THE ROMANIAN SPIRIT AND THE EUROPEAN MODEL IN CONSTANTIN NOICA'SPHILOSOPHY

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Abstract:The main aim of this paper is to reflect the Romanian spirit in comparison with different European models as reflected in Constantin Noica's philosophy. The research was carried out during the 4 year Ph.D preparation period and emphasizes the role that Constantin Noica had during one of the most turbulent periods in the Romanian history. The Romanian spirit between East and West is still a debatable issue. Stereotyping Romanians as being part of a small and inferior culture, living in a social, political and historical minorate, impossible to compare with the well-known and developed European cultures was an issue that bothered Constantin Noica who wanted to prove that the Romanian culture is entitled to the top-cultures group due to the following reasons. First of all, Lucian Blaga, Mircea Vulcănescu, Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica described a Romanian reality based on the language and the culture they belong to, being always guided by the religious factor – the sine qua non condition of the Romanian essence. Concepts like culture vs. civilisation, race vs. nationality will be discussed with reference to Oswald Spengler, Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger's theories. Secondly, the European cultures as pragmatic spirits have always emphasized the question: What is Romania?, What is a small culture? and the answers focused on minimizing aspects like Romania is a small culture, a second culture which lives its destiny in a social, political and historical minorate or, in other words, Romania bears the stamp of historical blemish. Constantin Noica believes that stereotyping is a characteristic of top cultures. Moreover, Constantin Noica considers that the question was incorrectly asked. Following Martin Heidegger's theories What is Romania? must be replaced with Who is Romania? and the perspective changes. The national component in Constantin Noica's philosophy is the result of a total way of rethinking the Romanian spirit, by identifying the reasons that led to the continuous marginalization of Romania. In all his books about the Romanian realities, he tried to answer the question Who is Romania? Romania is a place where silence specificity echoed in faith, a chronotop where the fatalism combines with cathartic serenity, and humility and modesty make souls talking to angels .
We built a split identity because of the inferiority complex that we have created/ those who were the actors of a history that has never had patience with us.

Keywords: national identity, culture, Romanian philosophy, European models, marginalization

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Because of youth articles, Constantin Noica was and, unfortunately, is still considered a nationalist philosopher. His nationalism was built around notions like individuals/human beings and nation and one of Constantin Noica's obsessions was the national/nation destiny.

Many of his writings converge towards a Romanian reality easily identified in language: *Pagini despre sufletul românesc* or *Cuvânt împreună despre rostirea românească* or *Creaţie şi frumos în rostirea românească.* The denigratory trend towards Constantin Noica, spoke of an impropriety of these writings, considering them "order books" (books written because the communist party asked for them). In reality, these books were born out of a deep sense of Romanian spirit, and not the shortcomings of a system devoided of any moral and intellectual value. These are books where you get the feeling that in Romania there is still that *something* that can be changed, that exile is just a dream of *will bebeing*, that in reality, the pride of being born Romanian is not a misfortune, but it must remain a pride, positively valued, to the end.

Always being a bridge between East and West, Romania's destiny was torn out from the very beginning. Emil Cioran was talking about our historical misfortune and the need for an historic leap so that Romanians could be able to enrol and follow the large European countries' destinies. It's the never ending debate between small cultures and large cultures. All this underperformance that has been characterizing Romania for centuries was Cioran's existential sadness. He was the most stubborn member of his generation (generation '27) - continually rising against the country's second culture destiny. More honest with himself and with others, open fully within the reality, given the fact that he lived in and within a Romanian language and reality, Noica thought that Romanians haven't missed anything. Cioran's negativity becomes in case of Noica a valuable tool for identifying the language and its unlimited philosophical traits. In this social, political and historical minorate, Lucian Blaga, Mircea Vulcănescu and Constantin Noica described a Romanian reality, impossible to spot in other cultures. According to Oswald Spengler, a small culture as compared to a large culture can be defined as the result of a split level which happened in the high/large cultures due to a will to power, based on Nietzsche's model.

For Spengler, a superior culture "has a soul. [...] The superior culture means the awakened being of a unique and exceptional body, which changes not only customs, myths, technology, art, but also races, and social classes as being representatives of a comprehensive formal language having a "unitary history"[1]and continues "a lot of inner experience was developed by power, by Faust's vital force, experiences that could have never been reached; because we continuously add to the most remote events, meanings and relationships that could not exist for all, even for those who have lived them; that is why today many things have an exact historical sense to us, in other words they have a life that is in harmony with our life"[2].

[1] Spengler, Oswald (1996:47), *Declinul Occidentului*. Schiţă de morfologie a istoriei. Prima parte: Formă şi realitate. Traducerea Ioan Lascu. Editura Beladi, Craiova.
[2] idem, ibidem, p.62.

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Spengler's influence in the Romanian philosophy is also visible in the debate between *culture* and *civilization*. Spengler believes that the rapport between high/large cultures and second/small cultures has to be defined with the help of racial theory. From this point of view, he explains the decline of the West recognizing that there is only one true culture – German culture - , perceived as a living organism that is born, lives, dies and bears in its depths the theory of races. To Oswald Spengler, the racial factor has a decisive role in conditioning a culture. From this point of view, he identifies an extremely clear distinction between culture and civilization. To Spengler, culture means traditional values, art, literature, religion (the spiritual matrix of a people), while civilization involves only economic, material, technical, scientific and even political aspects. Spengler identifies a key element in the distinction between culture and civilization: the religious factor: "Religion is the essence of any culture, and no religion is the essence of any civilization"[3] . But in reality, things are not so simple. The religious factor is perceived as a sine qua non condition in defining the spiritual matrix of Romanians by Nae Ionescu or Nichifor Crainic. Constantin Noica in *Pagini despre sufletul românesc*, refers to the national identity taking into consideration the spiritual matrix. Spengler's influence is easily recognized in Tudor Vianu, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru or Dumitru Drăghicescu' writings. Spengler's model was borrowed and accepted, up to a point. For example, Tudor Vianu in *Studii de filozofia culturii*, admits Spengler's model but he totally disagrees with the assumption that highlights the role of the racial factor in identifying and conditioning a culture. He replaced race with nationality and he was right because in the 20th century philosophy the emphasis will be on nationality rather than race. Race as a concept - an operating factor in Spengler's philosophy and associated to German culture, has deep insertions in Friedrich Nietzsche's nihilistic philosophy. Nietzsche introduces the Superior Man's morale who considers himself as being God against the herd man, led by aspirations that, for Nietzsche, have no basis in reality. He aims to remove this herd instinct which, for him, means a disease and determine the true relationships to another level of coherence: "the modern Europe herd man wants to be perceived as being part of a unique species who believes itself as being entitled to live; the herd man highlights his qualities – docility and sociability – due to he is useful to the herd, qualities that he believes to be true human virtues: community spirit/herd spirit, kindness, consideration, industriousness, temperance, modesty, indulgence, compassion [...] Europe's morale nowadays is a herd animal morale [...] it is only a certain kind of human morale beside which, prior to which, following which, it is, or should be possible many other ways, and above all, higher rank morals."[4] The objective man is no longer a value; he must be abandoned to the outskirts of the world, his place being taken by the master. For Nietzsche there is neither a genuine moral nor clear boundaries between good and evil; he depicts the image of a Superior man, made up of contradictions and paradox, being the result of the ego forcening. There are two alternatives: to destroy (inferior race) or to impose (master race). It is clear that the typology of races used by Spengler is strongly influenced by Nietzsche's nihilistic philosophy.

[3] idem, ibidem., p.493.
[4] Nietzsche, Friedrich (1992:106), *Dincolo de bine şi de rău*. Preludiu la o istorie a viitorului. Traducere din limba germană de Francisc Grunberg. Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti.

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Spengler's distinction between culture and civilization seems to be extremely simple in the sense that, over time, philosophers have defined this rapport as one of interdependence and not establishing clear limits between the two concepts, otherwise extremely slippery. You can not talk about culture without talking about civilization and vice versa. The contradiction has worked in our junimism, sămănătorim, gândirism periods as a sort of continuation of Maiorescu phenomenon - acceptance or rejection of form without substance. Spengler claimed that civilization succeeds culture, being the sign of its decadence, hence the decline of the West and the signs crisis in the twentieth century.

Constantin Rădulescu-Motru was influenced by Spengler's theory giving his own interpretation. To Rădulescu-Motru, culture is right after civilization, and, as in the case of other Romanian philosophers, culture and civilization need to coexist, thus inverting the whole theory of Nietzsche. "Culture and civilization - this living body of a soul and its mummy. This is the difference between Western existence before and after 1800, abundance and balanced life, on the one hand [...] and on the other hand, this twilight, artificial, uprooted life specific to metropolitan areas, whose forms are some intellect blanks. Culture and civilization - this mechanism born from the landscape and the mechanism resulted from its petrified body. The culture man has a life directed inside, while the soul of the civilized man is headed towards outside, to the outer space, to bodies and facts"[5], this is what Spengler claimed. Furthermore, Spengler adds: "Culture's morale is the one that we have, civilization's morale is what we seek. The first is too deep to be ended through the logical path, the second is a function of logic"[6] similar to what Constantin Noica believed. In the article *Logica naţională*, Noica associates the concept of *freedom* to the one of *logic* in a way that may seem paradoxical today: "Life is a time of reality. Logic is a reply of the people to what they are offered. Life is and is given to us. Logic is what we give, our real contribution to setting up the world."[7]

Speaking about nation and country identity, Noica identifies the national aspect. From this point of view, he makes use of two syntagms: *national life* vs. *national logic*. Noica strongly believes that one cannot speak about the national aspect without taking into consideration these two aspects. Both Spengler and Noica believe that a nation is a living body that is born, lives and dies: "I make the distinction between the idea of a culture that is the sum of its internal opportunities/possibilities and its sensitive phenomenon in its historical image. This is the rapport between the soul and the living body; it is their expression inside the universal which is visible to us. The history of a culture is the progressive accomplishment of its possibilities" and Noica continues in *Logica naţională*, a nation exists as any body "as any other energy forms of life [...] A body can not live without a balanced provision of its component parts, without mutual cooperation and solidarity of those parties, in a word, without a general organization of its being.[...]"[8]

[5] Spengler, Oswald, idem, ibidem, p.484
[6] idem, ibidem, p.486
[7] Noica, Constantin (1930:73), *Logica naţională* în *Acţiune şi reacţiune* II/1930. Caiete semestriale de sinteză naţională în cadrul sec. XX. Scrise de Petru Comarnescu, Ion Jianu, Constantin Noica, Mihail Polihroniade, Bucureşti.
[8] idem, ibidem, p.80

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While morale is a spiritual act that exceeds the matter, aesthetics is presented as an act that defines "a capricious attitude, settled on the edge of life, refreshing it by mood, with new meanings. And communities may not adopt this position and attitude. Individuals may require life values because they can think of them and have the freedom to decide. [...] Nations are superstitious. They have the essence superstition, low speed and created world instead of creating world"[9].

The national component of Constantin Noica's philosophy is strongly influenced by Mircea Vulcănescu and his philosophical masterpiece *Dimensiunea românească a existenţei*, by the writings of Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, Eugen Lovinescu, Lucian Blaga and Tudor Vianu. The national component in Noica's philosophy is determined by the following antonymic pairs: large/high cultures vs. small/second cultures, nationalistic politics vs. national politics, and inner purpose vs. outer purpose. Constantin Noica's philosophy is also the result of Martin Heidegger and Friedrich Hegel's influence. Up to a point insertions from Plato and Aristotle are also easily recognized.

From Mircea Vulcănescu's philosophy, the mentor of *fire generation* (as it was called by Dan Puric), Noica borrowed the complexity of thought, how to take responsibility for your thoughts and also the pleasure of making philosophy. "He undoes the language, turns the words on all sides, twists and afflicts hem, endeavours and keeps asking them, hoping that, in this way, he will find out something about the deeper and more specific structures of the Romanian way of being in the world".[10]

From Heidegger's philosophy, Constantin Noica borrowed the idea of building up identity with reference to two fundamental questions: *What is Romania?* vs. *Who is Romania?* Around these two questions the whole idiomatic typology is conducted in Noica's philosophy. The difference between us and the Europeans is given by the rapport between questioning and inquiring. Being an exceptionally pragmatic spirit, the European spirit has always put emphasis on the question: What is Romania?, and the answers were focused around a core of minimization; Romania is a small culture; it is a second culture, that lives its destiny in a social, political and historical minorate, or, in other words, Romania bears the stamp of historical blemish. Stereotyping is a characteristic of top cultures. On the other hand, the question was wrongly asked; according to Heidegger, the emphasis must be on the inquirer: Who is Romania? and then the perspective changes.

The national component in Noica's philosophy was born as the result of an entire rethinking, essentially spiritual, of the Romanian soul. His philosophy is a continuation of the ideas expressed by Mircea Vulcănescu, a philosophy which sought to ensure the unity of mind, "to express the universal forms of the Romanian soul, in other words, to find authentic forms of life suitable to this people, from politics to theology, philosophy, literature, science and art, and to shine in the eyes of the whole world as samples of a unique specificity", a philosophy that em-

[9] idem, ibidem, p.81
[10] Brădăţan, Costică (2000:80) *O introducere la istoria filozofiei româneşti în secolul XX*. Episoadele Noica. Editura Fundaţiei Culturale Române, Bucureşti.

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phasizes "the preparation for difficult times that may come" and last, but not least, having the universal mission of preparing the "emergence of the new man."[11]

In *Pagini despre sufletul românesc*, Noica rethinks, in a typical manner, the essence of the Romanian soul. Wondering himself *Who is Romania?*, Constantin Noica redefines the spiritual matrix of this nation, by discovering *what is eternal* and *what is historical* in the Romanian culture. He tries to identify the causes that led to the constant marginalization of Romania. Based on Dumitru Drăghicescu's work, *Din psihologia poporului român*, an excellent essay about Romanians tragic condition, Noica identifies the reasons that have led to the continuous marginalization of Romanians in history: Romania is still a patriarchal and rural Romania. However, Noica strongly believes that beyond all historical determinisms, obstacles and subversive techniques it was subjected to, the Romanian soul in the world has the right to identity. *Who is Romania?*Romania is a place where silence specificity echoed in faith, a chronotop where the fatalism combines with cathartic serenity, and humility and modesty make souls talking to angels.

At the pastoral Romanian heart we have identified creativity tiredness, and in wish and sorrow we discovered a synthetic unit of expansion (Kant's influence), that has helped us to stay in *a never ending closing open situation*. This synthetic unit of expansion is identified by Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, who admits that the Romanian people are struggling without being able to secure a sustainable social order. The Romanian spirit has the soul divided between two opposing trends. On one hand, the trend towards individualism "almost anarchic, that we can strongly find it represented in ancient class of landowners and their survivors; and on the other hand, the trend towards an instinctive collectivism that defends the traditions [...] Romanians' individualism is not bourgeois individualism. Bourgeois individualism is an opportunity hunting attitude [...] Romanians' individualism has no resemblance to bourgeois opportunism or competition. It is autocrat. It is an end in itself. Bourgeois individualism gradually changes into professional specialization, while Romanians' individualism confined to asserting psychological egocentrism. The former contributed to shaping the bold colonizers [...] the second, the extortioners from the past and the politicians from the present".[12]

Between the two trends, the feeling of being Romanian is born and lives like a living organism. A way of being whose specificity was born from a deep historical reality which has its defensive instincts; a historical reality that we witnessed, willingly or, often unwittingly.

We built a split identity because of the inferiority complex that we have created/ those who were the actors of a history that has never had patience with us.

Sorin Alexandrescu in one of his books speaks about the "advantage" of being part of a small /second/inferior culture, proposing a positive valuation of marginality: "There is no provincial culture, but there is high quality culture or there is the lack of culture, especially due to political reasons. As far as Romanians are concerned, it's not about a provincial culture [...] I

[11] Vulcănescu, Mircea (1991:25-26), *Dimensiunea românească a existenţei*. Ediţie îngrijită de Marin Diaconu. Editura Fundaţiei Culturale Române, Bucureşti.
[12] Rădulescu Motru, Constantin (1996:86-87), *Românismul. Catehismul unei noi spiritualităţi*. Ediţie îngrijită, note şi postfaţă de Marin Aiftincă, Editura Garamond, Bucureşti.

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would say that there is an edge-shaped culture form. All Romanians lived in the outskirts of empires: Russian, Habsburg or Turkish. In all Romanian provinces marginal/edge-shaped cultures were created. But an edge-shaped/marginal culture is not an inferior culture […] an edge-shaped/marginal culture is a culture different from the culture that is at the center".[13]

In an interview published in *Orizont,* Virgil Nemoianu notices this serene passivity of Romanians and considers it a different way of understanding the Romanian soul: "I would understand the Romanian soul or the Romanian space not as a monolithic unit. What interests me is precisely this space as an area of intersections, of multiplicity".[14]

In a letter sent by Mircea Eliade to Vintilă Horia, Eliade recognizes the need [not necessarily an historic leap, as in the case of Cioran] to recover at least a part of Romanian specificity: "Romania was sabotaged by the European historiography and, therefore, is absent from the West historical consciousness - and this was our fatal bad luck: it brought us out of history. Romania would still have a chance in the near future – but, especially, in the remote future to <enter the History>".[15]

This marginal status had a doubtful double-sided charm that, unfortunately, we were unable to exploit accordingly. We have waited at the East gates and we haven't left the West gates, despite our uncertain identity. We have built a becoming prototype, in an undulating space, with which we wanted to defy the center culture.

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