inspectorates, which had administrative responsibilities and also provided a sort of teacher training according to centrally formulated guidelines. Schools had no autonomy for planning or implementing their budgets, and school headmasters and administrative councils could not define the school’s human resources policy. Local communities participated to only a very limited extent in managing schools; elected local authorities had sporadic relationships with the local school system. The system was damaged not only by being too highly centralized, but also the infrastructure was collapsing. For example, the infrastructure of Romania’s rural education, assessed in terms of quality of the school buildings, is very poor. This means that 24 percent of the kindergartens,

² George F. McLean, *Philosophical Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization vol. 19*, Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.

32 percent of the primary schools, 42 percent of schools grades 1-8 and 47 percent of high schools and vocational schools required major repairs.³ Availability of the main communication and ICT equipment: computer is 8 percent, fax 0.6 percent, television 15 percent, telephone 33 percent, copier 4 percent. Major disparities exist between the rural and urban areas concerning the human resources – about three times more unqualified teaching staff are employed in compulsory education in the rural than in the urban areas.

The stakeholders who emphasize poor or inappropriate educational policies as the root cause of Romania's peripheral role in the world of education, suggest a fairly straightforward solution: policy reform. However, there are good reasons to suggest that Romania's poor educational performance may not be explained solely in terms of bad policies. The sociopolitical environment is probably just as much to blame, and thus performance could remain poor even after reforming key educational policies. It is more reasonable to expect quality education when governments provide a minimum level of social order, macroeconomic stability, and adequate resource allocation.

In view of these considerations, it seems clear that appropriate remedies for reversing the trend of lowering the output of education system must include policies to revitalize growth, diversify offering and promote change, as well as improving access and equal opportunities. Romania can neither stand aside from nor ignore the current globalization process. It must adjust to the process and become more fully integrated into the European and future global school system. However, Romania's past experience with school reform policies also cautions that protection of so called "national characteristics" should be narrowly targeted, moderate and performance-based. The purpose should be to minimize undesirable distortions and costs, while encouraging rapid changes.

The starting point is to establish the policy and institutional prerequisites for rapid and sustainable development of the education sector. These require political and macroeconomic stability, sustainable fiscal policies, realistic and flexible policies, stable financial system, efficient infrastructures, and private sector development. The next stage is to design and implement policies aimed at reinvigorating Romania's education sector through initiatives that enhance changes and reduce losses. This stage involves rebuilding and strengthening the country's educational research and extension services, rehabilitating and improving rural school infrastructure, and introducing appropriate information and computer technologies. The final stage of the strategy should overlap the second. It involves the design and implementation of a policy reform and capacity-building program aimed at moving the

³ *Rural Education in Romania. Conditions, Challenges and Strategies of Development*, Bucharest 2002.

Romanian school system gradually but systematically away from its current posture of control and inward orientation. It should move toward a more deregulated and outward oriented environment. Given the amount of organizational learning and capacity building needed, this stage may require a time span of five to ten years.

In the early 1990s, Romania began to undergo a number of major political changes that affected education efforts in order to reform the education system, although no clear alternative was offered. The changes were primarily attempts to satisfy education stakeholders. Secondary education was diversified, class size and teaching loads were reduced, minorities' language education was extended, and education finance was reorganized. A readjustment period began in 1992. The Ministry of Education needed to revise curricula and to eliminate the highly ideological orientation of school programs. It soon became clear that successful reform requires a systemic approach. Romania's tradition of a highly centralized political system, a communist mentality, and the cultural attitudes it spawned were major obstacles to change and impeded legislation to that end. Moreover, there were few experts and no political consensus on reform directions and priorities.

There have been two major directions of educational reform in Romania: curricular and management and finance. The study plans and textbooks were purged of the ideologically contaminated content. The first new textbooks were published and drafts for the new curricula for compulsory education were developed as a foundation for education reform. A new national curriculum was issued in 1995 for compulsory elementary education and in 1999 for high schools. The curricula evolved gradually to a set of educational documents in order to coordinate the entire educational system in Romania. A new Education Law was promulgated by the Parliament in 1995 and was revised several times thereafter. In 1995 the Romanian Government signed an agreement with the World Bank on education reform that lasted till 2002. The agreement with the World Bank provided the financial support for alternative textbooks for compulsory education and training for headmasters and inspectors.⁴ There was a trend to improve educational financing through establishing budgeting formulae and new ways for the mobilization, allocation and management of funds, as well as to diversify the sources of funds for education, transferring the decisional authority in the financial field to the local levels (School Inspectorates, local authorities and, finally, to school units). Another direction was to optimize the structure and functioning of the educational system, which meant analyzing the educational system. Changes were initiated in educational regulations to decentralize the system and create

⁴ *Decentralizing Education in Transition Societies*, Case Studies from Central and Eastern Europe, The World Bank, Washington D. C. 2001.

new decision making structures at the local level, to empower the school headmaster, redefine the inspection system and set up an Educational Management Information System (EMIS) and a Data Interchange Agreement (DIA). Managerial capacity was strengthened through equipping seven Centers for Professional Development, Innovation and Resources. A professional in-service training network was developed and trained a national body of trainers.

A National Model of Inspection for schools in Romania has been designed to ensure that school inspections are carried out according to an agreed national pattern. The model outlines the purposes of inspection and who should carry out inspections, and it provides guidance on how an inspection should be conducted. It outlines how the inspection system should be monitored, evaluated and developed, and how very good schools should be rewarded and very weak schools supported. The Inspection Model has been agreed by the Minister of Education and is to be used in all inspections, which are carried out in state and private schools. The purpose of inspection is twofold, first, to help the school improve, second, to report to the various stakeholders on the level of performance in the following:

- the educational standards attained by pupils;
- the way the school supports and encourages pupils' personal development;
- the quality of teaching/teachers;
- the quality of the school's management and the efficiency with which it uses its resources;
- the quality of the curriculum and extracurricular activities, and the way in which the national and local curriculum is implemented;
- the relationships the school has with parents;
- the relationships of the school with the local community;
- the extent to which the school carries out its legal responsibilities;
- the attitude of pupils towards the education which the school provides.

The Inspection Model based on the new idea of "full or integral inspection of school" was designed to have important advantages. It provides a review of the state of education:

- Improve, through good quality inspections, the attainment of pupils and the quality of the teaching in schools of all types.
- Operate a more decentralized educational system through the information available to all concerned.
- Evaluate thoroughly both local and national educational initiatives through focused inspection.

- Through the publication of individual reports make known to teachers and the general public, the successes and the deficiencies of the education provided in schools.

- Improve the organization and management of schools through proper consideration of individual school development plans.

- Make judgements on the value for money provided by the education service and individual schools.

- Provide in-service training for teachers that fully matches their needs.

There are also some implications for the educational service. The inspection programs of the Counties and the country will need to be focused on the major policy issues of the day, yet also improve the standards of the education provided by individual schools.

Inspections will need to continue to judge the standards of individual teachers and to play a major part in determining their promotion. New inspectors will need to be trained in operating the inspection procedures and also mentored in their early days in the inspection service. The quality of the inspection carried out by all the Counties will need to be of a comparably high standard. The publication of reports will show clearly where poor inspections that do not cover fully the criteria take place. Both centrally and locally decisions will need to be taken on the issues to be addressed by each year's inspection programs and the local and national samples of schools determined according to these requirements, the needs of local schools and the manpower available in the Counties.

It also provided training for other personnel categories with management functions inside the educational system:

- personnel at local community level (500 employees);
- head teachers (4000 persons);
- head teachers trained in financial system and EMIS (20,000 persons);
- school inspectors (1000 persons);
- financial staff trained in the new financing system (20,000 employees);
- information staff trained in EMIS (20,000 employees);
- trainers for inspectors (30 persons);
- national and regional trainers for Head teachers (160 persons);
- resource Centers equipped for training (7 Centers); and
- school inspectorates (42 units), schools (500 units) and other educational institutions ITC equipped.

What has happened after ten years of this compulsory education reform? The evolution of the dropout rates in compulsory education system between

1990-2002 shows two trends: a maximum of 2.4 points in 1989 when the Communist Regime collapsed, a decrease to 0.3 in 1993/1994 and an *ascendant trend* which reaches 1.0 points in 2001/2002.⁵ International studies of student achievement provide valuable comparative information about student performance, instructional practice, and curriculum. Comparing achievement across countries, cultures, and languages, The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)⁶ provides a base from which policy makers, curriculum specialists, and researchers could better understand the performance of their educational systems. Romania takes part in this study and the results are poor for both areas. Romania had in Science Achievement in 1995, 1999, and 2003 almost the same average score: 471, 472, and 470. The score was constantly under the International average: 518, 521, and 474. In 1995, 1999, and 2003 Romania had in Mathematics Achievement very close average: 472, 474, and 475. The International average was 519, 521, and 467. The score was under the International average in 1995 and 1999 and slightly below in 2003. A new inspection model was designed and all the School Inspectors in Romania were trained in a cascade model, but the old inspection system was not removed. The quality of the education cannot be measured with accuracy and improved because there is no autonomy of the School Inspectorates, and most of the trained inspectors (between 80-90 percent) were replaced with untrained teachers or headmasters. The policy makers in the Ministry of Education did not decide to create an independent National Inspectorate and it was not possible to affiliate the country to the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI), an organization of 20 members drawn from across Europe, working together to improve their inspection systems. These facts prove that the frequently used argument of the “top quality of education in Romania” is a myth, and education reform has had a very small impact or maybe has failed.

To redefine and continue the reform process is a must for the newly elected Government. The Romanian school system needs real decentralization, including financial and human resources management, and a autonomy of the school unit. There is need also for an effective and proactive educational management, following international standards, and by trained managers. It is necessary to put in place new, effective and transparent systems of resource allocation for education through financing formulae. Also there is need for an efficient and fast information system adequate to the new trends in the educational reform, a stronger link between the educational offer of the school

⁵ Eurostat, www.eurostat.org.

⁶ *The International Mathematics and Science Report* (TIMSS), The International Study Center, Boston College Lynch School of Education, The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 1996-2003.

and the community needs, and a coherent quality assurance system for education based on school improvement and development procedures. In bridging gaps in education, the solution of providing equal access opportunities, compared to a performance-based solution, seems to be more realistic, less expensive and more encouraging for the individual competition. Actually, most of the projects pursuing such a bridging of gaps tend to consider only the equality of opportunities to have access to education and have limited impact on school performance, with subsequent effects on the social-professional structure and integration.

The move towards European and global policy harmonization may preclude precisely those initiatives required in order to stop and eventually reverse Romania's peripheral trend. Globalization trends in education are likely to generate substantial gains in knowledge and skills, however it tends to diminish national educational policy sovereignty in relation to European and global systems. Unfortunately, the old mental map developed under the Communist Regime shapes public perception of the Romanian educational system. This means that almost 40 percent do not agree with the private educational system, and 50 percent consider that changes in the educational system during the 1990-2004 period, have only bad results. Over 50 percent consider that students should be first of all tidy and only 10 percent consider that students have to learn to be independent.⁷

The trend towards privatization, deregulation and market-based solutions in economy will affect the education sector. Why should Romania invest in education? Investing in education has many benefits for people and society. Good quality education is among the most powerful measures known to reduce poverty and inequality and promote sustained economic growth. The major benefits for Romania could be helping people to make informed choices, and increasing individual productivity, earnings and quality of life. This is fundamental for the development of a democratic society and key to building a highly skilled and flexible workforce – the backbone of a dynamic, globally competitive economy. It is also crucial for creating, applying, and spreading knowledge, and therefore for a country's prospects for innovation, comparative advantage, and foreign investment inflows.

The Romanian political leadership has lacked vision regarding the need for education. Politicians should determine to work together in pursuit of the country's interests. They should identify the points of their current strength and use them to get concessions in negotiation. In the face of this dilemma, it is only prudent to suggest that governments ought to concentrate on fostering public, mass, general education to as high a level as the economy will bear. If

⁷ *The Public Opinion Barometer*. Romania, May 2004. The Gallup Organization, Metro Media Transilvania.

knowledge production is becoming an industry, then education cannot but be a major input, and may well be threatened with industrial stasis in the process. This may seem an innocuous suggestion. But it appears to be a tall order for many administrations, especially as the education system grows and becomes dominated by the more expensive secondary and tertiary levels. Entrenched positions on how to finance these should be avoided. Education always has an element of income redistribution, taking from the relatively better off to finance the development of the children of the not so well off. This is a public sector activity which clearly requires the most delicate of political skills. Since almost all stages accept the task of providing some fraction of perceived educational demands, one explanation may be that there could be some market failure involved with the financing of each individual's schooling. Another reason may be precisely the redistribution effects which are sought, rather than social efficiency. Another practical suggestion is for governments to avoid sector specific policies, especially notions of fostering industrialization, a task dear to the hearts of the first generation of development professionals.

To date it has been demonstrated repeatedly that, when the government teams up with academia and industry on a spectrum of technologies, the probability of success expands dramatically. Universities and scientific institutions create research that is "pre-competitive." Its results become of commercial value only when they are employed by industry. Government can facilitate the process of technology creation and commercialization through the use of appropriate incentives and by eliminating obstacles. There is a triangle referring to strategic linkages, cooperation, and mutually reinforcing policies among three sets of institutions in society: universities and scientific institutions which create knowledge and skills; business and industry which employ and commercialize knowledge; and Government which provides constraints and opportunities, regulations, and legislation, for the expansion of knowledge and skills.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite two periods of accelerated industrialization, Romania is still a developing country, not yet prepared to face globalization. There is an economic, social and cultural gap between urban and rural areas of residence. Romania's poor educational performance may not be explained solely in terms of bad policies. The sociopolitical environment is probably just as much to blame, and thus performance could remain poor, even after reforming key educational policies. Culture should also play a much larger role in explaining the Romanian failure in democratization and setting up a market economy between 1990 and 2000. In the early 1990s, Romania began to undergo a number of major political changes that affected education: efforts were made to

reform the educational system although no clear alternative was offered. There have been two major directions for educational reform in Romania: curricular, and management and finance. The evolution of the dropout rates in the compulsory education system shows an ascendant trend. The scores to the Third International Mathematics and Science Study were constantly under the international average. The quality of the education cannot be measured with accuracy and improved because there is no autonomy of the School Inspectorates and most of the trained inspectors were replaced with untrained teachers or headmasters. To redefine and continue the reform policy's a necessity for the newly elected Government, the Romanian school system needs real decentralization, including in financial and human resources management, and a larger autonomy of the school unit.

Chapter X

The Dilemma of the Cultural Researcher: Are Global Answers Suitable for Local Queries?

Serban Iosifescu

In Romania we are, now, in a deep and comprehensive reform process with great tribulation – “one step forward – two steps backwards”. Very recent studies and analyses¹ show, for instance, that the Romanian pupils’ results at math and sciences did not change within the last four years, even if a very dramatic and comprehensive curricular reform occurred since 1999. A curricular reform is supposed to change somehow the results. We conceive reforms in order to perform better, but if a specific reform is not well planned and implemented the results could be worse. In all cases something must happen and the results are expected to be different. Such a result – nothing changed - puzzle the decision-makers: they consider they “did their best” (and, sometimes they really did) - but the ultimate results show that the education practice remains the same.

The literature dedicated to this issue from the last 10 years² confirms the fact that many of the traditional approaches to the educational reform (enforcing and enhancing standards, upgrading school staff, reorganizing and decentralizing, changing the curriculum, increasing funding etc.) failed and the crisis continues. A new approach emerged: the educational reform has to be seen in terms of cultural change: the unchanged and unchanging culture is the cause of inefficient and nonproductive investments in school. It is obvious that the culture affects not only the functioning of any organization, but also the way a specific organization changes, develops and improves. Only with a supportive culture for a specific planned change, will that change be successful. Thus, all reform processes have to deal with the individual and collective human mind.

From the cultural researcher’s perspective the results of the survey mentioned above confirm that the existing organizational culture (norms, values, representations, ways of thinking, dominant practices) did not back the desired changes. The reform was “absorbed” into the existing culture and the change

¹ See Martin, M. O *et alii* (2004). *TIMSS International Science Report*. Boston: IEA.

² See, for instance Maehr, M., C. MIDGLEY (1996). *Transforming School Cultures*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

was only at the level of rhetoric: we said we changed something, but our practice and behavior remained the same.

That is why we consider that is important to know if the existing culture is adequate or not to the planned reform and whether the programmed measures will have to deal with cultural barriers. For instance, we believe that the lack of impact of the curricular reform (mentioned above) has as one of its causes teacher resistance against a student-centered education. Traditionally, the Romanian education is teacher-centered and remains so, despite the good will of the reform initiators. Moreover, such a change involving cultural aspects will produce tangible results only in the long term.

So, the Institute of Educational Sciences began to research organizational cultures. It was soon discovered that we lacked a basis for our analysis: there are no original national researches in this field and no application of well-known theories. Having in mind the fact that in any evaluation and analysis the research instruments depend on the theory employed³, we reached an impasse regarding how to analyze the organizational culture and became aware that this kind of research is a matter of choice. After many discussions and even arguments we opted for two theories (presented, briefly, below). There were several reasons for this choice.

The first one was the methodological convenience: they provided coherent sets of research tools (questionnaires, interview guides, observation guides, etc.) for all the aspects of the culture in an organization such a school unit. The consistence between the theory and the associated methodology was obvious.

The second and, perhaps, the most important reason was personal: we knew them better and we liked them more. But this brings the first dilemma:

Dilemma 1: Will what we find using the “preferred” tools be relevant, or do we need to have a comprehensive approach, using all or at least the most important theories and methodologies? Are we allowed to use, within the research process, what we prefer or we are forced to use only “rational” choices?

We solved this dilemma quickly finding enough reasons inside these two theories for using them and arguing that, in our context, they are the most productive. Of course, this is an assumption, but these kinds of reasons came to be accepted: it is impossible to use all the information that could be had. This is one important aspect closely linked with the globalism: the globalization of information increases the importance of personal choices. Nobody is supposed

³ See Shadish, W.R., T.D. Cook, L.C. Leviton (1998). *The Foundation of Program Evaluation. Theories of Practice*. Bucuresti: Fiman. (Romanian translation)

to know all the information on a specific topic, even as researcher. Hence, it is legitimate to make choices, even personal ones, if you have enough reasons and are able to convince the scientific community and the decision-makers.

So, we opt for two theories dealing with the organizational cultures, the model proposed by Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones⁴ and the Geert Hofstede model⁵.

The first model judges (and separates) the organizational cultures into two dimensions:

solidarity – defined as “common thinking and common goals”;
sociability – defined as a “way of inter-human relationship”.

According to these two dimensions, the authors identify four dominant types of culture. Each type is specific for some kinds of organizations and has “positive” and “negative” aspects. The four types are:

“fragmented” culture " – with a low level on both dimensions;
“network” culture - with a low solidarity level and a high sociability level;
“mercenary” culture - with a low sociability level and a high solidarity level;
“communal” culture – with high levels on both dimensions.

The model also describes an evolution "pattern" of the organizational culture: from the “communal” culture, to the “network” one, and then to the “mercenary” one and finally to the “fragmented” one. The main purposes regarding this aspect are:

to identify, starting from the organizational mission, the most appropriate type of culture for a specific organization;
to stop the evolution at the desired type, strengthening the positive cultural aspects of this specific type and weakening the negative ones, by using specific actions and instruments.

We chose this model because it seemed quite “rational” and consistent with the theory presented and associated methodology. We anticipated a very important need for change regarding some dominant aspects of the organizational cultures within the educational sector, and this model offers actual means to

⁴ Goffee, R., G. Jones (1998). *The Character of a Corporation*. London: Harper Collins Business.

⁵ Hofstede, G.(1994). *Cultures and organizations*. London: Harper Collins Business.

control these changes in a desired way. We expected, as well, that we should find different types of cultures in different school units.

We applied the research instruments and, when we collected the first data (the answers to a questionnaire for teachers), we had an unpleasant surprise: the results told us that all the school units we investigated had the same culture, the “communal” one. Thus, it seemed that, in the Romanian schools, there is a great concern for having good relationships at work (“we are all like family”) and, as well, a very powerful goal orientation (“we know what to do and we do it well”).

These results contradict all previous studies and our “feelings” as well. All the studies described the school system as bureaucratic, yet the two authors mentioned argued that the bureaucratic organizations cannot have “communal” cultures. We came to another impasse. We thought, at the beginning, that we had inappropriately used the theory and the instruments. We repeat the questionnaire application and we back it up with interviews and observation. The results were, more or less, the same, but we discovered an interesting fact: for the Romanian teachers the image on themselves is more important than the reality. Even if the questionnaires are anonymous, even if we told them that we use their answers only for research purposes and this has nothing to do with their career or evaluation (as individuals and also as organization), the Romanian teachers try to offer the best image of themselves. Consequently, they gave us not the real answers but the answers they believed to be the researchers’ expectations: there is a very powerful need “to do well” and to be “well” perceived.

The theory of Goffee and Jones did not offer a solution for this problem. But we found some explanations inside other theories. And we came to the second dilemma:

Dilemma 2: Are there theories and methodologies built and proved within specific cultures transferable in other cultures? For the cultural research are we allowed to “think globally” or we are forced only to “act locally”? Are universal models reliable or do we need to develop only specific model for cultural analysis and development?

In order to solve this dilemma, we gave up the Goffee and Jonas model and concentrate on the Hofstede’s model, which explains the problem of the uniformity of responses we encountered. On the other hand, the Hofstede’s theory offers less intervention instruments because the five cultural dimensions (see below) refer to the national and not to the organizational culture and, consequently, they are supposed to change very slowly.

We chose Hofstede’s theory because the five cultural dimensions are relevant for the reform processes. These dimensions are “power distance”, “individualism – collectivism”, “masculinity – femininity”, “uncertainty

avoidance”, “long term / short term orientation”. We shall not present in details this theory, only its relevance for the reform processes.

“Power distance” indicates the degree of equality or inequality within the society shown by the dependence or independence of the subordinates to managers. A higher “power distance” means that the individuals show an unconditioned respect to the “powerful” and “rich”. A lower “power distance” means that the society de-emphasizes the difference between citizens’ power and wealth. The awareness of this aspect is important in order to find the easiest way for implementing reform measures: use mostly authority if the “power distance” is high, or mostly consultation and participation when the “power distance” is low.

The “individualism - collectivism” dimension indicates the pre-eminence of the individual or the collective interests within the society. Hence, the optimum way to motivate people is satisfying, in the first place, the individual interests in “individualist” cultures or the collective ones (in “collective” cultures).

The “masculinity – femininity” dimension refers to the degree the society reinforces, in “masculine” cultures, the dominant male role model, enhancing the values of “achievement”, “control”, “power” and “arrogance”, or enhances, in “feminine” cultures, the “sensibility”, and treats equally women and men. This aspect is important for the “change agent” in order to know whether to stress the male/female role difference or to minimize it.

“Uncertainty avoidance” indicates the tolerance level of ambiguity and uncertainty within a society. A high level of “uncertainty avoidance” means a rule-oriented society and a low tolerance for the difference of opinions. A low level of “uncertainty avoidance” means that the society is ready to accept change and to take risks. This dimension is important for the reform processes in terms of the pace and the scope of the reform: where there is a higher level of “uncertainty avoidance” reform measures have to be introduced one by one, step by step and with a lot of supporting measures. If there is a lower level of “uncertainty avoidance”, the measures may be introduced more rapidly because the system has a greater capacity for “absorption”.

Finally, the “long – term / short term orientation” indicates the degree the society embraces or not the tradition and the forward thinking values. This dimension is useful in the reform process in order to see what kind of policies and strategies may have success: in a “long term” society, the reform programs have to be thought starting from the tradition and having in mind long term deadlines, while in a “short term” society the tradition doesn’t mean so much and the change may occur more rapidly.

We found out, in our research, that the Romanian society has high levels of “power distance” and “uncertainty avoidance”, and average levels of

“masculinity” and “individualism”⁶. These findings confirmed our “feelings” and explained some of the problems encountered by the reform programs. For instance, some previous analyses and studies revealed as dominant features of the educational system a “governance of rules” and conservative traits, which lead to the failure of any radical reforms. Those characteristics were confirmed by our findings.

Having in mind the future integration of Romania in the European Union, we tried to compare our findings with what is happening in other European cultures, Hofstede’s theory and model being widely recognized and used around the world. But this model is questioned and some researches raised some doubts. For instance, Dr. Brendan McSweeney⁷ and Mikael Sondergaard⁸ argue that Hofstede’s model is based upon several crucial assumptions which make this model invalid and misleading: that every micro-location is typical for the national level; that the national culture programs individuals in the same unique way; that cultural dimensions can be identified by responses to questionnaire; that what is identified in the workplace is situationally non-specific; that surveys are inappropriate instruments to measure cultures; that the “nation” as the unit of analysis is the most suitable for studying cultures; that one company (IBM in this case) can provide information about an entire national culture; that the four / five dimensions are enough to describe a national culture, etc.

We had to agree that there is a very serious and sound criticism on Hofstede’s theory. So, we are in a delicate situation: we like the Hofstede’s model, and it had produced results, but it is seriously challenged from the theoretical and methodological points of view. What to do in this case where the second dilemma is reinforced? The answer could be only situational, but we reach a new dilemma, the third one:

Dilemma 3: To use or not to use the results of the research we made as a possible foundation for political decision-making?

It is a practical dilemma: the results are what we expected, are confirmed by other analysis and, especially, very useful especially for the reforming processes - having in mind the most important strategic objective – integration into the European Union. But, on the others hand, their theoretical and methodological foundation is challengeable.

⁶ We did not approach, at that time, the “long term / short term orientation”.

⁷ McSweeney, B. *Hofstede’s Model of National Cultural Differences and Their Consequences: A Triumph of Faith – A Failure of Analysis* (abridged) <http://geert-hofstede.international-business-center.com/mcsweeney...>

⁸ Sondergaard, M. *In My Opinion* <http://geert-hofstede.international-business-center.com/sondergaard...>

There are tremendous pressures towards globalization: ICT, supranational organizations with their own policies, international cooperation projects, the wider and wider circulation of goods, information and persons, etc., which force us to “think globally”. Because of this, and as Romanians having in mind the future integration into the European Union and a much larger participation at international trade and exchanges, we are forced to use common research theories and instruments, even if the results are not entirely acceptable. We need to compare ourselves with other cultures and nations; we need to participate in international projects while being aware of the other’s cultural specificity; we need to produce good and services acceptable in other cultures; and last but not least we need to educate people able to handle cultural differences. Thus, we need to use theories and instruments produced outside our national culture.

On the other hand, we need to take into account the cultural specificity and very carefully use the results in this very sensitive area of organizational and national cultures. It is very difficult to present findings that show cultural features there are not convenient for specific groups or trends.

So, we decided despite all criticism to present our results as such, because we consider them productive and useful. We decided, as well, to search for confirmation of our findings in the way the decision-makers use the research results themselves. Not only is the way of analyzing cultures culturally oriented, but also the way of using these research results. Thus, if our national and organizational culture has these specific features (especially high power distance and high level of uncertainty avoidance) it is likely that the decision-makers do not take them into consideration. We hope we are wrong but reality could indicate that we were right.

We also used these results as a starting point, as a “ground level” for further research. For instance, the National Socrates Agency⁹ asked us to find out if there are any changes in the organizational cultures of the schools that developed several partnerships programs with other European educational institutions. The findings were interesting and promising: these schools have lower levels of “power distance” and “uncertainty avoidance”. This means that the international cooperation is a very efficient tool in order to “open” the educational system to change and alternative views. This means too, that international cooperation changes views on power: if the people in charge, the “bosses”, are not competent, their authority might be challenged and no longer accepted.

⁹ National Socrates Agency administers the Socrates European partnership programs in the field of education – partnerships among schools, in service courses for teachers all over Europe, adult education programs, distance learning programs, exchange of pupils and students, etc.

Broadening the perspective, we must be aware that we live in a very complex and interrelated world. We need to think, for instance, how our educational reforms affect the free movement of the work force across the Europe, how to educate people in order to maximize their chances for finding a suitable work place, not only in Romania, but wherever they want. So, in the end, beside all dilemmas mentioned above we think that cultural research is productive for the reform process: the change has to be national, originating in existing values and traditions, but it has also to deal with its global impact.

What conclusion could we draw from this? Is it possible or not to use research theories and methods coming from other cultures; are we allowed to make choices; are the cultural research findings useful?

The answer for these dilemmas could be only situational: there is no absolute truth and nobody possesses "ultimate knowledge". In this regard, we tried to conceive our own "code of conduct" for our research practice in order to give our answers for these questions. Thus we try:

to know, as much as possible, while aware that is impossible to know everything happening in a specific scientific field;

to make sound and motivated choices, but to present them explicitly as personal choices;

not to be afraid to make our own contribution in theoretical and methodological fields: every research is right or wrong, useful or useless – depending on the perspective;

to use very carefully different methods and instruments (our own or adapted);

to be aware that the adapted instruments are more efficient, but diminish the chances to compare cultures;

to be aware that the decision-makers are culturally biased, but not to give up and to try to persuade them to use our findings; and

to be persistent, being aware that the cultural changes are possible only long term.

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Chapter XI

Globalization and Cultural Diversity

Zeno Reinhardt and Oana Almasan

OUR DAILY GLOBALIZATION

The word “globalization” is on everybody’s lips; it has suddenly become a slogan, a magic incantation, a *pass-partout* capable to open the gates to all present and future mysteries. Some consider “globalization” a must for our welfare; others say that our source of unhappiness resides exactly in “globalization”¹.

Talking about the irreversible phenomenon of globalization, Bauman describes it as an implacable destiny towards which humanity is driving ever faster. In the new globalized world, individuals are no longer citizens but consumers: the social segregation has a new look, shaped by the dynamics of life, dividing individuals in nomad and sedentary, tourists or tramps².

In a world of ever-traveling consumers, where the product has become more important than the environment that created it (McDonald’s having become more important than the United States³), the fast-food industry has changed its meaning into a symbol of globalization, of uniformity, beyond being a “symbol of the American culture”⁴ or a “piece of America,”⁵ as in the past. Considered progress by some, and regress by others, McLuhan’s “global village” is always in a precarious balance, and the pressure of a life torn between global and local puts a heavy weight on everyone’s shoulders. From an optimistic point of view⁶, globalized culture means openness to a plethora of resources: simultaneous access to the movies produced in Hong Kong, the novels of García Márquez, famous Cuban bands like Buena Vista Social Club,

¹ Z. Bauman, *Globalization and its social effects*, Ed Antet, 2002, p. 39.

² Z. Bauman, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

³ George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of the Society*, Ed. Comunicare.ro, Bucuresti, 2002.

⁴ Bill Keller, *Of Famous Arches, Beeg Meks, and Rubles*, *New York Times*, January 28, 1990, section 1, pp. 1, 12, in George Ritzer, *op.cit.*

⁵ *Wedge of Americana: In Moscow Pizza Hut Opens 2 Restaurants*, *Washington Post*, September 12, 1990, p. B10, in George Ritzer, *op.cit.*

⁶ T. Cowen, *Does Globalization Thwart Cultural Diversity?*, Harvard, 2000.

the Aborigine art in Australia, and the vast spectrum of traditional food all over the world. In addition, globalization provides us with the means of contacting anyone on this planet at any moment through a computer connected to the internet. The defenders of this approach say that the cultural diversity lovers have never had so many opportunities to choose quality things as they have today, and the artists have never had so many chances to reach their audience as now. Globalization offers a kind of “supermarket” in which a multitude of products awaits their customers.

The pessimistic approach emphasizes the “things out of control”⁷ as Bauman calls them, of no value, or of negative value. As Paul Ricoeur put it.

the cheap civilization spreads under our very eyes. All over the world, the same bad movie, the same rattling slot-machines, the same plastic and aluminum horrors, the same propaganda-twisted language...; Everything happens as if humanity, making its way towards the first consumer culture, would entirely be stuck, in mass, in a subcultural threshold.⁸

Perceived as a grey chaos of blends and mixtures, globalization is far from being a manageable phenomenon. It is more “what happens to us”⁹, than what we do, an unleashing of artificial wildness. It is created by man who lost his sense of order in a state with no sovereignty, being swallowed by a social order¹⁰ that transcends the borders of individual states.

However, even the sharpest critics admit that globalization has its benefits. For example, globalization provides the population with worldwide access to an elementary welfare, freeing people from basic needs. Furthermore, standardization is also helping humankind discover itself as one, a sense of “man recognizing man”.¹¹ But, in the context of accepting humankind from this perspective of universality, a new problem is born: while it promotes humankind, one and the same it seems subtly but continuously to erode the local diversity, destroying the *ethos*, the creative core of the cultures, the ethnic-mythical essence of humankind¹².

⁷ Z. Bauman, op.cit., p. 22.

⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *History and truth*, Ed. Anastasia, București, 1996, p. 317.

⁹ Z. Bauman, op.cit, p. 60.

¹⁰ Z. Bauman, op.cit, p. 63.

¹¹ Paul Ricoeur, op.cit., p. 316.

¹² Paul Ricoeur, op. cit., p. 317.

THE PERENNIAL CONFLICT OF GLOBALIZATION AND OPPOSING PERSPECTIVES

From a cultural perspective, one source of conflict resides right here: in being torn between the acceptance of globalization as a universal civilization satisfying basic needs, on the one hand, and the tendency of global cultural uniformization threatening local identities, on the other hand. Should different peoples forget their cultural identity, their reason for existence, in order to integrate in the globalizing civilization that provides them a better life? Is there no way to compromise, to accept universality while also preserving cultural identity?

Paul Ricoeur analyses this issue from the perspective of a general loss of identity and creative power, of the metamorphosis of the self into a stranger or a copy of the other, of becoming one among many others. "It is not easy to remain yourself while also practicing the tolerance towards other civilizations"¹³.

Maintaining contact with this new world civilization, cultures risk losing diversity, some risk even extinction, because not all have the same capacity for persistence and assimilation. Cultures that do not find the resources to adapt, to become compatible with the new global civilization based on science and technology will face the danger of extinction¹⁴.

From Cowen's perspective¹⁵ things no longer look that somber. Although Cowen too agrees that, in the modern world, too many cultures disappear in a too short time, he considers that the balance between failure and success does not depend on the number of declining cultures. Neither does a high number of declining cultures necessarily mean failure, nor does a low number of such disappearing cultures indicate an obvious success. A low number of moribund cultures, he explains, could be in fact the reflection of a world lacking in variation and diversity from the very beginning, neither able to achieve, nor capable of producing great things. Similarly, a high number of different artistic genres, decaying or not, could be the symptom of a cultural richness and vitality, an ethos changing, developing, creating, and flourishing in new forms, rather than a symptom of a fading culture. Cultures change ceaselessly. Some die, others flourish from those vanishing remains and take their place. It is the natural way of the world.

Almost all of today's cultures said to be endangered by globalization have been born in their turn from the contact, the mixing and the changing of other cultures, some of which have died away. Throughout history, cultures

¹³ Paul Ricoeur, *op.cit.*, p. 318.

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *op.cit.*, p. 323.

¹⁵ T. Cowen, *op.cit.*

come to life, flourish and disappear. In fact, the so-called indigenous cultures of today are nothing else but mixed versions of previous cultures. History teaches us that their disappearance, like their appearance, is a natural, unchangeable process. That is why Cowen places the emphasis on the newborn cultures, on the ones that are growing, burgeoning, and bringing their treasures to enrich the world.

Intercultural contact could bring some cultures to ruin, while nurturing others. For the latter, the more intense the cultural exchange, the more powerful the cultural blossoming, and the more valuable things brought to life. Little by little, the exchange takes over and only a shade will remain of the old burgeoning culture, while shapes developed by its flourishing are reorganized into a new culture. Thus, its bloom bears the seeds of its future disappearance. Nothing is historically immutable. Fear of losing some of our present cultural treasure will not prevent those cultures from disappearing, or new cultures from taking their place: it is only natural. Therefore, instead of fostering conflicts and vainly advocating the preservation of the world in its present shapes, Cowen proposes a fresh perspective: do not look back, look forward; remove the ethnocentric perspective and take a good look at the interesting cultures that are rising from the mixture of globalization.

Ethnocentric isolation, Cowen concludes, is not the answer for cultural survival in a world of ever smaller distances and ever closer people. Communication among cultures should not (and, in fact, cannot) be impeded. Yet, two main issues have to be resolved: finding a balance between one culture's ethos and that of the cultures with which it interacts with, and finding a way for genuine and effective communication.

Ethos, Ethnocentrism, Cultural Relativism, and the Pitfalls of Effective Communication

Genuine intercultural communication and exchange could be a solution for cultural survival and renewal, but humankind does not yet seem ready. Here lies another source of modern day conflict: we want to preserve diversity, but we fail to accept it as a natural phenomenon. Tributary to the *ethos* of the culture in which we are born, blinded by the prejudice of *ethnocentrism*, and too easily falling into the temptation of false acceptance of every one and every thing, we are more likely to try to impose our ways on others than to find the middle ground. A real, authentic and effective communication begins with the acceptance that comes with knowledge of self and of the other.

Ethos, the Heart of a Culture

What is this cultural core, this diversity-generating nucleus which shapes our conscience and whose corrosion and disappearance Ricoeur fears? What is this *ethos* that Cowen refers to while explaining human cultural diversity and its evolution? How does this creative essence work on us and in which way does it influence the acceptance of others as legitimately different?

“The only way to reach the nucleus of a culture is to go deep down into its soul. The ethic-mythical nucleus shapes a people’s cultural background [...]. The structure of this subconscious or unconscious shelters the very mystery of human diversity”¹⁶, says Paul Ricoeur. The ethic-mythical core of a culture is formed by the “very values of a people which define it as people”¹⁷. Those values are born from that people’s genuine approach to life, for example its traditions or its individuals’ behavior in relation with the others (whether similar or strangers). It is *that something* specific to a culture, that does not repeat, but always re-invents itself, thereby perpetuating the culture it defines.

Cowen talks about the same cultural essence and about the way it can be developed and preserved. He assumes the philosophic definition of *ethos* as that specific something that confers individuality and distinctiveness on a culture, it is a set of basic assumptions through which the world is filtered and analyzed.

It was noted above that globalization threatens to destroy diversity, corrupting the very heart of diverse cultures. Cowen agrees that an *ethos* can be weakened or destroyed by external influences. Being too much and too often in contact with other cultures’ stronger *ethos*, artists could lose their creativity. Even though they do not use external elements or try not to be influenced by them, once they enter in contact with these elements artists cannot forget them; therefore, a certain degree of isolation can offer self-confidence to a culture and even a touch of magic. But too much of the same isolation, of severe lack of intercultural contact and rejection of diversity, could result in the decay and disappearance of an *ethos*¹⁸, for lack of new experiences and opportunities to re-invent itself in contact with other cultures.

¹⁶ Paul Ricoeur, op.cit, p. 319.

¹⁷ Paul Ricoeur, op.cit, p. 320.

¹⁸ T. Cowen, op.cit.

The Paradox of Ethnocentrism: Similar in Rejecting Dissimilarity

Unfortunately, the diversity of cultures does not appear to the people as a natural phenomenon, but seems rather to be outrageous and monstrous¹⁹. Finding themselves in an unexpected situation, the first reaction of the individual is that of rejection, of contemptuously labeling the other as barbarian, savage or inferior. This reaction of denial and contempt towards any attitude that does not fit one's cultural canons, a reaction deeply rooted in the conscience of the majority and supported on a solid psychological basis, is defined as *ethnocentrism*.

From this perspective, humankind is reduced to the sum of similar individuals; it does not extend over the frontiers of the tribe, of the linguistic group or even of the village. Numerous so-called primitive populations define themselves as "the humans", "the good ones", or "the complete ones", while the rest of the world, starting with the next village, forms the savage world, the barbarians or "the evil"²⁰.

A very savory and eloquent definition of ethnocentrism is given by George Bernard Shaw who said that it consists in "believing that your country is superior to all the others simply because you were born there".

It is true that, at philosophical and religious levels, various attempts have been made to eliminate this absurd way of thinking and relating to others, proclaiming the natural equity and fraternity among people which should unite different races and cultures. Still, in Levi-Strauss's opinion, all of these are but an attempt to eliminate cultural diversity by simulating its complete recognition and acceptance, without actually reaching a true understanding and acceptance of diversity as a natural phenomenon²¹.

Cultural Relativism and the False Acceptance of Diversity

An influential and widespread idea pleading for the recognition and acceptance of diversity, cultural relativism was born, according to Boudon²², from the combination of three founding ideas expounded by Montaigne, Hume and Weber.

The idea launched by Montaigne in one of his essays states that "a nation [a culture] sees things from a certain point of view, another nation from

¹⁹ C. Levi-Strauss, "Race and History", in *Racism confronted by science*, Ed. Politică, București, 1982, pp. 8-13.

²⁰ C. Levi-Strauss, op.cit., pp. 8-13.

²¹ C. Levi-Strauss, op.cit., pp. 8-13.

²² Raymond Boudon, "The Social Sciences and the Two Types of Relativism", in *Journal of social issues*, nr. 2/2003.

another point of view". This is illustrated by the display and explanation of the customs of several cannibal tribes. For example, the corpse of a member of the tribe would be eaten by his/her sons, so that it would be given an honorable grave and not be devoured by worms. Such a practice may seem repulsive to individuals belonging to a Western culture who bury their dead ancestors, letting them become victims of worms and rotteness, a fact considered repulsive by the above-mentioned tribe.

Montaigne's idea spread rapidly among anthropologists, creating the belief that there is no normative truth, but only deeply rooted customs which vary from one place to another, customs which give birth to norms and values that are perpetuated through socialization. Therefore, the diversity of the norms and values in various societies proves that these are simply social and cultural conventions transmitted to individuals through socialization.

In a similar way, starting from a Hume's theorem which says that a system of affirmative statements cannot produce an imperative conclusion, anthropologists have come to the idea that norms and beliefs shape the individuals without their notice, and the role of anthropology is to bring to light the true grounds of the formation of normative beliefs.

Max Weber contributed a third idea, based on his known metaphors: "the polytheism of the values" and "the war of gods", suggesting that societies are conducted by norms and values which can be incompatible from one culture to another, and that social life is marked not by the conflicts between classes, as Marx stated, but by conflicts between values.

The conclusion derived from the compilation of the three basic ideas is that while norms and the values are only products of conventions, they cannot be measured with the same standard, thus being all equally good or bad.

Brought to the extreme, as Boudon shows²³, the conclusion of the partisans of cultural relativism is that no culture and no society is better or worse than another. Therefore, the world should live in a sort of collective goodwill, in a general acceptance or, as Levi-Strauss put it, in a simulacrum of acceptance and understanding²⁴. But whom are we trying to fool? A fake and arid benevolence towards the others could not produce cultural forms of synthesis and help humanity progress, getting "another winning series for the destiny's lottery", as Levi-Strauss expressed it. Only genuine communication and intercultural exchange could set a solid basis for mutual acknowledgement and acceptance, and for further cultural evolution. We have to learn to accept differences for what they are, a natural phenomenon, and start real intercultural dialogue and exchange, rediscovering ourselves and re-interpreting our values, while also being aware of others' existence and values.

²³ Raymond Boudon, *op. cit.*

²⁴ C. Levi-Strauss, *op. cit.*, p.11.

Intercultural Exchange and the Fruitful Development of Ethos under Reciprocal Influence

Only a living culture, truthful to its origin and, at the same time, spiritually creative, producing new art, literature, philosophy, is capable of bearing the burden of meeting different cultures, and also of making it fruitful. When the meeting of two different cultures becomes an encounter of two creative energies and enthusiasms, it becomes creative itself. I think that there is some kind of consonance between creative powers, even when there is a lack of agreement²⁵

Ricoeur says.

To be able to communicate and to also give meaning to this communication, cultures have to first rediscover their origins, find and re-build themselves, this time completely aware not only of their identity, but of the others' idealism as well. This way, "Every civilization will develop its own perception of the world standing face-to-face with other civilizations"²⁶.

While Ricoeur sees the solution of cultural survival in the self-discovery and self-rebuilding, Cowen²⁷ thinks that the answer lies in keeping the balance between cultural isolation and intercultural exchange. In intercultural communication, he states, the ethos relies equally on isolation and on intercultural exchange. It was not by chance, he argues, that the classic civilization developed on the Mediterranean ground, where maritime commerce brought together a great diversity of cultures, offering them the opportunity to learn from one another. Commercial exchanges carried throughout Europe not only merchandise, but also the desire for knowledge. The mobility of scientists, manuscripts, and scientific ideas gave birth to the Renaissance and its artistic accomplishments. The very formation of the United States, as well, has its roots in the intercultural exchange and the mobility of resources.

It is impossible to talk about culture, without considering the importance of intercultural exchange. In most cases, intercultural exchange favors the fruitful development of an ethos before distorting or destroying it. The initial encounter of cultures produces a creative outburst, an intense exchange of material goods, as well as of technologies and ideas. For a while, the best of both cultures is brought to the surface and blooms. In time, though, the richer or more widespread culture tends to change the balance and overwhelm the poorer or less extended culture, generating its cultural decay.

²⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *op.cit.*, p. 325.

²⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *op.cit.*, p. 326.

²⁷ T. Cowen, *op.cit.*

The “Minerva” Model

To better illustrate his ideas, Cowen builds a model of intercultural exchange based on Hegel’s metaphor that “the owl of Minerva flies only at dusk”, reflecting Hegel’s belief that philosophic understanding appears when civilizations have already reached the climax of their development.

Cowen states that, in a similar way, the peak of a cultural blooming appears only at the point when the cultural development has been reached and the slow decline has just started. In this picture, the flourishing of a culture paves the way for its decline, and implicitly for the decline of its ethos. Even when two or more cultures prove to be incompatible for the long run, put together for the short run they can produce marvelous results, outcomes of an intense and rich cultural exchange. Therefore, as Cowen put it, a cultural burgeoning bears the seeds of its own destruction.

Nevertheless, the decline or death of an ethos does not necessarily imply its complete disappearance. It means only that a certain ethos has ceased to exist in a specific form, while it could very well continue to exist under a new shape, a new structure born from the metamorphosis of that specific ethos under the influence of exchanges with another ethos.

Consequently, the “Minerva model” of intercultural exchange explains Cowen’s conviction that we should rather speak about a metamorphosis of cultures and ethoses rather than about their death. In today’s world of globalization, when cultural interaction and exchange are a global phenomenon, there might be a smaller number of spoken languages and religions, but the number of new ethoses, *niche-ethoses*, as Cowen calls them, is increasing. That the world is changing is true. But it has always been changing, and globalization is just a new stage in the world’s history. Globalization, he states, does not kill ethoses, but changes them. Cultural diversity is not going to disappear; only that the elements composing that diversity will be different from the old ones, they will be new shapes of old essences.

Levi-Strauss²⁸ also shares the idea of reformulating the ethos in a new shape under reciprocal influence. He considers that it was not the absolute play of chance that gave birth to the important inventions and achievements humankind has accomplished along the centuries, but that, beside chance, an overwhelming weight of their creation has been based on the power of human imagination and on intercultural exchange.

Among the examples he cites to sustain his point of view is the craft of pottery. The widespread belief that all you have to do to make a pot is to take a handful of argil, give it a shape and put it in the oven to harden is completely false. In order to obtain a pot that could be used one has to follow a series of

²⁸ C. Levi-Strauss, op.cit., p. 31.

very strict techniques and to combine very diverse elements; without all these, the result would be null. Therefore, throughout this whole process, chance plays a small part compared to human ingenuity, while certainly it does not deserve to be given the whole credit.

THE MODEL OF THE ROULETTE PLAYERS

For the collaboration among cultures, Levi-Strauss illustrates his convictions through the suggestive metaphor of the players at a roulette of destiny²⁹. For just one player counting on a complex combination, thousands or millions of games would be necessary before that specific combination could win. Waiting all this time, our player would have, instead, great chances of being ruined. This, however, could not happen to a coalition of players betting on the same combination, but playing in more roulette games. Furthermore, the waiting time would be reduced even more if the players were allowed to put together the favorable results obtained by each individually.

Levi-Strauss compares this scenario with the situation of the cultures that have managed to achieve great accomplishments during history. He observes that important progress and achievements have never been produced by isolated cultures, but only by cultures that combined individual resources, voluntarily or involuntarily, by the means of migrations, borrowings and exchanges, commerce, or even wars³⁰. Therefore, progress is a result of the manner the different cultures put their resources together. Levi-Strauss concludes.

The only fatality, the only lethality that could strike a certain part of humankind and prevent it from fully accomplishing its own nature is being alone.³¹

Ricoeur, as well, sees the lack of communication and cultural exchange as harmful and far from being a valid solution for cultural survival. He does not call it isolation, because in his view the cultures acknowledge each others' existence, but they live without authentic dialogue, in a state of "vague and inconsistent syncretism"³², a useless, sterile co-existence. "Syncretism has to be replaced by communication, by the dramatic relation in which I assert my

²⁹ C. Levi-Strauss, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

³⁰ C. Levi-Strauss, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

³¹ C. Levi-Strauss, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

³² P. Ricoeur, *op.cit.*, p. 324.

origin while also offering myself to the other's imagination, as it is shaped by his own different civilization"³³.

Out of this planetary dialogue among cultures a new global civilization is born, a co-existence of cultures of a rich diversity³⁴, a cultural worldwide coalition allowing each individual culture to preserve its uniqueness, but to evolve in the same time with the others, and under reciprocal influence.

A NEW GLOBAL DIVERSITY

Whether globalization is seen as a threat or as a natural change of the world, one thing seems to have gained universal agreement: "long-term cultural isolation leads to stagnation"³⁵, as Ivo T. Budil put it.

Globalization brings into contact small and great communities, but will not completely wipe away the differences, nor destroy diversity³⁶, explains Cowen. Extended global politics is based on a very diversified internal structure.

The newborn cultural communities are independent of geographical areas, and their characteristic ethos is transmitted through ways different from the old, classical ones of spatial proximity. For example, the Internet has freed culture from geographic limitations to an unprecedented extent. Cowen thinks it would be more appropriate to talk about the liberation of the ethoses from geographic limitations than about their destruction.

As Cowen tries to demonstrate, the more communication-based cultures take the place of regionally-defined ones, the more the number of smaller *niche-ethoses* will increase. Although contemporary societies seem homogeneous, he states, their inner diversity is continuously growing. Paradoxically, globalization means at the same time homogeneity and diversity, Cowen concludes.

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³³ P. Ricoeur op.cit., pp. 325-326.

³⁴ C. Levi-Strauss, op.cit., p. 42.

³⁵ Ivo T. Budil, "Multiculturalism: enrichment or threat", in *Intercultural Education*, nr. 2/2003.

³⁶ T. Cowen, op.cit.

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INDEX

A

Ades, 146
Aesthetics, 3, 7, 9, 12-15
Anderson, 144, 146
Andler, 9
Aquinas, 106, 112
Aristotle, 2, 57-58, 61, 67, 91, 99,
103, 106, 108-109, 111, 113, 118,
122
Aron, 80
Augustine, 33, 99, 109, 113

B

Badillo, 241
Balan, 34
Barro, 146
Bataille, 80
Bauman, 4, 186, 213-214, 223
Becoming, 3, 53-59, 72, 74, 76-77,
80, 82
Being, 3, 18, 25, 39-40, 47-48, 51,
53-62, 65, 72, 74-78, 80, 82, 86,
88, 91, 105, 119, 121, 182, 186,
217
Bergson, 16-17, 43
Bhagwati, 146
Biemel, 39-41, 46, 48, 51, 88-95,
110
Blaga, 1, 40
Blasko, 238
Boboc, 44, 46
Bogdan, 39, 51, 176, 187
Boudon, 218-219, 224
Brentano, 10, 48, 51, 90, 93
Brunschvicg, 39
Buksinski, 239
Burbules, 181, 186

C

Calabretta, 241
Calhoun, 146
Canclini, 150, 152, 164
Caragiale, 104, 109
Ceausescu, 53, 133, 137, 139, 172,
174
Cercel, 51
Chalon, 34
China, 129, 130
Christianity, 7, 15
Ciocan, 51
Cioran, 1, 17-35, 38, 45, 48, 54, 103,
105
Citizenship, 155, 156, 164
Civil society, 162
Communication, 4, 216
Communism, 112, 132
Community, 3, 52, 72, 81, 86, 89,
127, 130-131, 141, 143-144, 146,
149, 155, 163, 167, 179, 185-186,
194, 197-198, 200, 205
Cooper, 146
Copoeru, 51-52
Coulby, 146
Courtine, 48
Cowen, 213-217, 220-224
Crainic, 7
Culture, 1-5, 7, 9-10, 12, 54, 64, 82-
83, 146, 152, 160, 163, 173, 186,
194, 201, 203, 211, 213, 216-218,
221, 224
Curtius, 9

D

Darwin, 97
Dastur, 52
Davidov, 238

Decentralization, 179, 185
 Delanty, 155, 164
 Democracy, 121, 127-128, 131-133,
 138-141, 143, 145, 155-156, 163,
 166, 174, 179, 182
 Dessoir, 9
 Diaconu, 3, 1, 37-38, 40, 42, 49, 52
 Difference, 3, 165, 180-183, 186
 Dilthey, 17
 Discrimination, 135, 183
 Dufrenne, 45-46, 49

E

Education, 1-4, 8, 49, 86, 125, 127-
 129, 131-136, 138, 140, 142-146,
 149, 153-166, 168-174, 177-186,
 190, 192-204, 209, 223-224, 234
 Eliade, 35, 38, 45, 54, 112
 Emad, 51
 Eminescu, 8, 10, 12, 54, 61, 82, 109
 Eros, 65, 71
 Ethnocentrism, 132, 216, 218
 Ethos, 216, 217, 220
 European, 15, 26, 37, 52-54, 83, 92,
 111, 132-134, 137, 143-147, 159,
 162-165, 167, 169-172, 179-180,
 186, 189, 195, 200, 208-209

F

Fichte, 112, 133
 Floru, 39-40, 45
 Flusser, 48
 Fouconnet, 39
 Freud, 112
 Fukuyama, 146

G

Gadamer, 51, 232, 234
 Galileo, 112
 Gallo, 241
 Gardner, 181, 186

Global, 3-4, 128, 149, 153, 156, 164,
 168-169, 179, 185, 192, 203
 Globalization, 2-4, 127-131, 143,
 145, 149-159, 162, 164-166, 168-
 169, 175-180, 184-186, 190-195,
 201, 203-204, 209, 213-217, 221,
 223-224
 Goffee, 205, 206, 211
 Goleman, 181, 186
 Griffiths, 146

H

Halman, 143, 147
 Haryatmoko, 237
 Heater, 155, 164
 Higher education, 128, 134, 157, 172,
 174
 Hofstede, 205-206, 208, 211
 Humboldt, 17, 87, 89, 133

I

Iliescu, 138-143
 India, 129, 130, 146
 Inglehart, 175, 177, 186

K

Keller, 213, 224
 Kilmann, 211
 Knowledge, 67, 81, 165, 192
 Kraay, 129, 130, 146
 Kumar, 170, 186

M

Maiorescu, 10
 Marginson, 149, 153, 155-156, 164
 Marion, 48
 Marx, 219
 Massis, 9
 Merleau-Ponty, 45, 48-49, 51, 80
 Mihailescu, 175, 186

Misztal, 232
 Modernity, 223
 Multiculturalism, 223-224

N

National, 4, 91, 98, 131, 136, 138-139, 159, 164, 166-167, 178-179, 185, 187, 197, 199, 208-209
 Nationalism, 2, 127, 132, 135, 146
 Nietzsche, 9-10, 12, 17, 19-26, 34
 Noica, 1-2, 38-39, 41, 45, 47, 49, 53-82, 89, 95, 98-109, 116, 121, 123
 Nongovernmental, 161, 164

O

OECD, 134, 135, 157-158, 167-168, 179, 184

P

Parmenides, 41, 56, 58-60, 63, 70, 87
 Partenie, 41, 110, 122
 Petrovici, 1, 38-39
 Phenomenology, 44, 48, 51-52, 78, 82, 104, 109
 Philosophy, 1-3, 7-10, 13, 16-17, 41, 48, 51, 53-54, 78, 80-82, 86-88, 163-164, 173, 194
 Plato, 2, 53, 57-58, 63, 66-68, 79-90, 92, 95, 99, 103, 106, 108-109, 111, 113, 119
 Plesu, 1
 Popenici, 1-4, 127

R

Rabinowitz, 141
 Radulescu, 1
 Reich, 156, 164
 Richir, 51
 Ricoeur, 214-215, 217, 220, 222-224
 Rinaldi, 34

Ritzer, 213, 224
 Robin, 39
 Rousseau, 9, 12
 Russell, 112

S

Sartre, 45-46, 48, 63
 Scheler, 10, 38-39, 44
 Schopenhauer, 17, 26, 35
 Sebastian, 38
 Shestov, 17
 Simmel, 17, 26
 Sloterdijk, 34-35
 Society, 48, 51-52, 146, 163, 174, 186, 213, 224
 Socrates, 41, 119, 121-123, 162, 209
 Solidarity, 3, 67, 145, 159, 163, 180, 182, 192, 205
 Sontag, 18, 34, 35
 Spengler, 9, 26, 28-29
 Sterian, 38
 Szigeti, 51

T

Tat, 1-4, 52
 Taylor, 152, 164
 Teilhard de Chardin, 45
 Ting, 235
 Tomlinson, 150, 164
 Trade, 128
 Troeltsch, 9
 Trompenaars, 211
 United Nations, 129, 166
 University, 3, 7-8, 12, 14, 38-40, 44-45, 48-51, 80, 85-88, 94-95, 99, 116, 127, 135, 138-140, 147, 158, 163-164, 186
 Uscatescu, 45
 Utitz, 9

V

Values, 1-3, 7-13, 16, 19, 30, 39, 44,
50, 105, 127, 131-133, 138, 143-
145, 147, 150, 153, 155, 159, 161,
163, 165-166, 172, 175-180, 182,
185-186, 190-194, 203, 207, 210,
217, 219
Vanina, 46
Vianu, 1, 7-16, 43, 98
Vieru, 41, 109
Villa, 232

Voicu, 170, 176-177, 187

Vuia, 39, 91

Vulcanescu, 1, 54

W

Weil, 80

Weininger, 26

Wheatley, 241

Williams, 232

World Bank, 128-129, 157-158, 196

THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

PURPOSE

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Studies in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

PROJECTS

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life*. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week crosscultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. *Joint-Colloquia* with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976 in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Colombia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

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