

ON MAN AND MORALITY IN THE VIEW OF EUGEN RUSSU

Ph. D. Constantin STROE

Abstract: *In the present study, I show that, although focused on pleasure, the perspective in which Eugen Russu approaches the moral issue is not a hedonistic one because, he says, pleasure is not the ultimate goal of life but rather its driving force and means ("the tool") through which life goals are achieved. The main function of pleasure is to be a reason for action, more from a psychological point of view rather than an exclusively moral and ethical one. Moreover, Russu recommended giving up primitive pleasures because they impoverish and limit the meaning of life. Man must not become a slave to material pleasures but to embrace an ideal harmoniously organized around the idea of his own moral perfection, i.e. to turn himself into a "man of altitude" with an intense experience on the spiritual plane (enjoying intellectual pleasures).*

Keywords: man, human individual, morals, pleasure, action, purpose, ideal, moral perfection, egotism, altruism, science, culture

1. The two sources of morals

Thanks to countless examples, no one is surprised anymore that mathematicians often switch from the abstract layer of their own scientific discipline to that of philosophy, successfully rising in the of this noble field of study. This is also the case of Eugen Russu, mathematician¹ with many works in the field, who "dared" to cross the threshold of other areas of knowledge: psychology², philosophy-ethics³.

¹Born on 12 15 1910, in Tecuci and passed away on 05 07 1983, in Bucharest. Worked in high school education (Iași, Tg. Mureș, Bucharest) and university education (Bucharest)

²Eugen Rusu, *Psychology of mathematical activity*, Scientific Publishing House, 1969, 288 p.

³Eugen Russu, *Notes About Man*, Cugetarea Publishing House – Georgescu Delafraș, 1940, 126 p.

What is surprising, however, is that people intensify their interest and concern about their own lives while it is not valued, as in the case of wars. The expression "à la guerre comme à la guerre" precisely illustrates this contempt for the value of life, as an excuse (well, what can you do, this is war: it reaps lives!) for fatality in the face of a massive loss of human life.

The above remark was stirred to me by the publication in 1940 – that is in the midst of the world war – of a book called *Notes About Man*, authored by mathematician Eugen Russu.

Although approached under different *notes* almost randomly spread within the work, the issues of man and morals are diverse, covering to a good extent the problematic area of anthropology interweaving with psychology and ethics. In spite of such a shortcoming caused by the dissipation of ideas, nevertheless, one can painstakingly reach a logically, coherent, articulated vision of man (his nature and condition) and morals, vision significant not only for a scientist's way of thinking 80 years ago but also for its current meanings.

Instead of a Foreword the author, Eugen Russu, preferred to incite the reader through *Reflections on—proper to the human being—morals, science, culture*.

In what concerns morals, Eugen Russu notes that, usually moral precepts are seen as dogmas and therefore "seem to spring from a certain, almost completely independent of reason, cosmic sense" so that, when they serve as "moral advice", "look like imposing themselves without need for argumentation"⁴. They are brought into the light of thinking and rational argumentation only when "the issue of turning Morals into a kind of societal wealth arises". It is only the compliance with this purpose that requires rational search and finding of moral precepts.

Therefore, the basic postulate that Eugen Russu has in mind when talking about building morals is that "Morals must serve the best and most harmonious coexistence of people in society." To achieve this purpose, all moral precepts should derive from one another, "through rigorous logical reasoning, like geometry theorems, which are rationally constructed on the bases of axioms and postulates"⁵, i.e. in a "modus geometricus" reminiscent of Baruch Spinoza's *Etica more geometrico demonstrata*.

⁴Idem, p.5

⁵*ibidem*

From all of the above it appears clear that Eugen Russu refers to two ways of perceiving morals, stemming from two views on its source: one is that of the ten commandments, which are imposed without rational argumentation, as being given by the Divine, and the other consists of the rational acquisition of moral precepts in accordance to the requirements of people grouped in distinct societies.

It is precisely because of this obvious utilitarian note that social morals always prevailed, says E. Russu. "The individual's behaviors that do not touch the social were left, somewhat, to his discretion. (...). Without touching the social, the morals of purely individual behaviors were obviously limited to advising, without imposing"... "While Social Morals were not limited to Platonic advice but extracted a bare minimum from it, to necessarily apply it even by force if persuasion were not enough, which constitutes the rules of Law"⁶.

The social focus of moral concerns has generated a somewhat paradoxical phenomenon: that of the society being selfish while the individual was not allowed such a trait.

Eugen Russu considers that "the moral behavior of the individual arises from compulsion and not from conviction". He leaves aside the direct coercion by force, which the Law exercises through its norms, and brings forward the subject of "the presentment and fear" which everyone experiences in conjunction to the reactions of one's fellows.

Here's how he unveils the mechanism by which, coercion in a certain moment becomes conviction in another moment: "In the soul of many of those whom we now call honest, the daily coercion and continuous show of sanctions applied to others sediment and acquire a kind of autonomous value; the coercion manifestation means may remain in the shadows or be completely ignored; they have appeared so many times in one's own case or in the case of others, so unexpectedly, that the individual unconsciously comes to sense their existence. This abstract constraint acquires the appearance of conviction"⁷.

In the eras when rights and their exercising were not as perfected as today, when the individual did not have a highly developed critical reason, his acts (actions) were constrained by other, particularly effective methods, such as the threats of hell and, conversely, the promise of heaven. Eugen

⁶*Ibidem*, p.6

⁷*Ibidem*

Russu correctly notes that the religious source of morals (even the one at the core of Christianity) is no more moral than the secular one. "I do not see at all the greatness or 'morals' of a deed performed under the threat of hell; I really have the impression that – for whom it can be applied – the measure is more barbaric than the threat of the gendarme"⁸, he categorically stated.

Under such context, he denounces the sanctimoniousness of society, which always seeks to hide the material means of the terror with which it wants to convince the individual, in order not to turn him into a discontented person, much more difficult to control. In principle, E. Russu states, "abstract categorical imperative or categorical imperative embodied in material force, it is certain that the individual is morally under terror"⁹. Not morally, in fact, but rather conforming to what society demands of him; knowing that in order to have a moral conduct, the individual must be free to choose both the purpose (motives) and the means of his actions.

Having a pronounced social coloration, Morals "is a masked tyrant" which subjugates the individual, canceling and thus denying his freedom. The consequence will be ignoring, "if he is allowed", the last refuge: moral books, from where he could take precepts and rules of moral behavior.

According to Eugen Russu, the individual ignores moral books precisely because they do not serve him, because something is required of him in these books - namely the "social image", much different from the "intimate background" (see below, chapter VIII).

But, he says, even those few who read them "do so with an intellectual attitude, seeking a problem of philosophy there which most often is that of the contradictory relationship between the primal, natural and healthy instinct of individual selfishness and dogmatic commandments, which sounds like the lordly, altruistic odes of Social Morals. The individual, he states, is tormented by serious processes of conscience generated by the fact that he has to sacrifice the natural and strong egoism that would ensure his free affirmation, on the stall of "sweet altruism" ("giveaway of Lei 2 from a man with thousands in his pocket") preached by social morals as ordinary deception and cheating in the name of altruistic commandments. "To be understood, accepted and desired by the individual, Morals should serve him", categorically pronounces Eugen Russu. How? Nothing simpler:

⁸*Ibidem*, p.7

⁹*Ibidem*

"let it be a guide and a light for him in the hesitations that free will give him"¹⁰.

But it has to do it in good faith, that is "to show him the smooth road when at the crossroads, the one that leads him to his goal and not one full of thorns on which Towards the interest of the Society is written in big letters"¹¹. Because then the individual would be confused and strongly marked by doubt. At the end of the road, what should he choose: the interest of the dogmatically driven society, and therefore viewed with distrust, or his own interest under the condition of the statement that he can coincide with that of society? Eugen Russu insists on the idea that "it is not enough to tell this to the individual, you instead have to rationally convince him – rationally because this is the almost unique way of convincing people today – of the rightness of the path you are leading"¹².

2. The impact of scientific style and civilization on moral life

"The lyrical tone of a lawyer in the Social Morals jury court must be replaced by the cold tone of Science and Technology", says Eugen Russu. Both of them play an essential role in the life of homo sapiens: "Science teaches me to decipher the laws of matter and, based on them, Technique teaches me to build useful things for myself"¹³.

Science is a prerogative of man alone, because it involves creation from his part "through a kind of intuition, sometimes also called inspiration, through a spark of genius that ignites at a moment when equally distributed attention has captured points of connection between which the spark ignites"¹⁴. However, this inspiration cannot appear in the animal environment with an atmosphere loaded with (typed) instincts. "However, the fundamental characteristic of intelligence is the power of simultaneous thinking about several facts at once, and when a whole series of truths have been arranged in a convergent string, their synthetic thinking"¹⁵. In fact, "the dominant trait of character which can qualify science, I believe,

¹⁰*Ibidem*, p.8

¹¹*Ibidem*

¹²*Ibidem*

¹³*Ibidem*

¹⁴*Ibidem*, p.11

¹⁵*Ibidem*, p.12

must be *synthetic thinking through schemes*", unique only to man, concludes Eugen Russu.

E. Russu also shows that what individualizes man in the concert of creation (creatures) is the fact that, in order to be able to "travel alive from one soul to another, bringing natural satisfaction to each one and emerging from everywhere enhanced and unaltered", science made man invent a language specific to it. The language of science that differs in style from other languages.

Here, for example, "Exact notation means scientific style. It addresses a depersonalized man, a mathematician for example, equally attentive to every word, to its scope and strict meaning, to a man of perfect, almost mechanical correctness of obedience, who is not allowed the human whims of distraction, carelessness, etc.". On the contrary, "Literary style addresses the living, real and capricious man." He never "acknowledges the exact meaning of the word, the phrase, but only their fluid aspect, from each immediate and fleeting impression handed directly to the resonances of the soul, not passed through the sharps of reason"¹⁶.

The author of the book I'm referring to noted, as a negative characteristic of the culture of the time, the fact that, from the desire for affirmation with everything from the inside, one can observe, both in science and philosophy, an excessive individualization of the idea of searching for the most insignificant "novelty" which, once brought to the public would require a signature and which would in turn amount to intellectual property of the signatory. In this sense, Eugen Russu says, "an individual rush for novelty-property is so fierce that it is enough that something, no matter how insignificant, has already been said, for this very fact to make us look at him as foreigners, without interest, or at most with the interest to see if something could be 'pulled out'"¹⁷. "The preoccupation with novelty and property has brought the tyranny of the book and bibliographies," he bitterly announces, as "the fruitful core of truth is passed over, looking only at its label. Things are not rethought, much less relived in order not to waste time"¹⁸, because time must be consecrated, allegedly, to "new things".

The conclusion he draws is that in our country's 1940s culture detailed works abounded and synthetic ones were very few. "Not because Science

¹⁶*Ibidem*, pp.21-22

¹⁷*Ibidem*, p.24

¹⁸*Ibidem*, p.25

and Philosophy were built in red (analogy to the stage of building a house - that of being "in red" -, i.e. unplastered and unfinished -n. m. -C.S.) and now they will be painted. But because today we lack the courage to think fundamentally, from the beginning, once again, unitarily and in the fullness of penetration, for fear of disappointment in entering a known domain. And when large-scale works appear, they are not syntheses but attacks on well-established foundations, with the sole pride of replacing them with something new"¹⁹ (if it really is something new?!). The consequence of such a state of affairs in the Romanian culture of the time is that "science can no longer be popularized". For, "while before the present century (20th century - AD - C.S.) a new idea brought a kind of settlement-crystallization that calmed and deeply satisfied the spirit, today the new science ideas increase confusion, infinitely complicate the apparatus of expression, produce restlessness and give the amateur discoverers of new things the opportunity for new complications"²⁰.

Regarding culture in a few succinct and lightning-fast notations, Eugen Russu refers more to literature, as the main form of culture, which has a significant role in "pushing the individual towards imagined living", i.e. to take him out of the real. For the same purpose, he shows, one can use the cinema, romance songs, spoken or newspaper accounts of extraordinary facts, etc.²¹.

But "literature is only one aspect among many other false experiences determined by civilization", specifies Eugen Russu. In this direction, he appreciates, civilization makes available a whole set of abilities regarding the easy work of man, "which, being repeated daily, end up giving the impression that a great deal of satisfaction can be received from without, without any personal effort".

In the extreme division of labor, which civilized life has imposed, man is subject to a completely partial duty (given by his profession), which gives

¹⁹*Ibidem*, p.25-26

²⁰E. Russu illustrates the above idea by exemplifying with Einsteinian mechanics, W. Heisenberg's theory of indeterminism, P. Dirac's theory, Michelson's experience. Because it is identical to the problem we face today, I can't help but reproduce it like this: "Works of simple compilation and even more plagiarism will be removed by themselves from the set of cultural values, without lawsuits and polemics. In any case, the qualification of original or re-edition must be placed, at a later time, by no means in the work itself. The fences of individual divisions must be destroyed from the fields of the spirit" (*Ibidem*, p. 27)

²¹*Ibidem*, pp.87-88

him the means (this being money) to procure satisfaction in all areas (therefore also in those in which he did not make an effort). In this way, these satisfactions accustom him to taste only those pleasures of enjoyment in which he has a passive, vexatious attitude; the only direction of effort does not directly bring him pleasure, as a crowning of it, because the monetary reward is of such a universal character and can be found in so many ways that it loses connection with the work performed²². For those who take advantage of civilization, pleasure loses its motor character of actions, "the affective is no longer colored in direct contact with the circumstances, to play its biological role. Soul life is no longer a reaction and a determinant of living events, it gains a meaning in itself, independent and isolated"²³. In the case of such individuals, "different feelings are artificially provoked, simply to experience them as such", without commitment on their part, in their soul structured in this way it is natural "for cravings to appear, to be lived imaginarily, for their own taste and not for the role of directing real life", as it should normally be.

If they become habits, the facilities that civilization offers make the one who tends at a given moment to a desire no longer mobilize his attention energetically to the means of achievement, leaving him with the impression that satisfaction must come from somewhere, outside, being enough to want it. This contrariety encountered in carrying out the action "gives a shock for which the individual was not prepared, which he did not expect and thus causes a disorientation, repeated, an imbalance"²⁴.

Eugen Russu claims that civilization is also a factor in the uniformity of individuals, through conformity: "There is in the current social and civilized life a strong tendency of conformity with the common spirit of other people. An imperative "to be like everyone else", to live in the directions that others, many, many, are following. Not necessarily, to go in line with everyone; the more in front, the better: But in no case in directions other than the usual overall ones"²⁵.

In such circumstances, the momentum of others becomes the individual's as well. Char if he no longer springs from his "fundamental, original, own aspirations", but is imposed on him from outside, like a dictate, independent of what he is and wants to be, in essence, him. "It can

²²*Ibidem*, p.88

²³*Ibidem*, p.89

²⁴*Ibidem*

²⁵*Ibidem*, p.91

be in a different direction than the organic one, or it can be that too, but disproportionately in level," says Russu.

This is how the spirit of imitation appears and manifests itself, when man instead of starting from himself, on the directions that spring naturally from his being, starts from what he sees to another. And thus he ends up borrowing aspirations inadequate and incoherent to his real fund or disproportionate to the measure of his means²⁶.

Attentive to nuances, Eugen Russu prevents a misunderstanding of imitation. Because, he says, "it should not be understood from here that it is good to go against the general trends of the society in which we live. The disadvantageous effect of imitation of which I have spoken is only the carrying to the extreme, without control, of a tendency ... "²⁷ .

For, indeed, people who live in society communicate the facts they experience, the impressions they produce, their tastes, their points of view, and their criteria for appreciation. "It is established, shows E. Russu, all the more as there is a greater ease in giving up originality, a common mentality, a uniform tint in the coloration of life. It is perhaps born from so many circumstances in which one lives the same way, tastes emotions in the mass and manifests itself in that persistent and stronger than we think, spirit of "fashion", fashion not only in the cut of clothes, fashion also in concerns, in tastes , in pleasures, in almost all manifestations of life"²⁸.

Therefore, he concludes, naturally there is an integration of the individual into the lines and rhythm of life around him, to establish that spirit of harmony, on which rests the healthy existence of a society. Because, in the last instance, "everyone must know how to stay in the middle, where he does not falsify his own person, without being, through this mastery of his originality, a discordant tone in the social whole"²⁹.

3. The way of finding the meaning of one's life, the role of the will and the sense of duty

Eugen Russu preliminarily states that man is not aware of his life - of its meaning and purpose, because if he realized this, he would know for what purpose he should live it and how this life should be lived. For such an awareness, it would be necessary, in his opinion, "to be endowed with

²⁶*Ibidem*, p.92

²⁷*Ibidem*

²⁸*Ibidem*, p.91

²⁹*Ibidem*, p.92

another kind of intelligence, which can be located somewhat outside of life, in order to be able to study and appreciate it, another kind of intelligence than that which we have it now, as an instrument of life, as a partial force of its manifestation, which is only a portion of life"³⁰.

Even with the help of reason, we cannot find out what Nature wants with us and from us humans, when she gives us free rein to existence ("makes us exist") and to the execution of so many acts of life, he states.

In such a context, posing the problem of orientation, our task is "to seek to ascertain how things happen and to force ourselves to separate what are the essential lines and profound effects of natural and healthy experiences". The domain of all of them being unknown, orientation difficult due to the impotence of reason, we can only guess it, feeling "that there is a difference between living naturally and living artificially", the option being "to place ourselves in "natural", according to the laws of Nature. The concluding thesis being that we humans should "feel the need not to be accidents, lost monsters", but "feel the need to fit into a huge flow towards progress"³¹.

But a human activity seen from the outside can tell us nothing. It must be associated with the human individual who unfolds it and whom it shapes internally and organically. Because even if, as the essence of their experiences, people are very similar to each other, yet the individuality of each one is drawn "on a uniform background, common to all, like varied embroideries on the same canvas", because "what creates human diversity, the practical impossibility of identity between two, the specific individuality, is the realization of life on one plane or another, from all the possible ones".

In other words, even if "in us live identical tendencies, largely the same possibilities, a numerous ensemble of virtualities with the same elements", "each virtual element has been realized to a greater or lesser degree or remained forever a simple tendency – conscious and living or obscure and unknown intent"³². Individuality is configured and detached as something unique "in the mosaic formed by the global configuration", when "each of the numerous totality of life elements is differently colored, with a different emphasis, with a different resonance, each with its own rhythm of manifestation"³³. Eugen Russu naturally concludes that "individuality takes

³⁰*Ibidem*, p.29

³¹*Ibidem*

³²*Ibidem*, p.54

³³*Ibidem*

shape, from a background of infinite possibilities, depending on the circumstances and the rhythms that we experience within them"³⁴.

Human actions are triggered and supported by the will, Russu asserts: "It would seem that, through the will, the individual dictates his deed, disregarding considerations of feeling, pleasure or displeasure"³⁵. The only feeling that could defeat the will is the feeling of duty. But the sense of duty can effectively support only those whose real ideal is the fulfillment of duty even when it is accompanied by suffering. Being in conditions that can be qualified as "duty fulfilled" brings that feeling of satisfaction produced by the fulfillment of a desire from the real ideal"³⁶. Even if the mechanism of the impulse towards pleasure is present and working here, the important role of the will is highlighted in its power and possibility to anticipate a "thought pleasure", i.e. "expected to overcome the preoccupation of the felt, actual pleasure, if the former is greater ". Because, in principle, Russu points out, will means overcoming inertia, neglecting the present in favor of the future, if it brings an advantage. Voluntary man only proposes actions that are on the line of his organic becoming, that is, that have as their end pleasure.

Nuancing, Eugen Russu also talks about situations when some people carry out voluntary acts, "without pleasure inherent in the action and who do not even consider the result", as happens with someone who proposes to do something absurd, which does not procure them no pleasure, "Fundamentally, he specifies, here the purpose of the action is the very exercise of the will, not the material result", explaining that "since it has the current notion of the will, with its procession of praise and admiration, the unconsciously expected pleasure is this satisfaction of pride, originating from the consciousness of having accomplished something difficult and the feeling of having perfected oneself along the desired line"³⁷.

4. Unconscious and conscious in human action and the role of pleasure as a means and not an end

Eugen Russu specifies that "Actions, as well as the inner life of man, are commanded [and] by two antagonistic tendencies, located in different planes, quite clear in terms of the framework and quite broad and

³⁴*Ibidem*, p.55

³⁵*Ibidem*, p.40

³⁶*Ibidem*, p.41

³⁷*Ibidem*

undefined concretely, to fit the range endless of human experiences"³⁸. These are: *the unconscious* and *the conscious*. The conscious wants novelty and change, the unconscious wants repetition. The conscious is like the capricious child who wants a different toy every day, the unconscious is like the old man with his strict habits³⁹. The conscious wants to introduce order and system, the unconscious urges the most familiar and comfortable ways. It is interesting, says E. Russu, what happens from the meeting and mixing of these two opposing tendencies.

One conclusion is certain, he claims, that "biologically, man has evolved towards fixed frameworks of possibilities filled with variable concrete content. Man fills and nourishes forms innate in him in constant desire for action. Normally it seems that the goal imposes itself and drives the action. But most often the establishment of the goal and training to the deed intertwine in parallel"⁴⁰.

Nature determines men to the same kind of actions, without making them explicitly visible and the purpose of the set of facts that constitute Life. The instrument by which Nature fulfills such a role is pleasure. Of course, the purpose (the "central role") in the conduct of all human actions is held by the existence of life, with the actions it gives rise to and makes possible. Pleasure is only the means by which the supreme will leads us to its ends. This role is evident in its way of manifestation.

But the main function of pleasure is to be a reason for action, especially and more so, from a psychological point of view ("of living").

So, the basic thesis used by Eugen Russu in explaining human action, people's behaviors and behaviors is that pleasure is the engine of human activity. "The engine of the deed is pleasure, which has two components: the reflection or expectation of the final pleasure and the pleasure itself of the performance of the action"⁴¹.

It is not mandatory that both components are present in the determination of the facts. "They are acts determined by only one of these two components", because, explains Eugen Russu, "it is possible for an act to be carried out, without there being a certain intention to train it: when the pleasure woven into the action is sufficient as to move it"⁴².

³⁸*Ibidem*, p.62

³⁹*Ibidem*, p.63

⁴⁰*Ibidem*, p.64

⁴¹*Ibidem*, p.124

⁴²*Ibidem*

The mechanism of this engine comes down, in the final analysis, to the perpetual incongruence (incongruence) between the tendencies (aspirations) of the individual and their satisfaction. In detail, things go like this: the two fundamental instincts that come from mother nature – nutrition, for the preservation of the individual and sexual, for the preservation of the species – are the ones that lead him to satisfy them as basic life needs. Their satisfaction procures him pleasure, and their dissatisfaction, increasing displeasure. It does not need rational precepts, thought of the type: I must eat to live or I must join to perpetuate the species. On the path to its realization, pleasure leads the individual unconsciously. Moreover, the necessary activities cannot always be carried out by themselves, easily and immediately, but the individual is forced to do other preparatory actions, actions called by Eugen Russu, actual actions. The possibilities or the forces of their execution, the individual already has planted in him, from the toil of previous generations (from social heredity), which he puts to work. Their use reveals that some have utility, which causes repeated appeal to them, and in certain cases when they are at their most productive, their repeated use as a glaring necessity causes, through organic, unconscious resources, their development and refinement; others prove their uselessness and, by implication, disuse, which leads to their atrophy.

Eugen Russu points out that there are also cases when these activities go through undesirable situations for themselves, thus appearing devoid of pleasure. But, he warns, "this is only displaced towards the end of the action," because "instead of it being performed for the pleasure which the performance itself would give, it is performed with a view to the pleasure connected with the end, or—if we are at a higher stage of evolution, where several actions can be linked in chains — in view of the interest: the result of the action is a tool, a step used, within a new action, towards the final pleasure"⁴³.

Normality⁴⁴, he says, is when "even this activity, which serves to gain the pleasant situation itself, is imbibed in a pleasant affective state."

⁴³*Ibidem*, p.31

⁴⁴The whole motivational construction of action through the mechanism of pleasure — motive and instrument of action — had primitive man in mind, precisely so as not to complicate the matter with the data that the consideration of society introduces. "The lives of present-day man preserve, as their essence, the lines sketched for primitive man. But they become much more complex, which causes an easier failure, a more frequent deviation from the normal and healthy rhythm"

Because, in the last instance, "the pleasure intertwined with the unfolding of the action is, in part, the reflection of the final pleasure, the expectation of this pleasure-target, but it also has an important independent component: it is the very pleasure that living in the act gives, the exercise of the faculties"⁴⁵. Which has as a consequence its pregnant existence, when the circumstances do not demand the deployment of the respective forces, when this deployment, without being necessary, nevertheless takes place, by virtue of their existence and their requirement to be "set to work".

Eugen Russu cautions his reader by stating that "this free work, which finds satisfaction in its course, becomes more frequent in easy living conditions." Depending on the rhythm of the action to which it is associated, pleasure acquires a static or a dynamic character.

When no actual action was required and the gratification of the instinct was obtained directly, the corresponding pleasure has a static character, being a relish, a contented indulgence in the situation. In such a posture there is a phenomenon of uniform decrease, as the organic tendency becomes more and more satisfied, and at the moment of complete saturation it first acquires the shade of "satisfaction" and soon passes into indifference.

In other circumstances, "embedded in a richer and more complex soul-atmosphere, colored by hope, shadowed by hesitation, laced with pride, which derives from the situation of active and determining subject," pleasure has a dynamic character. As a result, it alternates in intensity, increases through what we call "training," decreases with fatigue, increases again as the goal approaches⁴⁶.

Also, E. Russu makes a dichotomous distinction, namely, when he talks about: 1) enjoyable activities in themselves that have the role of exercising and maintaining existing forces whose activity aims to cause their strengthening and improvement and 2) final pleasure, which may remain as the sole determinant of action. This role of the first factor in the

(*Ibidem*, p. 34) And the evolved man feels pushed to live in the conditions of his real ideal or to fight for gaining the conditions for his instincts to be satisfied by a mechanism of the same essence. And modern man unconsciously weighs his pleasure and pain, benefit and disadvantage, always looking for the path that leads to the maximum yield of pleasure and benefit. But all this is very subjective, each individual appreciating with their own mentality and units of measure, the pleasures of different kinds (*Ibidem*, p. 39)

⁴⁵*Ibidem*, p.31

⁴⁶*Ibidem*, p.33

engine of an action is held by pleasure "when circumstances require a maximization of work, an effort that exceeds the rhythm of pleasant activity. This may occur when the ultimate pleasure or interest is of paramount importance. (...) This call for maximum effort, this mobilization of the full range of individual possibilities is a call to the present organic resources, but also a warning given to them, in order to temper in the future - in an individual or his descendants - the forces that are his necessary"⁴⁷.

The conclusion that Eugen Russu deduces from the above is that, in general, the two types of pleasures only together constitute the engine of an action, they are not independent ("alone"), but determine, each with its contribution, the unfolding the action.

It should also be mentioned that he draws attention to the fact that it cannot be said that any activity is or must be a sum of pleasures. In this sense, he specifies that "To quench this organic thirst for being in pleasant states (it is also understood to avoid unpleasant ones), man encounters obstacles, sometimes more firm, sometimes simple contradictions. Their passage can be accompanied by a number of difficulties, inconveniences. What causes them to be accepted freely, in other words, by compulsion from within, is precisely the fact that the sufferings are seen as of lesser importance in relation to the pleasures expected or felt at the same time"⁴⁸.

In such an order of ideas appears the opportunity to relate pleasure to psychological experience from a temporal perspective. In this sense, Eugen Russu bluntly states that apart from the expectation, with hope, of a pleasant state, which provokes the action of entering into it, man also lives naturally, the expectation with fear of unpleasant states, which provokes the action of avoiding falling into their gear.

Of course, it is easy to assume that these expectations require a certain intelligence that manifests itself through the anticipated representation of possible situations, that can glimpse in the present states the cause, the germ of future ones, that in addition knows what needs to be changed in these states- causes, to obtain advantageous states-effect.

And since the future is always possible (and not certain, categorically), the above are also not possible in a precise and categorical form, for the simple reason that the determinants of the future include, with a greater or lesser coefficient, a sum of random conditions, therefore independent of

⁴⁷*Ibidem*, p.32

⁴⁸*Ibidem*, p.33

human influence. Without being able to predict and state them precisely, man takes them into account, through an unconscious mechanism, when he compares his expectation of pleasure with the chances of having it. He somehow prepares his affectivity to bear a possible failure, just in case he falls into a suffering, not foreseen rationally, yet foreseen affectively.

The proportion between what we undertake and what happens to chance also shows how much action-determining power the expectation of final pleasure has, says Russu. In quantitative terms, it is presented as follows: the amount by which the final pleasure decreases when it is expected, compared to the full one, results precisely from the uncertainty given by the intervention of chance, he specifies.

Eugen Russu has the opinion that a desired fact can be fulfilled, without engaging one's own effort, but only through the simple intervention of chance, and the corresponding pleasure only having to be waited for. In such a case, he demonstrates, the momentum is strictly proportional to the probability of the chance producing its effect. But "instead of the thought turning to the real value of the amount of uncertainty involved in the accomplishment of the act, instead of the expectation of pleasure being moderated by the doubt which the objective appreciation of the possibility must give, a misunderstood selfishness intervenes, which pushes towards an overestimation of the favorable odds. As a consequence, he argues, "thought fixates on those, sometimes few, chances of winning, neglecting to weigh them in relation to the unfavorable ones, in this false way, the affective is also trained, taking on the color it would have when would have led there, in a favorable direction"⁴⁹. In this case, he says, we are dealing with a disproportionate effort in relation to the means of achievement.

His conclusion is that "in general, chance and the person also intervene, in different proportions from case to case. She (the person -n. me -C.S.) will be urged, (...) to overestimate the intervention of chance, he expects more than he should objectively appreciate"⁵⁰.

By nature, life cannot be static. Nature itself wants, first of all, that living matter exist, but it cannot be satisfied with that. As soon as existence appears assured, since the very tendency to maintain this existence does not cause action, it wants movement on other planes. Never prolonged rest. Life cannot be lived "tasting", in a passive attitude, pleasure. It must

⁴⁹*Ibidem*, p.90

⁵⁰*Ibidem*

be a continuous manifestation of energy, set in motion by the appropriate dosage of affective states"⁵¹. What causes man to be in eternal turmoil, in eternal evolution towards the complex, is precisely this necessity of a new gain of pleasure, because the previous one has been exhausted. But man is not destined to stand still forever desiring something higher. Therefore, again unsatisfied valences appear in his soul, again an organic thirst for pleasure, again the attachment for another longing, different from the previous ones and above them. "A situation cannot be pleasant by itself, but we feel the pleasure by entering it, and we cannot in any way obtain the duration of the pleasure, by settling definitively within the framework of the same situation. Gradually it is consumed, the situation becomes indifferent and serves as a step of comparison to relate the pleasure, possibly the future unpleasantness"⁵².

Happiness

So, says Eugen Russu apodictically, pleasure is in continuous development.

This becoming of pleasure is seen by him as a winding road to happiness. Because, he postulates, happiness still exists, but in a fluid and imperceptible form ("The very moment you ask and want to ascertain its existence, at that very moment, it escapes you"⁵³). However, happiness results from the state of eternal motion, from the succession of eternally renewed pleasures. Happiness is the fruit of the individual's own efforts to secure his pleasure through the whole natural range of states of mind, for the securing of pleasure by outside forces does not lead to happiness, but, on the contrary, to unhappiness."⁵⁴You have to be happy to be alive and if the situation you're in doesn't satisfy you, you're happy if you can wish for another and if you can join the rhythm of movement towards it."⁵⁵ Because, indeed, the leit-motif invoked by Eugen Russu is that "an essential condition of happiness, of the healthy development of life is the integration into a rhythm, which means a succession of steps, each being composed of elan, pleasure, indifference and hence another new one, excluding

⁵¹*Ibidem*, p.47

⁵²*Ibidem*, p.43

⁵³*Ibidem*

⁵⁴*Ibidem*, p.46

⁵⁵*Ibidem*, p.44

disappointment as much as possible". Opposite to happiness, disappointment is doubled by a natural situation – grief, which has an internal cause, leaves traces in the soul structure. An incomplete and abnormal rhythm is experienced through it. His desire is that "we must educate ourselves and seek the life in which the intention is more and more intimately intertwined with the deed"⁵⁶.

In the perspective above, Eugen Russu, mentions the existence of two situations (in the current terminology): 1) the negentropic situation, "when life is lived in its natural lines, its skeleton, matter is organized both structurally and functionally, in the most good, the healthiest; the individual feels happiness, even if statically he cannot recognize it", and 2) the entropic situation, "when the fundamental thirst for pleasure (in the broadest sense given by him to this word) cannot be satisfied, due to some artificial deformations of the individual, matter disorganizes, an unhealthiness appears, primarily of the soul, unhappiness is felt even if the one who lives it tries to delude himself about its existence, life loses its meaning and Nature soon dispenses with the one who does not submit to its goals"⁵⁷.

The determinations ("tendencies") to action of modern man, he notes, are not only those "implanted directly by nature. A number of different others are superimposed on them, much more numerous and varied, some are embroidered on the primitive background, others have a completely different nature"⁵⁸. For example, "a number of moral impulses seek to be imprinted on him from outside, through the intentional or unintentional influence of society"; another, "through religious or metaphysical experiences".

As, "an important source of intrusiveness is also the thirst for perfection", which we find in all human individuals. "Each individual, according to his specific structure, can see perfection in a different way, the essential thing is that everyone has a latent, unconscious and organic tendency towards perfection"⁵⁹.

Eugen Russu talks about the existence of pleasurable activities that derive from "some individual forces that exist and only manifest

⁵⁶*Ibidem*, p.93

⁵⁷*Ibidem*, p.47

⁵⁸*Ibidem*, p.34

⁵⁹*Ibidem*, p.35

themselves", having "as intensity, the corresponding variations of pleasure"⁶⁰.

Revealing their specificity and value, he notes the fact that "in terms of the value of this type of activity, (...) as long as the manifestation of forces is done at an average pace, in a comfortable deployment, therefore reduced, the use of these actions is at most to maintain the already existing performance capacity. Only when there is also a goal, a well-defined goal of the deed and this quite high, the forces seek to manifest and organize themselves in maximum efficiency, so only in this case is the organic resources of the being heard and listened to the call for progress, for the improvement of forces"⁶¹.

Moreover, his clarification comes to decisively clarify the problem: "the pleasure procured by "pleasant activities" is fatally less than that procured by work (if the natural conditions are repeated here), in which to the pleasure of the action is added the pleasure of training towards a goal. Therefore, taking into account the vital energy that is expended and the satisfaction of the tendency to perfection, we must conclude that, in limiting oneself to pleasant activities, true happiness cannot be found"⁶².

Pleasant activities alone can dominate only those who have no well-defined (bounded) aspiration to drive them to action. Because they belong to a category of forces that make sense only in moments of repose of another category of forces that have already manifested. The example provided is peremptory: an intellectual can, during a break ("as repose"), do a pleasant manual work, without seeking in it the satisfaction of an interest. But one who would confine himself in all spheres to pleasurable pursuits would only leave his individual forces undeveloped and gradually anemic his sources of pleasure, from which a reduction of vital energy necessarily follows, a flattening of life⁶³.

5. Perfection, the theoretical ideal and the real ideal

Between the actual work and the pleasant activity "places that kind of activity which aims, through work, to improve oneself". In other words, he explains in detail, the action derives from the knowledge that through

⁶⁰*Ibidem*, pp.124-125

⁶¹*Ibidem*, p.125

⁶²*Ibidem*

⁶³*Ibidem*, p.125-126

exercise the forces become stronger. "The longing exists: it is this refinement." But, he points out, "there may be some falsity here as well." Because through action indeed "forces are strengthened and amplified, but this strengthening is caused precisely by the fact that they prove to be necessary, that they have a precise and felt purpose in the life of the individual"⁶⁴. Because otherwise, it is not known whether the organic resources for improvement would still react when the improvement is consciously willed, in itself, and when its necessity was no longer felt in facts with a precise and important purpose⁶⁵.

In conclusion, Eugen Russu shows that pure perfection is a notion born through abstraction. For him, fundamental is perfection related to a concrete goal. "Therefore, he notes, without condemning the actions taken only with a view to improvement, those that have a concrete target are preferable, in such a way as to make the necessity of this improvement evident"⁶⁶.

This makes each individual have his own ideal, derived from the set of life conditions towards which the individual tends, as a result between organic tendencies, on the one hand, and moral norms⁶⁷ (which seek to be imprinted on him either from the outside or through the idea and own tendency to perfection), on the other. Because, introducing a qualitative-quantitative criterion applied to the two components – moral norms and organic tendencies – Eugen Russu emphasizes that "according to the nature and how the moral norms worked, as well as according to the dosage of the coefficients of importance with which the organic tendencies and moral norms entered, this set of desired life conditions, acquires a color specific to the individual, constituting his own ideal"⁶⁸. And "since it is a matter of real longings, of desires that warm the whole of the being, towards which the individual feels totally, without reservations, trained," he calls this ideal ensemble real. He attributes this real qualification to distinguish it from the theoretical ideal.

⁶⁴*Ibidem*, p.126

⁶⁵*Ibidem*

⁶⁶*Ibidem*

⁶⁷Why moral norms too? Because, states E. Russu, "The moral norms that seek to be imposed on him from the outside also have the color of the environment in which the individual is placed and manage to a more or less important extent, to transform into tendencies felt intimately"

⁶⁸*Ibidem*, p.35

The theoretical ideal is the ideal professed, to himself or others, towards which the individual tends more rationally, towards which he is drawn by a desire "that has no resonance in the obscure fibers of our being". If "toward the real ideal we feel pushed, we go of our own accord; towards the theoretical "we would like", our reason forces itself to order us to go"⁶⁹. The real ideal cannot be expressed explicitly, because it does not reside in consciousness⁷⁰, but is only felt. "The real ideal is not constant," he says, differing both because of the variation in intensity of "primitive tendencies" and because of "rational norms which come to be grafted onto organic tendencies and which can change, according to the angle from which reason looks at things. Also, he can partially modify his composition through goals that have been fulfilled and do not require repeating or by the disappearance of goals that are abandoned before they are realized"⁷¹.

Eugen Russu shows that, despite the distinction between them, under certain conditions, transitions from the theoretical ideal to the real one can take place. Thus, "norms of the theoretical ideal, norms first awakened in reason can become of the real ideal only if they graft and unify with already existing impulses". (For example, the Christian ideal could become a real ideal, when the individual convinced himself that "it represents a perfection and the impulse towards it will have the strength that the thirst can already give existing towards perfection" ⁷²).

Most often, "the real ideal is reduced to a certain diffuse conception of life, constituted more by a certain specific atmosphere than by drawn lines, and which in a certain way colors the tendencies and actions of an individual." On this diffuse conception of life actually depend all those essential actions and attitudes, apparently unimportant, but which in reality give direction to the destiny ("fate") of the individual. "This (fate) is much less than it seems to be determined by chance (chance or luck) and more by the deeds of man, especially those that have their motivation in that diffuse conception from the unconscious; precisely because it is thus

⁶⁹*Ibidem*, p.36

⁷⁰In consciousness, the theoretical moral norms, those that pass through perfection, sound stronger. This consciousness should be very attentive and understanding to the obscure tendencies of the being, in order to be able to perceive the structure and content of the real ideal" (*Ibidem*, p. 36)

⁷¹*Ibidem*, p.37

⁷²*Ibidem*, p.37

located in the shadow, that twist occurs in attributing the determinants of fate to chance", emphasizes Eugen Russu.

He is adamant that "man creates his own destiny; it is shaped and realized very little and in very unessential parts according to chance. Man creates it; man in his deep, total and inexpressible meaning"⁷³. The real ideal is composed of a set of aspirations, of a sum of life conditions to which the individual aspires and tends to be achieved. At any moment the individual placed in these conditions will have an affective state - pleasure, which will impress and support the movement towards their achievement. The components that structure the real ideal can be placed on different planes, without any relation to each other. Several independent plans of life only condition each other through the necessity that the sum of the pleasures obtained reach a certain value, regardless of how the contribution of each one was distributed. But, says E. Russu, "there can exist in the real ideal, dependent urges. They can be compatible with each other or not. When several categories of pleasure can be tasted at the same time, the total amount that expends the vital energy is sooner and easier to reach"⁷⁴.

But there can also be divergences between the components: for example between the egoism component and the altruism component. "In every human being, alongside the purely selfish tendencies, those of satisfaction through altruistic actions are found. They can practically come into conflict. The real ideal must therefore be colored, emphasizing one or the other of the two shades. Living to the full of purely selfish tendencies (and, correlatively, neglecting the altruistic ones), however, fatally leads to fatigue, to the reduction in rhythm and intensity of the respective pleasures. Coordinating and highlighting altruistic tendencies can maintain life in a rich rhythm of discharge of an ever-strong and alive vital energy. This presupposes, not the repression of selfish tendencies, but their satisfaction with indifference"⁷⁵.

In such a situation, "we realize that a real ideal in which desires of different categories are incompatible, depend on one another but in opposite directions, unable to be satisfied at the same time, is incapable of

⁷³*Ibidem*, p.38

⁷⁴*Ibidem*, p.65

⁷⁵*Ibidem*, p.72

bringing to the one who is possessed by it, the minimum necessary total pleasure"⁷⁶.

The thesis derived from this circumstance by Eugen Russu is: "so that energy can be mobilized decisively in a certain direction, there must therefore be no desire for the opposite directions. A life can only unfold healthily and "alive", when the various components of the real ideal are compatible, in order to be able to step towards its realization and living, without reservations, with full vigor"⁷⁷. A life is all the happier the more the components of the real ideal are harmonized, the more likely to be satisfied on common paths, and the more unhappy the more the various aspirations are opposed to each other. Harmonization cannot be complete ("completely") from the start. "The harmonization of the content of the real ideal happens, sooner or later, by itself, without the willful intervention of the conscious"⁷⁸.

But, according to Eugen Russu, it would be best for man "to try, through reason, to shape and harmoniously organize the content of the real ideal, as much as possible before the impact of its translation into action"⁷⁹. Moreover, in the harmonious organization of the real ideal, with a view to a full and happy life, we must therefore start from the principle of protecting other tendencies, to the detriment of their opposites, i.e. selfish ones.

Eugen Russu is convinced of the fact that part of the striving for the real ideal derives from the individual's organic thirst for perfection. And as this perfection is seen, these quirks are "individually colored," that is, they bear the stamp of the individual, he points out. "Almost in all cases, perfection is conditioned by giving up living with emphasis on primitive pleasures, because they impoverish and limit the meaning of life. One cannot strive for perfection through living conditions that make him a slave to material pleasures. However perfection is seen, it has a richer meaning than the property of being able to taste strictly personal pleasure"⁸⁰. In his opinion, to consume vital energy in order to acquire primitive pleasures, "means to give up a special satisfaction of the tendency towards perfection, a tendency nevertheless dug deep in the human being".

⁷⁶*Ibidem*, p.66

⁷⁷*Ibidem*, p.67

⁷⁸*Ibidem*, p.70

⁷⁹*Ibidem*, p.71

⁸⁰*Ibidem*, p.73

His conclusion is worth remembering: self-improvement⁸¹ is compatible with the tendency towards altruism, since it can be put at the service of social utility. At the same time, it is also compatible with selfish tendencies, and in some cases it can be put to their service. In any situation, perfection must unconditionally enter into the composition of the real ideal.

In summary, the real ideal must be harmoniously organized around the idea of self-improvement, "won at the expense of emphasizing primitive pleasures and put at the service of the tendencies that can give the most enhanced and happy life, of the altruistic tendencies"⁸².

In this ideological context, Eugen Russu speaks of "altitude people", as those who, having a desire for moral perfection, practice "asceticism and suffering on the planes of the flesh", as a condition of "strict necessity for an intense experience on the plane spirit". He asks that in the same way we see the current cases of people satisfied with intellectual pleasures, wanting (not not having, but not wanting) material ones. This in opposition to "the opposite case, much more frequent: soaked with material pleasures that (as long as they have not reached indifference), no longer feel attracted to those that art, science, etc. give them. who, in addition, cannot understand the one who lives in the zeal of morals by himself, by himself, for his own satisfaction"⁸³.

Education also plays an important role. But only education that offers the possibility of soul-to-soul communication. Because, he draws attention, "it is much preferable to lack any educational concern, one lacking in skill". In this vein, he criticizes the old school, which offered only intellectual instruction based on the mechanical memorization of knowledge ("massive accumulations of inconsistent piles of knowledge") and highlights the new school, which takes on the task of integral education by introducing the active method, perfecting various categories of individual forces through personal work performed by the student only under the guidance of the teacher (creating and perfecting the good intellectual apparatus, "as a proper and well-mastered tool for life and science"⁸⁴). In short, education

⁸¹"The content of the idea of perfection often includes that of power: sometimes physical, more often spiritual, soulful, moral." (*Ibidem*, p.73)

⁸²*Ibidem*, p.73

⁸³*Ibidem*, p.49

⁸⁴*Ibidem*, p.61

thus becomes an art; "the art of producing conditions in which the child's soul can manifest itself in a creative rhythm"⁸⁵.

If at some point it is found that the forces of achievement do not respond to the desire, the solution is not abandonment, but "it can be found, in a healthy way, in the zeal for self-education". "Man is not allowed to play it safe. He does not have to foresee events and wait for them quietly. They have to fight. And the charm of the fight is to hope for success, without predicting it for sure, the doubt you are gripped by to liven up your nerves, to appeal to the full range of possibilities"⁸⁶.

6. Conclusions

To conclude, first of all, the ethical ideas circulated by this author are limited to the ethics of individual selfishness. Because, in his opinion, "the premise, its basic postulate, must be individual selfishness." And yet he substantially amends this thesis by arguing that altruism must also play a significant role in human life (see above). In such an approach, in Eugen Rusu's view, morals must be an aid to the individual, a guide to his interest; only if it would clearly appear that his good is mixed with that of society, only then should he also go towards the latter, "conscious, reconciled and firm, not constrained, slavish and full of hesitation". Otherwise, there is a disruptive intrusion of society and its morals into the proper functioning of the value system adopted by the individual in accordance with his interests.

Second, his ethical ideas fall within the perimeter of rational ethics, but not abstract. That is, he says "the strength and solidity of its precepts (moral, *author's note*) must be both in this solid base of the foundation, and in the logical interweaving, in the equally solid construction of rational arguments"⁸⁷. And one more thing: based on the laws of manifestation of the human soul provided by Psychology ("Morals must be the technique of Psychology"), morals should teach the individual what behaviors suit him and how he can achieve them, what is his good concrete and not come to teach him what Good is, an abstract, colorless and supreme Good, which does not interest him⁸⁸.

⁸⁵*Ibidem*

⁸⁶*Ibidem*, p.101

⁸⁷*Ibidem*, p.9

⁸⁸*Ibidem*

Thirdly, the perspective from which Eugen Russu engages the moral issue seems to be that offered by the ethics of hedonism, as it focuses on pleasure. But it only seems, because, in reality, we are not dealing with the pleasure existing in Jeremy Bentham, for example, (I consider him much closer to J. St. Mill), but with the pleasure that is not the final goal in life, but only the means, (the "instrument") through which the ends of life are accomplished. Pleasure is seen by him as the engine of human activity, but not its goal. The main function of pleasure is to be a reason for action, more from a psychological point of view and not from an exclusively moral-ethical one.

Moreover, he recommended giving up primitive pleasures because they impoverish and limit the meaning of life. Man must not become a slave to material pleasures, but to propose an ideal, which is harmoniously organized around the idea of his own moral perfection, i.e., to make him a "man of altitude" with an intense experience on the spiritual plane (indulging in intellectual pleasures).

Eugen Russu joins the ranks of those whom I have named others (speaking of those lists of cultural personalities – scientific, philosophical, artistic, etc. – some that which I called "and others"⁸⁹) who left behind the at least a book or a few studies through which they maintained the environment conducive to preserving and carrying forward the ideas in that field – in the present case in that of man and mora

⁸⁹See "Ethical ideas circulated by 'and others' in the interwar period" in Constantin Stroe, *Ethical utterances in Romanian philosophy. Studies in the history of Romanian moral reflection*, 2nd revised and added edition, Grinta Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, pp.309-365