

## BLAGA AND NOICA ABOUT THE MEANING OF THE CATEGORY ONE MULTIPLE

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**Abstract:** *Blaga and Noica were concerned with the category One multiple, which contains in itself the contradiction between a thesis (One) and an antithesis (multiple). They analyzed the mentioned category from different perspectives, but both argued for its importance in knowledge and culture. Blaga argued that the use of the One multiple category contributes to the deepening of the mysteries through a so-called minus of knowledge, and Noica argued that the same category ensures a plus of knowledge through a maximum expansion of creative freedom and the open nature of culture. The two positions are complementary, because any expansion of the known area is also accompanied by a widening of the boundaries of the unknown. Both positions are valid and further valorization.*

**Keywords:** transcendent, *One multiple* as possible cognitive reporting to the transcendent, dogma, minus knowledge, plus knowledge, *One multiple* as a possible way of understanding the cultural relationship between One and the multiple.

### 1. Blaga about the multiple One as a transfigured antinomy

Lucian Blaga and Constantin Noica were concerned with the multiple one category within different theoretical approaches: the first analyzing dogmas as transfigured antinomies and distinguishing them from the usual antinomies of knowing the sensible world through the senses or other types that do not have the imprint of dogma; the second through his analysis regarding the degree of freedom of cultures. Despite the different paths taken, both thinkers appreciate the admission of the category one multiple as marking a fruitful novelty in the sphere of knowledge and culture.

In his work *The Dogmatic Aeon* (1930), the first of his trilogy of knowledge, Blaga was concerned with the so-called dogmatic method of knowing, starting from the analysis of some fundamental dogmas of religion, in this case of the Orthodox religion, which include the category one multiple, such as those relating to the trinity and the double nature of Jesus Christ. He

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believed that religious dogmas do not come solely from faith, but are also a result of intellectual knowledge. More precisely, he argued that, from an intellectual point of view, religious dogmas or non-religious ones are transfigured antinomies. They are antinomies because they contain a logical contradiction, but they also have an intellectual aspect, since they are formulated with the help of concepts. At the same time, they are transfigured or dogmatic antinomies in that the transcendent itself, which I cannot logically explain, determines, as Blaga says, a deformation of the logical laws and, thus, an indication of it in a transfigured way, in a appearance other than a logical one, shrouding him in an aura of mystery. For example, the dogma which holds that God is a being in three persons is unrationalizable, illogical, and, not being logically admissible, presents the divine Being as a mysterious being. The dogma of the trinity would somehow lose its dogmatic, illogical character, only if it affirmed that God is a single being, but who has three ways of manifestation, because such an affirmation can be accepted rationally, logically.

Given the fact that religious dogmas appear in statements about the transcendent, Blaga argued that the method of dogmatic knowledge can be found not only in religion, but also in philosophy (in metaphysics), but he specified that not every metaphysical report opposed to the transcendent has character dogmatic.

In this context, he distinguished several possibilities by which thinkers of different times related to the transcendent.

1) "The transcendent is rationalizable and formulable" (eg: Eleats, Aristotle, Spinoza, Leibniz).

2) "The transcendent is experiential through a kind of intellectual intuition and describable at least metaphorically, or negatively formulable" (eg: Plotinus - the unique, Schelling - the absolute, Bergson - consciousness, Goethe - original phenomena).

3) "The transcendent is rationalizable and formulable dialectically" (eg: Hegel)

4) "The transcendent is unrationalizable and unformulable" (eg: agnosticism, Kantian criticism).

5) "The transcendent is non-rationalizable, but formulable" (eg: the dogmatism of Philo, Gnostic, Christian).<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, Blaga distinguished the dogmatic reporting to the transcendent, either religious or philosophical, expressed by the last possibility

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<sup>2</sup> Lucian Blaga, *The Knowledge Trilogy Trilogia cunoașterii (The Knowledge Trilogy)*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2019, p. 208

(no. 5), by which the transcendent is indicated by contradictory concepts, remaining non-rationalizable, mysterious, from the other types of reporting (no. 1- 4), which is achieved either through rationalizing concepts (pos. 1 and 3), or through intuition and not through concepts (pos. 2), or by considering the transcendent as non-rationalizable and denying the validity of the categories applied to it because they generate antinomies (pos. 4). Among the non-dogmatic positions, Blaga insisted on Kant's conception and Hegel's conception, which admitted that the reference to the transcendent is made through pairs of opposites, theses and antitheses, but did not grant them a dogmatic character, whereby the transcendent to appear transfigured, mysterious.

Kant argued that reason that refers to the transcendent reaches antinomies, that is, contradictory but equally justified assertions, because both have their arguments and cannot be controlled by experience. Hence his conclusion that the transcendent is unknowable and cannot be rendered by categories. For example, the thesis of the first Kantian antinomy states that the world has a beginning in time and is limited in space, and the antithesis admits, on the contrary, that the world is infinite in time and infinite in space. But, as Blaga noted, antinomies of the Kantian type do not have the character of dogmas, because they are not inscribed "in the very nature of the transcendent", as the dogmatic method claims. Or, "As long as the theses of the human mind do not admit to be confronted directly with the transcendent, the Kantian theory that the transcendent is unrationalizable and unformulable remains a simple statement, like the rationalist thesis, like the dogmatic thesis."<sup>3</sup> Unlike Kantian agnosticism and rationalist procedures, which reconcile theses and antitheses with logical procedures, the dogmatic method considers that contradictory claims cannot be reconciled by a synthesis, because they are specific to the transcendent being itself.

With regard to Hegel, the Romanian philosopher noted the fact that he, supporting the transition from thesis to antithesis and their resolution in a synthesis, operated a transition from the metaphysical panel of categories to the relative, sensitive plane engaged by that transition, which it takes place in the real and therefore relative plane and not in the transcendent, in the absolute. We recall the fact that the first series of triadic categories in the Hegelian *Logic* are: *Pure Being – nothingness – becoming; quality - quantity - measure* etc. *Pure Being* imposes itself on thinking as a transcensus, as an absolute, because the original source from which everything that is sensible flows, cannot possess any sensible determination.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 210

But something devoid of determinations amounts to nothing in relation to the sensuous which is full of determinations. According to Hegel, the contradiction between *the thesis that affirms Pure Being* and *the antithesis that admits nothingness* is resolved in their *synthesis*, in the reciprocal transition between thesis and antithesis, which implies a becoming. But the becoming can only be of something determined, sensible, of a quality. However, as Blaga repeatedly stated, the true dogma is in opposition to the sensible, which it transcends, the opposition being constitutive of the dogma and somehow imposed by the mysterious character of the transcendent.

According to Blaga, "although the proper field of dogmatic thinking is metaphysics", dogmatic or transfigured antinomies can also be found in the scientific field. He adds that although "the dogmatic can neither be verified nor denounced directly by experience, because a dogmatic formula will always exceed experience", yet "indirectly experience could serve as a basis and justification for formulas of a dogmatic nature"<sup>4</sup>. As striking examples, which admit transfigured antinomies in the sphere of scientific knowledge, Blaga referred to the cohabitation in physics between *quantum theory* (of Max Planck) and *wave mechanics* (of Louis de Broglie), by which it is admitted that light has a *corpuscular* and *undulatory* character, and to *the vitalist conception* (of Max Driesch) in biology of entelechy or finality, according to which "entelechy is capable of *acts* but not *energy*" or "entelechy is *aspatial* but manifests *in space*."<sup>5</sup> "Such formulas," he argued, "would come into being through the equally justified aspiration of 'two archetypal phenomena' that exclude each other, to substitute for one experience."<sup>6</sup>

Blaga considered that the transfigured antinomies from metaphysics and those from particular sciences denote the presence of the intellect, constrained by reasons that may come from the very specifics of metaphysics or from experience to support them. It is about an intellect that no longer respects the logical laws inherent to it, it is no longer *enstatic*, but it is one that leaves the sphere of logic, leaves itself, is *ecstatic*. *The ecstatic intellect*, through its *ecstasies*, realizes a knowledge, but not one with a plus sign, which brings an increase of logical knowledge, but one with a minus sign, a *minus knowledge*, which increases the halo of mystery that surrounds *positive knowledge*. In other words, Blaga argued that a knowledge, whether metaphysical or scientific, to the extent that it operates with transfigured antinomies, not only does not elucidate its object of knowledge, but even increases its aura of mystery, as the background of these antinomies. He also did not minimize the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 217

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 231

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 217

importance of enstatic knowledge, but even specified that *the ecstatic method of dogmatism* comes in only after all *enstatic attempts* have been exhausted. According to him, behind any familiar objects there is something mysterious. The enstatic direction aims to reduce the mystery of objects, realizing a *plus-knowledge*, while the second direction enhances the mystery through a *minus-knowledge*.

Given the fact that the transfigured and mysterious object of dogmas can be diverse, belonging to the theological or metaphysical perspective, but also to particular sciences, the author of the Dogmatic Aeon concludes that "the dogmatic mystery is plural" or heterogeneous.<sup>7</sup> According to him, the "felt world" is only "a complex of signs of the mystery", and these "signs" or "symptoms" can be constitutive and integrated into the mystery, and then the knowledge is realistic, or they can be simple subjective reflections of the mystery, and then knowledge is illusory.<sup>8</sup> But even the "archetypal phenomena," he added, "although obtained by the reductive processes of the enstatic intellect, do not cease to be 'mysteries.'<sup>9</sup>

We would say, following the meaning of Blagian thought, that behind sensible things, with their perceptible attributes, lies the mystery of their specific essence, usually defined by proximate genus and specific difference, the essence of the species, once defined, is embedded in the mystery of the genus, this is understretched by the mystery of the living world, or, respectively, of the non-living world, etc. By incorporating any known object into a more comprehensive system, there is an amplification of plus-knowledge, but on any level of positive knowledge there is also room for minus-knowledge, which increases from one level to another.

## **2. Noica about the category *One multiple* in the context of the analysis of the degree of freedom of cultures**

In his book *The European Cultural Model* (1993)<sup>10</sup>, Constantin Noica started from the premise that any cultural creation is an expression of human freedom, and human freedom presupposes a certain detachment from the concrete-historical conditions of human life, including from the defining spirit

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 2011

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 221

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 215

<sup>10</sup> Constantin Noica, *Modelul cultural european (European Cultural Model)*, Humanitas, 1993 (The work originally appeared in German, under the title *De dignitate Europae, 1933*, Criterion, 1988.)

embedded in the guiding ideas or rules of a culture at a given time and constituting the unity or One of that culture. As creative freedom means exceptions to given cultural rules, a certain culture can be characterized as more or less open to creative freedom depending on the degree to which its rules allow exceptions to these rules, in other words according to the way in which understand the ratio of one to multiple

Cultural innovations that appear as exceptions to the rules, from the guiding ideas of a culture also imply a certain understanding of the unity-multiplicity, One-multiple relationship.

Considering the examples provided by the history of culture, Noica concluded: "There are five possible ratios between the One and the Multiple:

1. One and its repetition;
2. One and its variation;
3. One in Multiple;
4. One and Multiple;
5. One multiple."<sup>11</sup>

In his book on the *European Cultural Model*, the author analyzed and exemplified each of the five cultural ways of understanding the relationship between the one and the many.

1) *On the lowest rung of admitting creative freedom* are cultures that reject renewals, exceptions to the rule. Thus, Noica appreciated, it was *the totemic cultures* (primitive religious, but also non-religious), which showed a zero degree of freedom towards the renewals that appeared within them and which they did not tolerate. So are, he considered, the different types of cultures, including "from the immediate historical life", which preserved the totemic spirit, as is also *the technical-scientific civilization*, whose engineering spirit also penetrated the "higher human areas"<sup>12</sup>. These cultures admit only *the repetition of One*, that is, of the standard explanation on which they focus. Opposing renewal, such cultures are dogmatic in the usual sense of the term dogmatism, *non-blagian*, cultures with imperative attitudes, which oppose any deviations from the promoted rules.

2) *On the second step* are the cultures that have a certain degree of freedom with regard to renewals, but a minimal freedom, in the sense that they admit exceptions, but only as appearances of the common fund, demanding their compliance with the standard explanations. They admit the *One that manifests itself varied in multiplicity* and not as such, but they consider the variations as lacking, however, their own essentiality, so that they only confirm

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 44

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 14

the common ground. Noica appreciated that at this level are *the older (Mosaic) or newer (Islam) monotheistic cultures*, or *the political ones based on the constitution* (but also others, of a different kind). Indeed, for Mosaicism, for example, Christianity only confirms the laws of Moses through the teachings of Jesus Christ, who would not be a hypostasis of Divinity. Likewise, any constitution-based political culture demands that all other laws be constitutional.

3) *The third stage*, with a higher degree of freedom and knowledge, is occupied by the cultures that give exceptions a certain essentiality, in the sense that they reflect, as a differentiated manifestation, the common background of the entire culture. The examples given by Noica are *pantheistic religious cultures* or *panlogistic scientific creations*. Pantheism considers that God (*theos*) is present in the entire created universe (*pan*), without, however, identifying the Creator with the creation, the divine One present in multiple with the multiplicity itself. Similarly, panlogistic scientific creations support the presence of logic in any particular science, but in each, in a different form, through other laws.

4) *On the fourth*, and higher, level of freedom and knowledge are placed the cultures that give the same importance to both their own rules and exceptions, that is, they place the same value emphasis on both the One and the multiple. According to Noica, *polytheistic religions* and *moral and legal creations* have always been of this kind, as well as *Plato's conception of the essences of things*. In other words, they are the conceptions that do not make a hierarchy between the professed values, whether religious, moral or legal, and, as such, admit that the new values (exceptions) are of equal importance to the standard values.

5) *Finally*, the freest and most creative would be the culture that asserts itself only through exceptions, so that exceptions become the rule or the rule would consist of exceptions, that is, One would be a One multiple. It is, Noica believes, *about medieval, modern, contemporary European culture*, which he calls *the European cultural model*. And he, like Blaga, believes that the multiple one structure was specific to the trinity dogma. That is why, according to him, European culture began in the year 325, when, in the Council of Nicaea, the understanding of divinity as a being in three persons was imposed. With the admission of the trinity, the acceptance of other forms of knowledge and culture that no longer respect the rules of formal logic was imposed. Since then, European culture has come to admit cultural exceptions to the rule as the very rule to be followed. In literature, for example, but also in other forms of culture and values, each creator aimed to be original, and each new literary

value began to be valued not only as autonomous in relation to previous literary standards, but also as another standard which can be diversified. Noica revealed the following characteristics of European culture focused on the category *One multiple*: *it is open to other cultures, it cultivates the complete man, it is located beyond nature, it is always creative*. The mentioned features result precisely from the fact that the European cultural model is structured by the category *One multiple*. Precisely because its rule is the exception, *it is a model open to other cultures*. Thanks to the same substrate that finds itself as multiplicity, the European model cultivates the complete, polyvalent man, who asserts himself through all kinds of values, "in all his versions", integrating the irrational into the rational. Also, the European model is no longer limited to a nature described by science and left unchanged, as in other cultures, "but refers to a nature ... generally, artificialized, passed in the laboratory through science and philosophy"<sup>13</sup>. Seeking and finding itself in exceptions, European culture does not stagnate, but exists in a state of rest, it is always creative.

So, Noica ends up, like Blaga, surpassing the category one multiple and also illustrating it through the European cultural type, affirmed starting from the medieval period, continued with the modern period and sustained also in contemporaneity. Despite the different perspective from which they analyze the aforementioned report, the two philosophers converge by concluding that European culture is focused on the one multiple category and by highlighting its importance: at Blaga in the sphere of understanding knowledge, at Noica in ensuring a maximum of freedom and creativity for culture .

### **3. Blaga and Noica on the scientific and cultural importance of the category One multiple**

Blagian's cognitive perspective on the category One multiple is workable in both science and philosophy.

In supporting the dogma (based on the One multiple ratio) as one of the methods of scientific knowledge, Blaga relied on the sciences that admitted as valid contradictory claims, such as the theory of relativity with the idea of a space-time continuum, wave mechanics and the corpuscular theory about the duality of wave-the corpuscle of light and the biological theory of an entelechial factor, in turn dual and inconceivable according to classical, Aristotelian logic. Subsequent to Blaga's philosophical elaborations, in a work from 1951, the French philosopher of Romanian origin Stéphan Lupasco theorized the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 279



principle of antagonism in science and proposed a non-Aristotelian logic (of the third included), his contributions being translated into Romanian under the title *Logica dynamics of the contradictory* (1982).

Indeed, the Aristotelian logic of the *excluded third* (according to which a proposition is either true or false, the third position being excluded) is appropriate to physical, corporeal phenomena under their (relatively) stable, identical, defining aspects for the macrophysical level. Instead, the law of the included third (or, in Blagian language, the method of transfigured oppositions) is claimed by understanding things more deeply, at the microphysical level, where microparticles behave contradictory, a certain theoretical thesis justifying a certain behavior, and the antithesis an opposite behavior. Although it seems to clarify the phenomena to be known, the logic of *the included third* or the dogmatic method does not cancel the mystery of the things Blaga was talking about, because, compared to *the excluded third*, which is rationalizable, being a basis of positive knowledge, *the included third* is non-rationalizable and does not give us an increase in positive knowledge.

Regarding the conception of a metaphysical knowledge through dogmas, as transfigured antinomies, Blaga was largely personal, detaching himself, as I have shown, from other philosophers of the modern and contemporary period. His conception of philosophical dogmas was also echoed by other Romanian philosophers, followers of a certain philosophical mystery, such as the philosopher Vasile Băncilă, the most receptive interpreter and supporter of Blagian philosophy in the interwar period<sup>14</sup>. In the first decades of the 21st century, the logician and philosopher Alexandru Surdu took up the problem of metaphysical knowledge through categories that go beyond not only experience, but also formal logic, which he called *supercategories*.<sup>15</sup>

Blaga's belief was that philosophy and science will increasingly apply the method of ecstatic or dogmatic knowledge, ushering in a new aeon, the *Dogmatic Aeon*, that is, a long period of time dominated by the new spirit. His conviction remains to be increasingly confirmed.

And Noica's conception of the virtues conferred on European culture by its structuring on the category *One multiple*, in which the rule consists of exceptions, is to be valued and updated. Given the fact that in any culture

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<sup>14</sup> Vasile Băncilă, *Lucian Blaga, energie românească (Lucian Blaga, Romanian Energy)* II<sup>nd</sup> edition, Ed. Marineasa, Timișoara, 1995 (first edition at the printer house Gând Românesc, Cluj, 1938)

<sup>15</sup> Alexandru Surdu, *Filosofia pentadică I. Problema transcendenței (Pentadic Philosophy. The Problem of Transcendence)*, Editura Academiei Române, Bucharest, 2007

there is not one, but different ways of understanding the One-multiple relationship, a certain culture, Noica will conclude, can be distinguished from others by the predominant type of relationship. Without being a follower of a cultural Eurocentrism, he nevertheless appreciates that, unlike others, the European cultural model is dominated by the category *One multiple*, hence its dominant features, manifested more than in other cultures. Therefore, the advantages offered by this model are greater than in others. For example, any culture is influenced by those with which it comes into contact, but European culture is not only receptive and permissive to other cultural ways, but also imposes its dominant character on others, i.e. imprints on them the tendency to consider themselves exceptions as a rule of creation. It is also about an influence, but of taking over not already created values, but of the *One multiple* creation structure. To use Blaga's terminology, in this case the influence exerted by the European model is catalytic, stimulating the background of the influenced culture. Through its catalytic influence, the European model is also important for the fact that, in its expansion, it also allows in other cultures both a full human affirmation, through all types of values, including through opposite types, such as theoretical and religious ones, as well as a reference to a nature recreated by man through his theories and laboratory experiments. Regarding religion and science, Noica is not interested in the fact that their structuring on the principle of one multiple provides them with a margin of mystery, but is concerned with arguing that the mentioned principle allows a cohabitation of both value types.

The theoretical efforts made by the two Romanian philosophers to theorize the importance of the one-multiple relationship in knowledge and culture remain valid and valuable both in the direction preferred by Blaga, of deepening the mysteries through a so-called minus knowledge, and in the complementary sense pursued by Noica, that of the plus of knowledge, through a maximum expansion of the open character of the culture and its freedom of creation.