Ion Barbu: The Lesson on the Cone

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Abstract

This article is an attempt to read Ion Barbu's "Din ceas dedus"[From Time Deducted..],", the celebrated poem the opens the poet's only volume of poetry, Joc secund *[Second Game] through Bergsonian lenses. The hypothesis we start from is that the generating matrix and the main themes of Barbu's poetics and hermetic poems have their pendants in Bergsonian thinking—the same outright hostility towards contemporary positivism, determinism and causality, some fundamental ideas about time, literary / artistic language, intuition, the nature and function of art, the artist's relation to his work, the nature of the creative process, impersonality in art, shared by both of them. Henri Bergson provided the Ion Barbu with the fertile theoretical foundations, and helped him develop his own teurgical impulse of participating in the dynamic processes of life emerged, which he strongly believed that poetry could stimulate.*

Key words: *Ion Barbu, Henri Bergson, hermetic poetry, intuition, duration, memory, knowledge, art.*

The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life,
by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later,
when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life.
William Faulkner

The untitled poem that opens the first section of *Joc secund* [Second Game] (1930) bears the visible marks of a dramatic change in style, in relation to Ion Barbu's previous poetry--with its cryptic language, torsioned syntax, its lines caught in the corset of a precise rhythmic schemes, yet relatively musical, its minimalist landscape, achieved through the dislocation of ordered thought at the expanse of irrational collage, which some of his critics have associated with the surrealist automatic diction (Constantinescu, 442) --, in an inevitably flat projection of a reality, which, however, possesses both depth and relief:

Din ceas, dedus adâncul acestei calme creste,
Intrată prin oglindă în mântuit azur,
Tăind pe înecarea cirezilor agreste,
În grupurile apei, un joc secund, mai pur.

Nadir latent! Poetul ridică însumarea
De harfe resfirate ce-n zbor invers le pierzi
Și cântec istovește: ascuns, cum numai marea
Meduzele când plimbă sub clopotele verzi.

[From time deducted, the bottom of this calm crest, / Through the mirror thrust into blessing azure, / By drowning the agrestic herds, it carves / In the groups of water, a secondary purer game. // Latent Nadir! The poet raises the sum / Of scattered harps, which in inverse flight you lose, / And struggles to make a song, hidden, like the sea / When it drifts medusas, under their green bells.]

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It is no surprise that, faced with such a shining spectacle, its theme –*the making of the poem* itself, developed, in its essential aspects in the two Alexandrinian tetrachords, and almost explicitly inscribed in the intricate texture of the text („the poet ...struggles to make a song") has practically passed unnoticed. It is not necessary to underline its symbolic significance[1], we shall only mention that, by doing so, the Romanian poet seems to indicate that the wants to create, not a perishable work, yet one the „would place itself among Scriptures", a work that aims at being „a serious meditation on concocting the adventure of Being."("Răsăritul crailor", 176)

The „Calm crest" in which, most of Barbu's exegetes, following George Călinescu' interpretation, now canonical, see in it a symbol of poetry, rules over the unreal landscape, sketched in the first stanza:

> Poetry ("the depth of this calm crest") is an opening ("deducted") in the contingent, („from time") into gratuity („blessing azure"), a second game, like the image of the herd reflected in the water. It is a latent nadir[2] lent, a mirror image of the zenith in the water, a sublimation of lifer through retortion. (892)

However, we have reasons to believe that the situation is somewhat different here. First of all, we must notice that there already exists in the poem a term („song") that almost explicitly identifies poetry. Moreover, if as Călinescu argues, the „nadir" represents poetry, then, the lines „Latent Nadir! The poet raises the sum / Of scattered harps, which in inverse flight you lose, / And struggles to make a song,", becomes utterly confuse, to say the least. This is another reason to reject the idea the „From Time Deducted... offers us a definition of poetry.

What is then „the depth of this calm crest"?

In order to reach an answer, we should firstly focus our attention in the inherent geometry of the figure. Afterwards, by means of an imagine artifice, we should turn it upside down, and complete it with the details form the text: we shall discover, not without surprise, a fundamental image of Bergsonian metaphysics: *the cone of memory*[3], in which poetry and science symbolically meet. Here are the reasons.

In an early review of 1920, with a direct reference to „Bergsonian psychology", Ion Barbu insists that we should understand poetical creation as a „transposition (of the artist) in the centre of some life aspirations", in fact, „virtualities of a hesitating becoming", and „prolong them in an imaginary plane of existence" ("Opera de artă", 1). By these, he most likely understood what the French philosopher calls *duration*, in other words, *continuous, indivisible and unpredictable creation*. Only this already involves memory, which Henri Bergson presents as preservation and accumulation of the past in the present" (*Mind-Energy*,

[1] The poem is one of the few unpublished poems, according to the General; Index, attached at the end of the volume and seems to have been completed only a few weeks before the poet hardened in the manuscript to his editor for publication. It is likely that this is the last poem written by Barbu. Symbolically, it is the Alsop the poem that opens the *Second game*, with which, eighty years ago began the greater adventure in the critical posterity of the writer, to whom the celebrated lines of T. S. Eliot, from *Four Quartets* may serve as an introduction: "In my end is my beginning."

[2] George Călinescu is not however wrong when he thinks of "the calm crest" and "the nadir" as synonymous, that is the fact they have the same referent, only this is not poetry, as we shall demonstrate.

[3] We believe that Ion Barbu did not stop haphazardly on this Bergsonian image. It circumscribes a virtual space, in continuous movement, where normal distinctions no longer operate: one can, for example rise from the base of the cone to its peak, or down from the, the situation does not change. This way, multiple variations of figuration open, the cone being the source of some amazing metaphors (see « The Drowned", „Orbits", „Uncreated", « Gate", « Sacred Wood", „Legend", „Aura", „Mode", „Century", „Margins of evening", „The Star of the Hymn", or « Passed away".

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8). Identical to duration, it is the means by which this primary reality becomes substantial and meaningful for us.

The symbolic, seemingly incongruent representations "From time deducted...", are based on the author's past perceptive experience, which consists, in the Bergsonian interpretation, in relating the objects that surround us to the possible action of our own body upon them („the mirror"): „ *I call matter the aggregate of images, and perception of matter these same images referred to the eventual action of one particular image, my body* [emphasis added]." (*Matter and Memory*, 8)

The experiences we have in relation to our outside reality, turn into knowledge (*connaissance*), comments Jean Hippolyte, in a well-known study on Bergsonian metaphysics, only when they are transposed in to the past, into a new dimension, namely of memory (113). Here, he continues, the distinctions between subject and object blur, so that knowledge become self-knowledge (*savoir de soi).* In this process of interiorizing our lived experience, the past, without losing its individually and originality, transformers itself into essence (122). The formula reminds closely of platonic reminiscence[4], but we can also find echoes of it in the Romanian poet's own statements: "The verse that we bow to", writes Ion Barbu in "Poetica domnului Aghezi" [The Poetics of Mr Arghezi], „proves to be difficult liberty: a world so purified that it mirrors only the figure of our own spirit. A clear act of narcissism" (161). Once stored in memory, spontaneous remembrances preserve themselves intact, in their particularities, yet without any association to time and space, or, as Ion Barbu puts it in his poem, they are „from time deducted". Accompanied by no image, memories (*souvenirs*) are simple forces hidden in the unconscious[5]. They are not completely outside time, yet they no longer obey its action. For this treason, they are pure knowledge (*savoir*) (Hyppolite, 112); they can be contemplated, but not modified. They are, in other words, perfect („thrust into blessing azure"), forming a heterogeneous multiplicity, where differences are only virtually indicated. The is the reason the French philosopher associates them to the unconscious.[6] Nevertheless, the Bergsonian unconscious does not designate, as expected, a psychological reality, but an ontological one, i.e., the Being in itself[7] In addition, the pure past coexists with the present and it functions as a general condition of our current experience--. It is the foundation of our being, and, as we feel, the very substance of the world in which we live" (*Creative Evolution*, 45). It is the past that makes the present pass, and conditions it, not the other way out. The past represents, in the Romanian poet's own words, „our general background of freedom, the ultimate Rembrandtian colour, the irreducible animal of light." ("Evoluția poeziei lirice", 163). The problem that raises now is how does this pure virtuality actualize itself, how does it change, form an existence in itself, into an *existence for us*.

The manner in which memory works, in its spontaneous functioning is detailed by Henri Bergson, in *Matter and Memory* (1896), an explanation which he supplemented with the celebrated image of the cone of memory: as a cone turned upside down „SAB", symbolizing regressive memory, whose apex cuts into a plane "P", representing "my actual representation of the universe" (196). Planes AB, A'B' și A"B", designate various ideal (virtual)[8] levels of

[4] We have her a characteristic feature that differentiates Bergsonism form Platonism, which is first of all, a vision of the general.

[5] Which, however, must not be taken for the Freudian unconscious either.

[6] Gilles Deleuze, 96, insists that "we must take this terminology, seriously: The possible has no reality (although it may have an actuality); conversely. the virtual is not actual. but *as such possesses a reality*."

[7] Compare (*Creative Evolution*, 45): "We perceive duration *as a stream* against which we cannot go. It is *the foundation of our being*, and, as we feel, the very substance of the world in which we live (emphasis added)."

[8] *Idem*, p. 371: "These planes, moreover, are not given as ready-made things superposed the one on the other. Rather

they exist virtually, with that existence which is proper to things of the spirit. The intellect, for ever moving in the interval which separates them, unceasingly finds them again, or creates them anew: the life of intellect consists in

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the depths of the memory, in relation to S (the present). Each and every mental plane contains the totality of a persons' past, only in different degrees of contraction, or tension, around some dominant memories, that vary from one plane to the other. The problem of human character leads Bergson to the idea that *memory preserves itself completely in itself*, and not in the brain, which acts only as an interface between spirit (soul) and mater (body), prolonging the movement of the former, and thus continuously generating a new, unpredictable reality, in relation to the totality of our past, so that each and every moment of our lives is different form the one that precedes it, and each of us is, to a certain extent, an artist, i.e. a creator. Our oldest memories lie at the base "AB" of the cone („the depths of this calm crest")[9], at the apex "S" of the cone, we have the image of the body, that concentrates in a mathematical point, it is the very location of present action[10]. At every moment, the present divides itself in two directions, the former dilated and oriented towards the past (*memoires-souvenirs*), the later, contracted and oriented towards the future. Bergson also adds that the apex of the cone advances systematically[11], and that memories from the various regions of regressive memory advance towards the vertex, in other words, they move uninterruptedly between *contemplation* and *action*. In addition, the movement of the cone is double. On the other hand, as memories descend, the apex of the cone advances into the plane of the present representation of the material world. A second step then follows: the cone rotates. This movement expands and relates contiguous memories. As soon as memories are fixed into images, the cone contracts" the movement of contraction narrows or diminishes personal memories-images and pushed them towards the point of the cone (*Matter and Memory*, 220). Since, by contraction, the differences between memories diminish, they turn into general and impersonal images, so that they may correspond to the present perceptions of action; here, at the top, we have only habitudes, which are contracted through repetition and react only to things that resemble. Through language, they turn into *general ideas, concepts*. This way, we obtain only conventional answers, meant to satisfy our need to control the environment in which we live (what Bergson calls *attention to life*. We live conformably, reading only the labels of things: "Between nature and ourselves, nay, between ourselves and our own consciousness a veil interposed: a veil that is dense and opaque for the common herd,—thin, almost transparent, for the artist and the poet" (*Laughter,* 151). The true reality, of life i.e. duration, escapes us. For this reason, we usually live in a sort of permanent exile.

On the other hand, „the blessed azure", evoking subtly „le vierge Azur", „Au ciel antérieur où fleurit la Beauté" of Stéphane Mallarmé (12), reminds us that, for our author, poetic creation involves „recovery, through the most recluse act of recollection of a lost sense of beauty" ("Evoluția poeziei lirice", 164) which, though a disinterested, superhuman, act of cognition, only the true poet, thanks to a sort of divine gift, is capable of achieving. „The agrestic herds" do not refer, as is generally accepted, to instinctual life, yet *to instinct as a form of internal knowledge* of the world. By contrast, the „drowning", evokes the series of successive operations by means of which this experience is achieved: suspension of the functions characteristic of practical conscience, the separation the sensible qualities of the object from personal duration, by means of which the poet focuses only on the object of his attention, in

this very movement." The data of experience prompts Bergson towards the conception of a pure memory, which preserves indistinctly in itself, not in eh brain, all the temporal moments, though which a sensation turns, by mans of consciousness into merely of something, that is a unique, individual synthesis.

[9] The image could also designate, the Barbu's power, this level and not only the depts. practically infinite of the of the cone of memory.

[10] The image of the cone exemplifies, on the other hand, the relation *cont*ent (body) and *container* (memory), on the other hand, the coexistence of the resent with the past.

[11] Barbu uses the paradox of the movement the intellect (which Bergson compares to a pendulum) to explore different meanings, ostomies opposed to this one.

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order to perceive it in itself, as Bergson puts it, „and not in us" (*Matter and Memory*, 38), an aspect the reminds us the mystical purgation as well. It is, in other words, a sensible perception, capable of reflecting on itself and which can make us feel the true reality of things. Barbu's syntagm („through the drawing of agrestic herds") suggests *intuition*, as a form of cognition from inside of the absolute: "But it is to the very inwardness of life that intuition leads us, by intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely" (*Creative Evolution*, 194). Artistic intuition, therefore, allows us to reconnect with the primary pulse of life. By means of it, our consciousness perceives external objects *sub specie durationis*, shedding light on those aspects that are characteristic of it: succession, continuity, qualitative multiplicity. In *aesthetic intuition,* the knowing *subject* (the poet) and the *object* of knowledge (which is not a thing, but an act, i.e. the current of continuous creation) imaginatively fuse, through a sort of intellectual sympathy[12], vibrating in unison. By means of an intense effort of introspection—the depths of the vision depend on the tensions of consciousness --, thus emerges an integrating modality of understanding and interpreting things, flashing, yet evanescent, „a spiritualty of sight" as Ion Barbu calls it, in „The Vigil of Roderick Usher (Paraphrase)" ("Veghea", 214), which claims less the resources of his sight, and more those of his mind, because, as in the mystical experience, there is nothing to see there. *The real is not given in advance, it is created, in accordance with the artist's and the work's of art particular durations*.

"If man accedes to the open creative totality", notes Gilles Deleuze, commenting on a passage from Bergson, „it is therefore by acting, by creating, rather than by contemplating" [Si l'homme accède à la totalité créatrice ouverte c'est donc en agissant, en créant, plutôt qu'en contemplant.] (|118:) Mute contemplation produces nothing. At the limit, the poet might lose himself in pure reverie, and then his vision would dissipate into nothingness if the same intellectual sympathy did not simultaneously generate a feeling (*La pensée et le mouvant*, 1394), or a *creative emotion*, as Bergson calls this aspect, in his last important work, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (1932). No matter the appellative, a feature defines both, namely "an exigency to create" that translates into an attitude suitable for poetic invention[13]. Only then,

> when we have placed ourselves at what we have called the turn of experience [=creative emotion], when we have profited by the faint light which, illuminating the passage from the immediate to the useful, marks the dawn of our human experience, there still remains to be reconstituted, with the infinitely small elements which we thus perceive of the real curve, the curve itself stretching out into the darkness behind them. (*Matter and Memory*, 241, 242).

No explicit reference is made in Barbu's poem to this aspect, perhaps because the text itself unfolds the process by means of which emotion materializes into images. In it, no distinctions are valid because it is the very location (=the origin) where all differences emerge from: „ As to the original theme, it is everywhere and nowhere. It is in vain that we try to express it in terms of any idea: it must have been, originally, felt rather than thought." (*Creative Evolution*, 189)

We are now in a position to reconstruct the stages of the creative process that lies undisclosed behind Ion Barbu's poem.

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[12] Henri Bergson, *La pensée et le mouvant*, 1395: "Nous appelons ici intuition la *sympathie* par laquelle on se transporte à l'intérieur d'un objet pour coïncider avec ce qu'il a d'unique et par conséquent d'inexprimable. "

[13] Cf Gilles Deleuze, 117 : "une Mémoire cosmique, qui actualise à la fois tous le nivéaux. Qui libère l'homme du plan ou du niveau qui lui est propre, pour en faire un créateur, adéquat a tout le mouvement de la création. "

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Thus, in a first movement, guided only by emotion and the idea of his own character, the poet turns to himself and places himself, through a *sui generis* imaginative jump[14], in the deepest zones of his own self—those of the dream („the depth of this calm crest"), where singular memories lie –art is, we should not forget this, a representation of the individual, not of the general --, to find and recover, from there, by dint of a sort of platonic reminiscence, the flux of light, weak and remote, virtually invisible, which the past casts and which helps to give original meaning to his actual experience. Only, in order to view himself as creator, the poet's self must unify, through an effort of volition, the requirements present action with those of memory. To this end, the poet places himself first in the past, then in a certain zone of it, recuperating by means of an undivided image (what Bergson calls „dynamic scheme"), his whole personal past, in a form that is more or less contracted, depending on the needs of present experience.

However, while matter repeats the past, spirit „imagines it" (*Matter and Memory*, 297-298). Therefore, through a series of conscious operations, the qualitative multiplicity of fusion of the past *actualizes*, through differentiation, into *images*, in the special meaning that Henri Bergson gives to the term,[15] in other words, it „takes on a psychological existence" (Deleuze, 57), each of them preserving, under a certain aspect, like an aura that accompanies it, the Whole form which it emerges from.

Returning, in a second movement, to normal perception, the imagination of the poet now cuts („cutting"), in the plane of immediate reality (=of life)[16], that is „in the groups of water"—„ "this ocean of life, in which we are immersed" (*Creative Evolution*, 210), a new reality, different for the utilitarian one, in accordance with the inner history of things and of the self, reducing the multiplicity of the qualitative aspects of objects to the elementary element that generates them.[17] More precisely, he unites them through condensation and contraction, and inscribes them into the rhythm of his own historical duration. The latter, like pure memory, conditions, yet it does not determine the present act[18]. The process has a certain circularity (hence the idea of "game"), and presupposes the mutual accommodation of the impulse coming from the past, with the necessities of the present. Nonetheless, something new and unpredictable always results from this; it bears the marks of the conditions that generated it, without being entirely shaped by them. This way, the poet removes the veil, woven by our

[14] Let us not forget that for Bergson, aesthetic perception is a process of actualization, through which a set of images from the past, connected either metaphorically or metonymically, are called to interpret the sensorial data coming from the outer world and to formulate the subject's answer to them, usually an image of spontaneous memory which allows him to suspend time, automatisms and thus respond creatively. Form the first moments of the perceptive act, a scheme of actualization of virtual memory is provided in an image of memory, and those that are not directly attached to concrete perception, remain in a region of memory called dream (rêve).

[15] *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 66: "Par « image » nous entendons une certaine existence qui est plus que ce que l'idéaliste appelle une représentation, mais moins que ce que la réaliste appelle une chose, – une existence située à mi-chemin entre la « chose » et la « représentation »".

[16] Henri Bergson (*Creative Evolution*, 514, 515), defines the group as follows: "In a word, the group must not be defined by the possession of certain characters, but by its tendency to emphasize them." We must add that this definition does not exclude, even presupposes the meanings the terms has in mathematics, and to which most likely Ion Barbu alludes to.

[17] Compare (*La pensée et le mouvant*, 1283): "Qu'est-ce que le « mobile » auquel notre œil attache le mouvement, comme à un véhicule ? Simplement une tâche colorée, dont nous savons bien qu'elle se réduit, en elle-même, à une série d'oscillations extrêmement rapides. Ce prétendu mouvement d'une chose n'est en réalité qu'un mouvement de mouvements".

[18] Henri Bergson (*Creative Evolution*, 7) argues that artistic invention is the expression of the whole personality of the artist: "our past remains present to us. What are we, in fact, what is our character, if not the condensation of the history that we have lived from our birth nay, even before our birth, since we bring with us prenatal dispositions?" Pure character emerges out so its own past m without stippling in the past, because it transforms itself continuously, together with our whole duration.

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utilitarian knowledge, without being able to completely eradicate it. This is perhaps the reason why the poet's aesthetic perception is only purer than the former. Born out of the interruption of the poet's imaginative impulse, fixed in the materiality of representations into which he has inscribed the *gratuity* or *indetermination* (=freedom) of his own spirit, poetic creation is a "second game", the primary game being that of utilitarian intelligence. The four variants of the poem, which have come down to us, point out the dissociative, discontinuous, and not linear nature of the process of creation: while some solutions seem to have emerged directly form a simple movement, such as the lines „And struggles to make a song, hidden, like the sea / When it drifts medusas, under their green bells.]." (see Barbu, *Opere,* I : 499), others underwent dramatic transformations, thus convincingly illustrating the process of the poet's internal, continuous clarification.

The poet therefore turns to the vague („latent") depths of his own soul, towards the base of the cone of memory („nadir"), the space of virtual singularities, whose energy (=„obscure light"), and attempts to recuperate, in order to understand current experience. Poetic creation develops centripetally from the tension specific of the initial emotion[19], which dissociates itself by differentiating itself, alongside divergent lines of action, firstly into undivided images or *dynamic schemes* („scattered harps"), similarly to a musical theme with variations, afterwards, in independent representations: "When a musician strikes a note on an instrument, other notes start up of themselves, not so loud as the first, yet connected with it by certain definite relations, which coalesce with it and determine its quality. These are what are called in physics the overtones of the fundamental note" (Bergson, *Laughter*, 55). As with a photograph, in art, the author acts like the developing solution which makes the undivided, hidden image take shape. However, in art, matter does not simply "pour into form, it crystalizes in it" (Vianu, 178). This is an important remark, because it points out the necessity of continuous, mutual adaptation of the experiential material to form and vice versa (which only emphasizes the idea of „game"). By means of this movement, the poet passes from the lived experience to its symbolic expression („raising", or better, „raising to thought", as Ion Barbu puts it in „The Vigil of Roderick Usher", actualizes, by means of language, those „familiar essences"[20] (=heterogeneous, virtual multiplicities of fusion), into isolated, juxtaposed representations. Spirit and matter are but contrary and complementary aspects of a more profound reality, the *vital impulse*, only, as in mathematics, they are of opposed signs. *Spirit*, which means tension, uninterrupted creations, symbolically moves upwards. *Matter*, on the other hand, frees this creative force through continuous differentiation. In *La pensée et le mouvant,* Bergson speaks of „the retrograde movement of truth" [le mouvement rétrograde du vrai] (1253), characteristic of intelligence. Somewhere else, the French philosopher, says explicitly: „life is a movement, materiality is the inverse movement, and each of these two movements is simple, the matter which forms a world being an undivided flux, and undivided also the life that runs through it,

[19] This is how Henri Bergson describes the procees (*Creative Evolution,* 348): „The *generative idea of a poem* is developed in thousands of imaginations which are materialized in phrases that spread themselves out in words. And the more we descend from the motionless idea, wound on itself, to the words that unwind it, the more room is left for contingency and choice. Other metaphors, expressed by other words, might have arisen; an image is called up by an image, a word by a word. All these words run now one after another, seeking in vain, by themselves, to give back the simplicity of the generative idea. Our ear only hears the words: it therefore perceives only accidents. But our mind, by successive bounds, leaps from the words to the images, from the images to the original idea, and so gets back, from the perception of words accidents called up by accidents to the conception of the Idea that posits its own being. So the philosopher proceeds, confronted with the universe. Experience makes to pass before his eyes phenomena which run, they also, one behind another in an accidental order determined by circumstances of time and place. This physical order a degeneration of the logical order is nothing else but the fall of the logical into space and time (emphasis added)."

[20] In „Paul B. Marian : De vorbă cu Ion Barbu" (1929), 143, the poet speaks of „mental discontinuity of soul events".

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cutting out in it living beings all along its track. Of these two currents the second runs counter to the first, but the first obtains, all the same, something from the second. There results between them a modus vivendi, which is organization. (*Creative evolution*, 272) Paraphrasing an Bergsonian observation, we could, define the poem as „a reality which is making itself (=the text) in a reality which is unmaking itself (=emotion) (*idem*, 270). The passage from spirituality (=action), to materiality (=interruption of action) is achieved through an inversion („inverse flight"), which is not, as it may look at first sight, a change of direction, but a change of state, in time, degradation of action into repose: "are not the original lines drawn by the artist themselves already the fixation and, as it were, *congealment of a movement*? (*idem*, 261, emphasis added). The idea is further developed by Henri Bergson in *Mind-Energy*:

> The effort of recall consists in converting a schematic idea, whose elements interpenetrate, into an imaged idea, the parts of which are juxtaposed. (203)
> […] The intellectual effort to interpret, to comprehend, to pay attention, is then a movement of the dynamic scheme" in the direction of the image which develops it. (210).
> […] The feeling of effort, in intellection, is produced on the passage from the scheme to the image. […] Invention consists precisely in converting the scheme into image. (211)

While, through intuition, the poet captures the essence of things in themselves and becomes one with it, intelligence intervenes afterwards to give conceptual meaning this this experience: intuition perceives the truth, intelligence offers verification (Bergson, *Introduction à la métaphysique*, 1424). Paul Valéry thinks in the same way: „It is impossible that o poem should contain only poetry. If a piece contains only poetry, it is not constructed; it is not a *poem.*" [Si un poème ne contienne que poésie est impossible. Si une pièce ne contient que *poésie,* elle n'est pas construite ; elle n'est pas un *poème.*] (Littérature", 552.) In his turn, along the same line of thought, the Romanian poet also insists that poetry is „also a work of volition and discrimination" ("Legenda şi somnul în poezia lui Blaga", 172).

Judging by the rough surface of Barbu's poem, we are left with the impression that the unity of things is lost fore ever. It is not so: it exists, only it some vis *a tergo* and must be sought for in the process that generated the poem itself. The proof of the participation of art in the essence of existence (=duration), consists in inventing, starting from an individual emotion[21], an individual, unpredictable reality, i.e. the work of art, and inscribing in its materiality, the poet's individual duration, which thus it unifies and defines (Worms, 163). In this manner, poetical creation configures a world (which we could call barbian), an organic structure, which recuperates some of the essential date of the world in which we live, and which could become a substitute of the former, because it expresses the individual's freedom[22]. Hence, perhaps, the original title of the text: „Style".[23]

The artist confronts himself with an unsurmountable task, yet in order to honour his „call", he must do whatever he can to bring it to a successful end („and struggles to make a song"):

[21] Ion Barbu, „Poezie lenească", în *Versuri şi proză*, 1984, p. 168: "Love enters only in the exhaustive song, in the curved and hermetical spaces of the verse, they alone, keep it as a universe before us."

[22] Henri Bergson (*Données immédiates*, 113) : "Bref, nous sommes libres quand nos actes éminents de notre personnalité entière, quand ils l'expriment, quand ils ont avec elle cette indéfinissable ressemblance qu'on trouve parfois entre l'œuvre et l'artiste."

[23] The title fits perfectly if, together with Albert Thibaudet, (II : 177), we understand by *style* "l'ordre et le mouvement qu'on met dans ses pensées" , not « des pensées, ni des phrases, ni des mots"

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> Thought which is only thought, the work of art which is only conceived, the poem which is no more than a dream, as yet cost nothing in toil; it is the material realization of the poem in words, of the artistic conception in statue or picture, which demands effort. The effort is toilsome, but also it is precious, more precious even than the work which it produces, because, thanks to it, one has drawn out from the self more than it had already, we are raised above our selves. This effort was impossible without matter. By the resistance matter offers and by the docility with which we endow it, is at one and the same time obstacle, instrument and stimulus. It experiences our force, keeps the imprint of it, calls for its intensification. (*Mind-Energy*, 28-29)

The lived experience is so ineffable that ordinary language, adapted to the pragmatic necessities of life, cannot encompass it, only some images, could eventually suggest it[24]. Shaped according to the needs of a *sensus communis*, it distorts the pure, individual perception that art aims at: „Thus, even in our own individual, individuality escapes our ken. We move amidst generalities and symbols, as within a tilt-yard in which our force is effectively pitted against other forces ; and fascinated by action, tempted by it, for our own good, on to the field it has selected, we live in a zone midway between things and ourselves, externally to things, externally also to ourselves" (*Laughter*, 154). We do not perceive things in their original purity. However, this distancing form the world is never complete, not even in the artist's case. Bergson explains: "Were this detachment complete, did the soul no longer cleave to action by any of its perceptions, it would be the soul of an artist such as the world has never yet seen. It would excel alike in every art at the same time; or rather, it would fuse them all into one. It would perceive all things in their native purity: the forms, colours, sounds of the physical world as well as the subtlest movements of the inner life" (*Laughter*, 154-155).

„Yet the writer", Henri Bergson comments, „will attempt to realize the unrealizable." (*The Two Sources*, 217-218) In his turn, Ion Barbu insists: "the Pythagorean frenzy needs being expressed. The sky of crystals, transposed. The problem of distributing a qualitative light— looks almost insoluble. How will you realize the immanent, in what manner will you remove the placate" [extazul pitagorician trebuie manifestat. Cerul cristalelor transpus. Problema de distribuire a unei lumini calitative — se ridică aproape insolubile. În ce chip vei realiza imanentul, în ce chip vei înlătura placatul"?]

As paradoxically as it may seem, what allows art to bridge the gap that separates, for practical reasons, reality from us, is *language* itself. The word, as an instrument of human intelligence, created to act upon matter in order to control it, differs from other instruments built by man „through its possibility if humanization, its vitality, and spontaneity*"*, attributes "that are them delegated to its poetical part [„mais cet outil diffère des autres par une possibilité d'humanisation, de vitalité, de spontanéité auxquelles est comme déléguée toute la partie poétique du langage] (Thibaudet, I :57). Thus, the artist overcomes the automatism of daily life, creating, as Bergson puts it, „an instrument of freedom", „a machine" that "triumphs over mechanism" (*Creative Evolution*, 288). To this end, he must do violence to language, disseminating some of the meanings in the poem's syntax, imagery, etc. ("Note pentru o mărturisire literară", 144-145). With Ion Barbu, the hermetic character of the work of art directly derives from the needs of visionary projection; it is not a simple gratuitous game. It cannot be: „It is indeed equally dangerous if the obscurity derives from the insufficiency of the reader or of the poet... but eluding this effort means cheating.*"* [C'est, en effet, également dangereux, soit que l'obscurité vienne de l'insuffisance du lecteur, soit de celle du poète... mais

[24] In the sense the French author uses the term in *Matter and Memory*, vii-vii: "And by ' Image ' we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less than that which the realist calls a thing, an existence placed half-way between the 'thing ' and the 'representation."

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c'est tricher que d'éluder ce travail] (qtd. by Loyd, 104). We also believe that the explanation that Barbu gives to this problem in his conference on Jean Moréas (202-209) fully expresses his own intentions, in this regard.

This is not however the meaning that Ion Barbu intended in „From Time Deducted". The poem does not however communicate the author's intuitions to the reader directly, but indirectly, through its effect(s). The *universality* of the work of art resides in the *effect* it produces on others:

> What the artist has seen we shall probably never see again, or at least never see in exactly the same way; but if he has actually seen it, the attempt he has made to lift the veil compels our imitation. His work is an example which we take as a lesson. And the efficacy of the lesson is the exact standard of the genuineness of the work. Consequently, truth bears within itself a power of conviction, nay, of conversion, which is the sign that enables us to recognise it. The greater the work and the more profound the dimly apprehended truth, the longer may the effect be in coming, but, on the other hand, the more universal will that effect tend to become. *So the universality here lies in the effect produced, and not in the cause* (emphasis added). (*Laughter,* 163-164)

We find the same idea, whose luminary point is the Poesque theory of the *poetic sentiment*, in Paul Valéry: „The poets function is … not to feel the poetic state: this is a private matter. *His function is to create it in others* [emphasis added." [Un poète – ne soyez pas choqué de mon propos – n'a pas pour fonction de ressentir l'état poétique: ceci est une affaire privée. Il a pour fonction de le créer chez les autres.] ("Poésie et pensée abstraite", 668)

The „hidden" song in Barbu's poem, designates the deep reality to which the poem gives life, through the dynamics of its imagery, and the complex relationships established among its various elements| (meanings, syntax, etc.), similarly to a melody, essence of which derives from the reality of individual sounds, without however identifying with them. This way, the beauty and intricacy of the final comparison becomes obvious ("like the sea / When it drifts medusas, under their green bells"), since it seems to evoke the multiplication of the vital impulse, which the text contains, into a large number (possibly infinite) of individual movements,[25] in the act of reading. Poetic symbols and metaphors transform into temporal images, into "vibrations on the spot" (*Matter and Memory*, 276), they become capable of communicating the durative character of the movement, which is its very quintessence. Springing from an integratory perception of the world, and by contracting in itself an infinite number of other possible forms that interpenetrate, from which, the poet selects only some, the true *poetic form radiates*. Such a miraculous result can be achieved through an intense effort of invention only: „Perfection" says Paul Valéry, „means toil." [Perfection c'est *travail*] (*Œuvres*, II, p. 553). We have no doubt our continuous fascination with this text, in particular, and with Ion Barbu's hermetic poetry, in general, springs from its power of bringing us closer to the very mystery that shrouds life itself.

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[25] This way, it reveals the formative dimension of art - « créer de créateurs", (*see* Henri Bergson, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, 1192).

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