THE CURRENT SIGNIFICANCE OF BLAGA'S CONCEPTION OF METAPHORICAL KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract: *The author exposes and explains the distinctions made by Blaga between plasticizing metaphors and revealing metaphors, between significant myths and trans-significant myths, as well as between these and the categorical ideas, which are involved in myths and metaphors. The author also presents the philosopher's conception of the co-presence of the metaphorical character and stylistic aspects in any form of culture, which also implies the co-presence of all cognitive sources that generate metaphors and, respectively, stylistic attributes or are involved in their genesis. Finally, the author appreciates Blaga's conception of culture as significant and current, on the one hand, because it allows understanding the interaction between the various forms of culture through the thesis according to which all cognitive faculties participate in the genesis of each form of culture. On the other hand, he considers that Blaga's philosophy of culture is important and fruitful also because it allows for the explanation of the autonomy of cultural forms by the fact that each form of culture engages the cognitive faculties in a specific proportion, different from one cultural form to another.*

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In the present study, I analyze Lucian Blaga's conception of plasticizing metaphors and revelatory metaphors and their presence in myths and in all other forms of human creation, including metaphysics and science. Finally, I highlight some current meanings of Blaga's conception, less highlighted by other researchers, regarding the conception of any form of culture as an expression of all cognitive faculties, the differentiation of forms of culture through the different degree to which they engage human creative forces, through the different degree to which they engage human

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creative forces, understanding communication between cultures both through their shared logical knowledge and through common stylistic and metaphorical factors, as well as differences from one culture to another, especially through specific stylistic matrices.

Plasticizing metaphors are called so because they plasticize a fact through another fact (the expression of one fact through the expression of another fact). Among the examples given by Blaga, we note an example from one of his poems: “on the streets, thin and tall/ the rain walks on the cataligi”; and another from a popular riddle about a spider: “in a peak of straw/ the monastery of the king”. They do not bring an increase in knowledge of the plasticized fact, they are inherent to the human spirit and arise from the disagreement between the abstract and the concrete, that is, between the descriptive-abstract expression of a fact and the concreteness of that fact, which is not exhausted by abstraction, a disagreement that requires completion through a suggestive comparison with another fact.

According to Blaga, man uses this type of metaphor when “he lives without mystery, without the consciousness of it, in an undisturbed state of paradisiacal-animal equilibrium”[2]. In other words, he analogizes plasticizing metaphorical knowledge with enstatic, ordinary, empirical, or inductive intellectual knowledge, in which the intellect does not leave its ordinary, empirical-inductive patterns, governed by Kantian a priori forms.

Of course, the difference between the two types of knowledge – intellectual enstatic and metaphorical plasticizing – is given by the faculties through which they are exercised: the enstatic intellect and, respectively, the plasticizing imagination.

In turn, we can analogize plasticizing metaphorism with the intellectual definition of notions not by proximate genus and specific difference, but by enumeration, through which we complete a first definition of an object by new features, which do not deepen the initial definition because all the new attributes are located at the level of empirical knowledge or are inductively dependent on the empirical stage. For example, to the definition of man as a rational animal, we can add bipedal, bimanous, featherless, etc., without advancing anything in the mystery of the human being. And in this case, analogy does not constitute an identification of the two modes of knowledge, because the definition by enumeration appeals to the intellect and to empirical aspects of the object

[2] Lucian Blaga, *Geneza metaforei și sensul culturii*, în Lucian Blaga, *Trilogia culturii*, E.L.U., București, 1969, p. 280

to be defined, while the plasticizing metaphor proceeds imaginatively "by approaching one fact to another, more or less similar, both facts being in the domain of the given, imagined, experienced or thought world"[3]. In one of Blaga's examples, the swallows perched on the telegraph wires are called "some notes on a musical staff".

Revelatory metaphors are called so because they “reveal something hidden”[4] of a fact, that is, they reveal a mystery to it. Blaga finds several revealed mysteries in the popular ballad Miorița, including the fact that death is called “the bride of the world,” and death “a wedding,” which gives the fact “death” another meaning, or the comparison of the elements of nature with the participants in a wedding, in a church, through which the whole of nature becomes a kind of church. Among the illustrations with Blaga’s verses, we remember two revealed mysteries, one of snowfall: “The ashes of the angels burned in the heavens/ fall flaming on our shoulders, on the houses” and another of a sunset: “The sun, the tear of God,/ falls in the seas of sleep.” This type of metaphor does not plasticize some facts, but “has a revelatory character, because they cancel the usual meaning of the facts, substituting a new vision for them.”[5] At the same time, they no longer have as their source a disagreement inherent in the human spirit (between abstract and concrete), but rather they spring from the specific way of being of man as an existence in mystery and for revelation.

Therefore, Blaga believes that more appropriate than the Aristotelian definition of man as a political animal (zoon politikon) is the definition given by him, according to which "man is the metaphorizing animal", because: "The emphasis we want to place on the epithet "metaphorizing", is, however, almost destined to suppress animality."[6]

As for the source of revelatory metaphors, it is found, as Blaga states, in man's existential way of living in the horizon of mystery and revelation, but I believe that this source is also inherent in the human spirit, namely in the permanent tendency of the spirit to discover something new not only to satisfy biological needs, but also to fulfill spiritual requirements, the absolute values of truth, good, beauty and sacredness, which are beyond any utility. Moreover, Blaga's conception, according to which revelatory metaphors suspend the usual acceptances of facts in order to substitute other, deeper meanings, is

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 276
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 279
[5] *Ibidem*, p.280
[6] *Ibidem*, p. 282

consistent with the Husserlian phenomenological method, with its two stages: 1) phenomenological reduction, of suspending or bracketing empirical or other knowledge, and 2) eidetic reflection, of accessing the eidos or essence of the objects to be known.

Given that the two types of metaphors have always been characteristic of human consciousness to concretize its abstractions and, respectively, to go beyond the already given knowledge about facts, towards their mysterious hiddenness, Blaga rejects excessive metaphorism, present especially in some poetic creations, in which metaphors do not correspond to either of the two purposes, being cultivated as a forced, abusive metaphorical game, in which the object is tabooed either magically, or aesthetically (as in the poetry of Gongora, Mallarmé, or Valéry), or intellectually (as in riddles), being forbidden to be named as such and replaced by metaphors.

The fact that abusive metaphors (also called catachreses) are admitted in some cultures, but rejected in others means that they, metaphors, are impregnated with stylistic aspects, which, however, arise from a different source than metaphors, namely from the abyssal categories of the stylistic matrix.

From the analysis of metaphors, Blaga moves on to the analysis of myths, which comprise a metaphorical efflorescence.

Myths are grouped, like metaphors, into two categories: significant myths and trans-significant myths. They differ, however, from metaphors, in that they all aim to decipher a certain mystery (such as the origin of a certain field of activity), having a revelatory character. At the same time, they differ from one category to another: “Significant myths reveal, at least by their intention, meanings that may also have a logical equivalent. Trans-significant myths try to reveal something without a logical equivalent.”[7]

Given that philosophical and scientific theories and hypotheses also aim to be revelations of the mystery (for example, to capture the essence or cause of phenomena of the same kind), Blaga discriminates, first of all, between significant myths (because their significance can be expressed through a logical idea) and scientific or philosophical ideas. Both forms of knowledge – both myth and scientific hypothesis – appeal to the metaphorical method of analogy, but the mythical spirit exacerbates analogies (it is their slave), while the scientific spirit controls analogies (it is

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 291

their sovereign), being able to find in a nonanology (a dissimilarity between facts) an analogy (e.g.: the moon falls towards the earth) or, conversely, in an analogy (a similarity between facts) a nonanology (e.g.: the whale is not a fish, but a mammal).

Another difference between myth and scientific hypothesis, Blaga notes, concerns the relationship between known facts and the revelation permitted by the facts: myth integrates (assimilates) the known concrete facts to a revealed power (impersonal or personal – I.N.R. note), while scientific hypothesis cancels the observed facts from which it starts, in order to retain only their common note. Indeed, to illustrate this difference, let us consider that the theory concludes that all people are mortal by generalizing the findings about individual people who have died, but ignoring the concrete cases, after arriving at the idea of all. In contrast, in the Assyrian-Babylonian myth The Epic of Gilgamesh, the idea of man's mortal nature emerges from the events experienced by Gilgamesh, who first lost his friend Enkidu because he had rejected the goddess Ishtar, then, having set out in search of eternal youth, finds out where the flower of immortal youth is found, picks it, but it is stolen from him by the serpent, which symbolizes precisely man's fall from Paradise, through which he became perishable.

In connection with the aforementioned difference, another difference, Blaga notes, consists in the fact that the vision reached by the myth is made up of vitalizing, animated elements that participate in human life, while the vision constructed by science is made up of devitalized elements, substituted for the concrete world.

In trans-significant myths, the difference between myth and science fiction is even clearer in that these myths, being much more extensive and developed than the significant ones, no longer have a logical equivalent, a precise meaning, but are "a kind of revelations that themselves hide an ultimate secret"[8]. To try to assign them certain meanings is to transform them into allegories, but what they reveal is only revelatory through myth, just as "what is 'poetry' in a poem cannot be translated into prose"[9]. They cannot be a kind of collective dreams that would be an expression of the human unconscious, with all their monstrous tendencies (as psychoanalysis claims), because myths, which are "the first great manifestations of a culture", will always bear the imprint of stylistic factors,

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 297
[9] *Ibidem*, p. 300

"will be shaped, internally, by the abyssal categories of a people", while "the dream, the one on the psychological level, is a-stylistic, like any natural phenomenon"[10].

According to Blaga, metaphors and style are present not only in poetry and myth, but also in metaphysics and science. He states: "A cultural creation (mythical, artistic, metaphysical, theoretical-scientific) has two twinned aspects: one metaphorical, the other stylistic. A cultural creation is "metaphor" and "style", in a kind of mystical union"[11].

Metaphysics is metaphorical because it tends to reveal the cosmic mystery. Blaga gives as an example the philosophical system of Leibniz, in which the sensible cosmos (a) is explained by the idea-image of the monad (b), which constitutes the metaphorical core of the entire Leibnizian philosophical system. Generalizing, he states: "A revealing metaphorical core is found in any metaphysical conception: regardless of whether the center of the conception is called Brahman, Atman, the idea, entelechy or the ego, the will, etc." [12]

Similarly, science is also metaphorical because it seeks to reveal the essence of concrete facts from one domain or another of reality through metaphorical ideas-images. For example, in physics sound is understood as vibration, and light in the form of particles or waves.

Blaga also reveals the difference between mythical-poetic and philosophical-scientific metaphors. The main difference lies in the fact that mythical and poetic metaphors respect the parity between the metaphorically amalgamated contents, while metaphors in philosophy and science do not respect it, but substitute the concrete-sensible contents by the ideas-images through which they explain them. For example, in the revelatory poetic metaphor "The sun, the tear of God, falls...", even if the image of the sun (a) receives a new meaning from the image "the tear of God" (b) and is absorbed by it, it does not degrade, but preserves its existence by being absorbed by another, more vast whole. On the other hand, in metaphysical and scientific metaphors, the concrete-sensible images from which they start are annihilated and substituted by the ideas-images through which they are explained.

Returning to poetic language, Blaga shows that not only explicit metaphors, but the entire poetic language is metaphorical through its

[10] *Ibidem*, p. 301
[11] *Ibidem*, p. 315
[12] *Ibidem*, p. 311

material, rhythmic and sonorous side, which also has something analogous to the emotional state or thought. Similar is the language of painting (through color, line, form), sculpture (through matter and volume), music (through tones, melody, harmony), architecture (through tectonic mass and organization of space). Generalizing, Blaga states: “The substance, objectively embodied of the creation of culture of any nature, is in the final analysis, and in some way, always a revelatory metaphor, or if you will a tissue, a weave of revelatory metaphors.”[13]

As for the stylistic component of cultures as a whole, including metaphysical or scientific forms, Blaga illustrates the stylistic characteristics of the culture of ancient Greece, India and Byzantium.

Blaga aims to distinguish cultural creations, including hypotheses, theories and conceptions, which have a metaphorical character and bear a stylistic imprint, from the categories circulated by philosophy, devoid of metaphorical and stylistic aspects. As a result, the categories of receptive knowledge are not myths (as Nietzsche claimed), but categories of this type, Blaga specifies, “(for example, the idea of substance, causality, unity, etc.) undoubtedly enter constitutively into “myths”, as well as into empirical knowledge”[14]. In fact, as he explicitly claims: “Any revealing-metaphorical act already implies categorical conditions”.[15]

Indeed, in the complex process of empirical or, more precisely, experimental knowledge, we cannot seek, for example, the cause of some facts if we do not already have the idea of causality. Or, in a cultural act, in the creation of a poem, we cannot metaphorically potentiate the usual expression of a fact if we do not have expressed the idea of that fact, which in turn presupposed a certain categorical idea, such as the idea of unity or identity of facts of the same kind.

Blaga distinguishes the categories of receptive knowledge, which belong to consciousness and are expressed through ideas that govern receptive (paradisiac) knowledge, achieved through the enstatic intellect, and the abyssal categories, which, in the form of a stylistic matrix, belong to the unconscious and generate the stylistic aspects specific to revelatory (luciferic) knowledge. The categories of receptivity form a constant structure, they can increase numerically, but without changing the structure, and are or tend to become universal, while "the unconscious stylistic matrix

[13] *Ibidem*, p. 31
[14] *Ibidem*, p. 324
[15] *Ibidem*, p. 325

is constituted, above all, of a kind of categorical places, which can be occupied by certain specific categories only through alternation"[16]. For example, among the main categorical places, there is the spatial horizontal categorical place and the temporal horizontal categorical place, the spatial one being occupied by the categories infinite three-dimensional space, or wavy space, or flat space, or vault space, etc., and the temporal one – by the categories time-fountain, or time-river, or time-cascade. By changing some categories with others or by combining two categories into a hybrid one, a lot of stylistic matrices can be created. They differ from one culture to another, or from one cultural stage to another, so, unlike the a priori structures of receptivity, which tend to constancy and universality, a priori stylistic matrices present, under certain conditions, variation and individualization. In general, matrices differ from one culture to another, but also retain some common categories of one categorical place or another. In a cultural community, there are also individual styles. Namely: sometimes the individual adds his own categories to the ethnic, community ones, differing from the ethnic only by peripheral categories, sometimes he differs from the ethnic also by some "primary" categories, but never by all of them: "At least a few, of the important ones, are always collective."[17]

Follows, as Blaga argued in his work Horizon and Style, delimiting himself from Spengler's theory about an autonomous soul of each culture, that: "The stylistic matrix of one culture and the stylistic matrix of another culture often contain various common or related factors."[18]

Through his conception of the metaphor and style of cultural creations, specific to Luciferian knowledge, and the a priori categories of receptive, paradisiacal knowledge, Blaga managed to personally resolve several dilemmas or ambiguities in the field of the philosophy of culture, such as the distinction between culture and civilization, between natural beauty and artistic beauty, between paradisiacal, so-called natural truth and the truth of stylistic, Luciferian creations, etc.

Finally, I highlight some broader current meanings, which result from Blaga's philosophy of culture, but which are not accurately highlighted by commentators.

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 136
[17] *Ibidem*, p. 363
[18] Lucian Blaga, *Orizont și stil*, în vol. Lucian Blaga, *Trilogia culturii*, E.L.U., București, 1969, p. 114

First of all, Blaga's conception according to which cultural creations contain plasticizing or revealing metaphors, stylistic aspects and categorical ideas is particularly fruitful and current for the theory of knowledge, if we consider the sources of all these elements of culture. As we have shown, according to Blaga, plasticizing metaphors come from the conflict inherent in the human spirit between the abstract and the concrete, revelatory metaphors spring from man's plenary existential way of tempting the mysteries of the world, that is, also from an inherent attribute of the human spirit, stylistic aspects emerge from the abyssal categories of the human unconscious, which reverberate in the conscious and, therefore, we can add, in the ecstatic intellect of luciferic knowledge, and categorical ideas belong to the enstatic intellect of paradisiacal knowledge. Therefore, according to Blaga, cultural creations are achieved by exercising the human spirit with its inner tension between the abstract and the concrete and its tireless tendency to reveal the mysteries of existence, as well as by engaging the ecstatic intellect of Luciferic knowledge and its conjunction with the enstatic intellect of paradisiacal knowledge. In other words, man asserts himself as a metaphorizing individual and creator of culture through all his subjective faculties, through his entire subjectivity.

Secondly, Blaga's conception of metaphorical-stylistic knowledge allows us to explain both the interaction between the different domains of one and the same culture, through the co-presence in all of them of all cognitive faculties, and the differentiation of domains through the specific weight with which these faculties manifest themselves in each form of culture and value.

Thirdly, Blaga explains that any culture has both a universal and a national character. Any culture is universal through the categories of consciousness, specific to paradisiacal knowledge, and through the categorical places of the unconscious, related to Luciferic knowledge. Through these common elements, cultures are universal through a common essence, through an essential unity, given in a real and conscious way, but also potentially and unconsciously (through the categorical places). At the same time, any culture also participates in universality through various abyssal, stylistic categories, which fill the categorical places and are common or related to other cultures. The national character of any culture resides in the specificity of its stylistic matrix, ensured by some stylistic factors of its own and by the cosmoid structuring of all.

However, from a stylistic point of view, cultures are equivalent in value, there being no superior and inferior styles.

In conclusion, Lucian Blaga's philosophy of culture is current through the following major ideas: 1) any form of culture is achieved through the exercise of all human faculties, conscious or unconscious; 2) forms of culture differ from each other by the different degree to which they involve the various subjective faculties; 3) any culture has a universal character and a national stylistic character, national styles being equivalent in value.