

TRADITIONS AND CURRENT MEANINGS OF ROMANIAN PHILOSOPHY

Ph.D. Ioan N. ROȘCA

Abstract: *Culturally situated between the West and the East, Romanian philosophy was concerned with both man and the community, combining Western individualism with Eastern holism. Thus, interwar philosophers understood man as a creative being – individual and social – (C. Rădulescu-Motru, L. Blaga and others), they defined values as national and universal appreciations (P. Andrei, T. Vianu, D.D. Roșca, L. Blaga, etc.) and explained history mainly through its ideational-value substratum, both individually and collectively (A.D. Xenopol, N. Iorga, P.P. Negulescu and others). Their anthropological, axiological and of the philosophy of history ideas are important and capitalizable also in the contemporary philosophical context.*

Keywords: *individualism, holism, creative being, value, philosophical anthropology, axiology, philosophy of history*

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The fundamental idea of this study is that Romanian philosophers, being formed at the confluence of Western and Eastern culture, approached the issue of man, values and history in a balanced spirit, of the reciprocity between individual and community, combining Western individualistic humanism with Eastern European holism. This spirit runs through Romanian philosophy from Dimitrie Cantemir, the creator of the first Romanian philosophical work, *The Content of the Sage with the World*, and to Constantin Noica, one of the last creators of the philosophical system, *Becoming a Being*. However, I will continue to deal only with the interwar period, because then, in the conditions of the destruction caused by the First World War, the interwar thinkers treated in a special way and theoretically deepened the problem of concordant affirmation of peoples and nations through authentic social values. Implicitly, but also explicitly, they took into account the affirmation of the Romanians through the values of the culture and, thus, of the collective personality of our people.

I. The philosophy of man

In the conception of man, the emphasis placed on both man and community is exemplary in C. Rădulescu-Motru and Lucian Blaga's works.

In his masterpiece from 1927, *Energetic Personalism*, as in other later writings, Rădulescu-Motru argued that people, through whom cosmic energy comes to be personalized, can be professional personalities or people of vocation. Through their profession, they both serve society, but the professional personalities seek to satisfy their personal interests through their competent activity, while the vocation people act selflessly in the service of the community. Rădulescu-Motru also referred to the collective personality of peoples and nations and to the relationship between individual and collective personalities. He stated, especially in the notes printed posthumously under the title *Revisions and Additions*, that the evolution of mankind is moving towards a prevalence of the collective personality of peoples, but in principle spoke in favor of reciprocity between individual and state, between individual and society.

He based his balanced view, which supports both the importance of individuals and the community, on the well-founded argument that social, community consciousness consists of the common elements of individual consciousness, so that the spirit of the state and social institutions is in line with the consciousness of their members.

But, as post-war realities have shown, especially those of today, there is or may be a disagreement between the thinking of the state, the state and the thinking of the majority of citizens, or a significant part of them, when the state – using the trainers of opinion, to a large extent those from the media – manipulates citizens and promotes the interests of the government as general interests, although they do not express the interests of citizens and in some cases do not even respect their fundamental rights. In this way, a pseudo-social consciousness is formed in a part of the population, which the state, through its institutions, seeks to forcibly inoculate to the majority of its members. Obviously, in this case, there is not a harmony, but a domination of the individual by his own state. Rădulescu-Motru also predicted the importance of social factors, somewhat external to individuals, through his theory according to which the consciousness of individual people, although it resides in their soul substance, in its innate tendencies, asserts itself or not depending on the social courts, which can be either favorable or unfavorable.

Similar, but also different from Rădulescu-Motru, Lucian Blaga treated the relationship between man and community in several of his works grouped in philosophical trilogies, especially in the *Trilogy of Culture* (1944)

and in the work “Anthropological Aspects” (1947) from the *Cosmological Trilogy*. He defined man as a being in mystery and for revelation, so as a creative being, projected into the non-immediate, into mystery, which, however, as he argued, he does not end up exhausting. According to him, creations from different forms of culture and value are individual, but the unconscious factors from which they spring and which consciously embody form a stylistic matrix specific to the members of a people and, therefore, to each people. In other words, the abysmal factors of a certain stylistic matrix (spatial horizon, temporal horizon, axiological accent, anabasic or catabasic attitude and formative aspiration) unify individuals with the cultural community of which they are part. Blaga also admitted the possibility for some individuals to distinguish themselves from the stylistic matrix of the respective people, but only through certain secondary stylistic factors. He argued that “usually a stylistic matrix varies from individual to individual... only by certain completely secondary or accidental determinants”¹⁰⁵, and for those that differ “by abysmal categories of prime importance” from the ethnic group in which they participate, however, the ethnic group “forms their background”¹⁰⁶.

Although the notions of *stylistic matrix* and *soul substance* admit the existence of a unity between individuals and community, there are also differences between them. First, as it follows from the above, the notion of *stylistic matrix* explains the orderly character of the unconscious, while the notion of *soul substance* suggests only a certain complexity of the unconscious by the idea of tendencies of the soul substance, different from people to people. Secondly, but equally important, the stylistic matrix and the substance of the soul also differ in the way in which the two thinkers conceive their relationship with the social-historical conditions. Blaga tended to absolutize the *a priori* character of any stylistic matrix and thus evade it from becoming social-historical, while Rădulescu-Motru argued that the tendencies of individual or collective soul substance assert themselves or not depending on the social conditions existing at a time. Therefore, his conception was appreciated as *functionalist*, the function being “a relationship between the elements of two different classes”¹⁰⁷, in this case between the subjectivity that is internal and the external social-historical environment. However, it should be noted that Blaga also referred, for

¹⁰⁵ Lucian Blaga, *Trilogia culturii*, Bucharest, E.L.U., 1969, p. 112.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 362.

¹⁰⁷ Claudiu Baci, *Ideea de vocație la C. Rădulescu-Motru*, în vol. *Simpozionul național „Constantin Rădulescu-Motru”*, Ediția a II-a „Maiorescu și maiorescienii” Târgu-Mureș, 2017, Editura Academiei Române, București, 2018, p. 149

example, to the bitter historical conditions, which determined that, for several centuries, the Romanian stylistic matrix asserted itself only in folk creations, not in works of major culture. In essence, through his conception regarding the Romanian *apriorism*, Blaga emphasized more the *apriorism* unity between the cultural community and the individual cultural affirmations, while Rădulescu-Motru considered that this unity manifests itself and is formed under the impact of history.

Through the categories of *soul substance* and *stylistic matrix*, Rădulescu-Motru and, respectively, Blaga denote a certain influence from Freudianism, present at the time, and Kantian *apriorism*. They differ, however, from Freud, who regarded the unconscious as a chaotic mixture of elements. Or, Rădulescu-Motru affirms the constancy of the unconscious tendencies, which implies a certain structuring of them, and Blaga, moreover, argues the structural character of the unconscious, imprinted by the abysmal factors. The two thinkers also differ from Kantian *apriorism* in extending this *apriorism*, from the level of sensible and intellectual knowledge to which Kant referred, to the level of the unconscious which is reflected in the consciousness and which leaves its mark not only on empirical or theoretical knowledge, but also of other forms of cultural creation.

In essence, the two thinkers supported the communion between individuals and the peoples they belong to as cultural solidarity. They explained this interconnection through the deepest, most unconscious common elements of the consciousness of individual people and, therefore, of the collective consciousness, and considered that the abysmal depths of consciousness penetrate in both directions: both from individuals to the community and vice versa. Nor did they neglect the influence of the social environment on consciousness. Generally valid, their conceptions had and still have a national, patriotic coloration, as they aimed, in particular, at affirming the Romanians according to the socio-cultural desideratum of the Romanian people and, at the same time, the creation, by the Romanian state and other national institutions, of an environment materially and spiritually favorable to human affirmation.

II. Philosophy of value

In the interwar period, Romanian thinkers combined the individualist and the communitarian point of view in **the field of philosophy of values**, an applied philosophical discipline that was founded at that time, called **axiology**. Values involve not only a knowledge of different objects, but also an appreciation of them as important or unimportant for different human

needs. Romanian axiologists considered that values depend on both the individual and society.

At the beginning of the last century, when axiology was established, individualistic-psychological conceptions predominated, which considered that the basis of value is either the feeling or the will of individual people. The psychologism of value had been taken over by the historian A.D. Xenopol, who, in his 1910 work *Théorie de l'histoire*, without dealing more extensively with axiology, thought that the historian could not explain historical facts as valuable facts, because he would introduce his own subjectivity in appreciating facts as significant or insignificant in value.

The one who initiated in us the systematic approach of values and overcame axiological psychology was Petre Andrei through his doctoral thesis *Philosophy of Value*, defended in 1918 and published posthumously in 1945. He overcame psychology, first of all, by the fact that he considered feelings of value as dependent on judgment, on the thinking that knows the goods to be appreciated and reaches truths common to all, so that thought enlightened feelings will have a general human character.

In this regard, according to him, "the phenomenon of value is a feeling that accompanies a judgment and seeks to concretize its object in the form of a purpose"¹⁰⁸. Secondly, he understood that individual appreciations become social ideals not only by their concordance with thought, but also by the fact that they receive the assent of other members of society, in other words, by the fact that they satisfy both individual needs and social requirements. Therefore, he argued that, in any field of activity, every man should cultivate the morality of debt, assert himself as a personality and thus assert the personality of his people.

Petre Andrei admitted that there are also two types of **hyperpersonal values**, in the sense that it would depend only on the individual, not on social factors, namely logical and mathematical values. He pointed out, however, that logical principles, for example, on which concepts and judgments are based, represent values by their generic nature, present in any thinking subject. In addition, logical values, called hyperpersonal, are integrated into social values, which depend on both the individual and society, as any social value includes cognitive elements as well.

As for the **social values**, Petre Andrei was concerned to show that they depend not only on individuals, but also on the various elements that exist in society. As types of social values, he mentioned and analyzed economic,

¹⁰⁸ Petre Andrei, "Filosofia valorii", in *Opere sociologice*, vol. I, Academiei Publishing House, Bucharest, 1973, p. 188.

legal, political, ethical, historical, aesthetic and religious values. The economic value, he said, depends not only on individual needs, but also on *social factors*, such as work, through which individuals cooperate. He also stated that the legal and political values are determined by the *regulatory elements* of society, the legal ones referring to the organization of life together, to the relations between individuals, and the political ones – to the relations between individuals and the state. With regard to this report, he challenged both *personal* axiologies, which asserted the supremacy of the individual, and *transpersonal* axiologies, according to which the state enslaves its individuals, while ruling for a state as a unit of individual will, in which individual goals are socially subsumed. About other types of values, such as historical (as a sum of different types of values), biological and religious, he mentioned that they are determined by the social environment as a whole. For example, religion, through its feelings, is individual, but through its cultic form, it depends on society.

Other Romanian axiologists, including D.D. Roșca, Tudor Vianu and Lucian Blaga have stated similar and balanced conceptions about values as both individual and community values given to different objects, which satisfy either material needs or spiritual demands.

A problem that preoccupied the Romanian philosophers of value from the interwar period and that involves the relationship between individual people, on the one hand and state and society, on the other hand, is the hierarchy of values, especially the relationship between spiritual values and material values. In general, they argued that spiritual values should be cultivated as a goal, because people are superior to them, and material values should be used as a means of acquiring spiritual ones.

D.D. Roșca, in his book *The Tragic Existence* of 1934, argued that excessive assertion only through a certain type of values, either spiritual or material, is harmful because neither people nor peoples can subsist only by spirit, as they cannot claim to be genuinely human just by meeting biological needs. In this context, he stated that the exclusively economic capitalist assertion unilateralized man, transforming him into a *homo economicus*, who “made the means of living a purpose, and spiritual values a means subservient to that purpose.”¹⁰⁹

In other words, what is happening today as well, the richer a man is materially, the poorer he is spiritually, the more he *has*, the less he *is*. In the same book leading up to World War II, the philosopher observed that, like

¹⁰⁹ D. D. Roșca, *Existența tragică*, Științifică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1968, p. 121.

human relations, relations between capitalist states became conflictual and aggressive, focusing on economic and political domination of one over the other and not on fair trade.

DD Roșca explained the reversal of the natural relationship between spiritual and material development both by the fact that individual people were absorbed in the concerns for material well-being, without worrying about their moral and spiritual elevation, as well as economic relations and capitalist social policies, based on competition and making as much profit as possible. Consequently, he argued that it is necessary, especially, for people to change their inner attitude and to cultivate, in addition to the scientific-technical values, necessary for material production, values not enslaved to the biological and still to a large extent, but also the society must radically transform and revolutionize.

As for spiritual values, unlike Blaga, who argued that, stylistically, there is a parallelism between the different spiritual values and not a hierarchy, meaning that they all intend to reveal the mystery, but none of them end up exhausting it, Petre Andrei and Tudor Vianu considered that religious values are the highest, because they are *integrative*, that is, they unify the other values, including the highest truth, the good and the beautiful.

In this sense, Petre Andrei stated that in the religious ideal “the supreme consciousness of good, truth and beauty is synthesized”¹¹⁰, and Tudor Vianu argued that religious values “integrate, unify, constitute in a unitary and coherent whole all the values that are contained in human consciousness”¹¹¹ because only in their light other spiritual values can as well be understood as absolute values, otherwise they remain conceived only in the form of creations at the human level, without an unshakable foundation, which would be most closely supported by all members of society.

The major ideas of the Romanian interwar axiologists are still relevant today, when the options of minority groups or states claiming universal values, which oppose the perennial values, which are truly eternal, regarding the importance of the traditional family for the continuity of each people, or the importance of the material and spiritual culture of any people for non-discriminatory communication with others. Regarding the relationship between material and spiritual, it is essential to cultivate spiritual values as an end in itself and material values as a means for both individuals and peoples

¹¹⁰ Petre Andrei, *Filosofia valorii*, cited work, p. 334.

¹¹¹ Tudor Vianu, “Introducere în teoria valorilor întemeiată pe observația conștiinței,” in Tudor Vianu, *Opere*, vol. 8, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1979, p. 118.

to overcome economic unilateralization and interpersonal and interstate conflicts, respectively. In this context, the value of the sacred must not be minimized or even removed, precisely because, by its absolute character, it integrates the other values and saves us from relativism, bringing us all closer to the divine self, which is, even if only latent, in the depths of human consciousness.

III. Philosophy of history

In the field of philosophy of history, some Romanian historians from the interwar period concerned with philosophy, such as A.D. Xenopol, Nicolae Iorga, Vasile Pârvan, and some philosophers who leaned on history at the same stage, such as Rădulescu Motru, P.P. Negulescu and L. Blaga have explained historical evolution through innovative ideas or through the ideals and values espoused by both individuals and peoples. At the same time, they thought that ideas and ideals alone have no power to change history, without individual and social activity to translate them into life, so without their concretization in different fields of activity. Consequently, distinguishing between the determining factor and the dominant factor, they kept the idea that the spiritual, ideational, valuable element is the determining factor of history, but they also raised the issue of the relationship between social domains in which this factor manifests itself, more precisely the issue regarding the dominant factor, as well as the issue of other factors with an impact on history. In general, I have maintained the predominance of spiritual culture, without neglecting the influence of the economic field.

A.D. Xenopol appreciated, in his *Theory of History*, published in 1910, that history “rests” on “public ideas” or that “the spirit... gives rise to the forms of civilization,” that the socio-political field is, usually, dominant, but also that “there are a lot of historical facts, ultimately explainable by economic considerations”¹¹², inasmuch as the economic form “is in its turn influenced by science, law, morality, political and social forms, all of which exert a strong action on the way goods are produced and distributed.”¹¹³

N. Iorga argued that new ideas are the determining factor of history, namely the ideas that constitute an ideal, because they ensure the progress of mankind and, once realized, justify “societies and the complicated buildings” and become a “principle, which supports a tradition that enshrines,”¹¹⁴ as

¹¹² A.D. Xenopol, *Teoria istoriei*, Bucharest, 1997, p. 328.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 334.

¹¹⁴ Nicolae Iorga, *Generalități privind studiile istorice*, 3rd edition, Bucharest, 1944, p. 74.

were, for the modern world, the ideas of the French Revolution. He did not indicate a particular historical field as dominant, considering that the guiding ideas could be political, or religious, such as the ideas of Christianity, or otherwise, provided that he proposed an ideal that would conquer the people. At the same time, he considered the land and the race, understood as repeatable factors of the life of each people, as permanent of history, but he relativized their importance, rejecting their absolutism by geography and, respectively, by racist point of view, because history overflows the stability of these factors.

P.P. Negulescu, in his pentalogy *The Destiny of Mankind*, explained, in his turn, the history through the spiritual factors that are manifested both at the level of the individual man and at that of the human community. He considered that the role of historical factor in conjunction with moral sentiment was the determining factor. According to him, the cause of the crisis of humanity that led to the outbreak of World War II was selfishness, a moral feeling which manifested itself both internally, through hatred between social classes, and externally, by the fact that “some of the European powers, animated by a national selfishness that I believe to be holy, pursue – hiding in vain, in words, the intentions that are betrayed at every step, in deeds – goals that cannot be achieved without the deep damage of the interests of others.”¹¹⁵ Consequently, he concluded that humanity can have a better future through progress not only intellectually but also morally, in a democratic state, not a dictatorial one.

Like the anthropological or axiological ideas, the main ideas of the philosophy of history affirmed by the Romanian interwar thinkers remain significant in the current context, because even today there is an economic and political hegemony of the strongest states, and many countries also face dissensions. internally. In addition, the world is also divided by the alternative of globalism versus sovereignty. Without a successful education, which will train innovative skills and spirits in every country, but also without more morality, fairness and justice within each state and between the states of the world, neither the prosperity of each people nor the progress of mankind in ensemble cannot be achieved. An intelligent and moral sovereignty is not opposed to globalization, just as an intelligent and moral globalism is not hostile to sovereignty, because it presupposes a unified humanity by harmonizing the states of the world and not a planetary neo-slavery in the service of a supranational elite blanket.

¹¹⁵ P. P. Negulescu, *Destinul omenirii*, vol. I, 2nd edition, Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă „Regele Carol II, Bucharest, 1939, p. 14.

ABOUT MAN

- 1) C. Rădulescu-Motru (1868-1957): *Energetic personalism* (1927)
 - professional personalities – *people of vocation*
- 2) L. Blaga (1895-1961)
 - *man in the given world horizon – man in the mystery horizon*
 - being in mystery and for revelation
- 3) D.D. Roșca (1895-1980): *The Tragic Existence* (1934)
 - man = heroic existence
- 4) C. Noica (1909-1987)
 - man = being in becoming

ABOUT VALUES

- 1) Petre Andrei (1891-1940): *Filosofia valorii*, 1918, 1945
 - the complex nature of value
- 2) D. D. Roșca (1895-1980) + T. Vianu:
 - the affective nature of value
 - the myth of utility (*being and having*)
- 3) L. Blaga (1895-1961)
 - utilitarian values – spiritual values

ABOUT HISTORY

- 1) A. D. Xenopol (1847-1920): *Theory of History* (1910)
 - historical fact, determining factor – dominant factor
- 2) N. Iorga (1871-1940): *General information on historical studies*
 - the premises of history: the idea, the land and the race (*biological and cultural background*)
- 3) C. Rădulescu-Motru
 - determining factor (technical and moral) – secondary factors (geographical factor, race)
 - collective personalities (*globalism versus sovereignty*)
 - the meaning of history
- 4) P. P. Negulescu (1872-1951): *The Destiny of Mankind*, 5 volumes
 - the crisis of mankind and its causes
- 5) L. Blaga (1895-1980): *The Historical Being* (1947, 1977)
 - cultural historical fact
 - historical continuity through communicability
 - technical, not value progress