

LUCIAN BLAGA IN ROMANIAN CULTURE

Vasile Muscă,

“Babeş - Bolyai” University
Cluj - Napoca, Department of Philosophy

Lucian Blaga’s work has constantly been accompanied by a lengthy exegesis, the dominant note of which is praise. This admiration has only been eclipsed temporarily, in the years when socialism and its official ideology placed the poet and philosopher for a while on the periphery of national culture, usurping the central place that was his right.

The history of Blagian exegeses reveals a significant “commonbasis” accepted by the majority of those engaged in the discussion of the work of our great poet and philosopher. It establishes a direct relationship, represented significantly in the midst of Blagian works and the popular - national cultural material which is the Romanian ethnical spiritual dowry. Expressing such an opinion previously, V. Băncilă identified in Blaga’s case “the last major expression of the Romanian cultural destiny”, “the new embodiment of the age - old ethnic conscious and subconscious, especially”¹.

Some years after, in 1941, when Blaga’s philosophical creation has already achieved a form which brought it close to its final standpoint with new works added to the previous ones - his last important philosophical work, *The Divine Differentials* (Diferenţialele divine) appeared in 1940 - G. Călinescu wrote, somewhat temperately but still in a laudable tone: “Lucian Blaga is the first who tried to build a complete philosophical system, with walls and “cupola” and to give it **an application to national realities** (underlined by us). No matter how puzzled professors of philosophy would be, **the real Romanian thinking is inaugurated here** (underlined by us)”². Even if by a “non-expert” in philosophy, this appreciation is relevant and has a good understanding of the matter things,

¹ V. Băncilă, *Lucian Blaga energie românească*, Cluj, Editura Gând românesc, 1938, p. 3.

² G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent*, Bucureşti, Fundaţia Regală pentru Literatură şi Artă, 1941, p. 864.

offering a clear distinction between two discussions of a different nature: a) the relation of Blaga's own doctrine to the **Romanian spiritual treasury and** to the particular Romanian way of feeling and thinking, Blaga's literary and even philosophical concept being considered an exemplary manifestation of this way of feeling and thinking. In this sense, the Blagian concept, the literary one especially, has been imbued with the saps of popular Romanian concepts, impregnated with Romanian cultural tradition, bearing the purest features of the Romanian national character; b) the philosophical theory initiated by Blaga himself concerning the character of this national spiritual ideal. Regarding former, literary criticism and history, within whose boundaries this particular aspect falls, have given satisfactory and lasting solutions. Eminent people, such as E. Lovinescu, P. Constantinescu, V. I. Streinu, T. Vianu, Ș. Cioculescu, G. Călinescu and those belonging to the younger generation, I. Pop, G. Gană, E. Simion, for example, have expressed their opinions competently, presenting acceptable points of view. The first book dedicated solely to this subject has recently appeared, written by Al. Teodorescu³.

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However, the philosophical concept drawn up by Lucian Blaga is, in many aspects, attributed to the philosophical atmosphere characteristic to the period of the transition from the thinking of the last century to that of this century, without becoming obsolete. The way was decisive in philosophy for Kierkegaard in the middle of the last century, for search as such has always being superior to the result. In the second half of the same century Western metaphysics arrived, through Nietzsche, to the end of it, as Heidegger assesses. There follows a period when philosophy went flat, became "engineer - like", a time of indigence, default and scarcity in philosophy when thinking had a certain efficiency but its course was separated from its own essence. It was a time of spiritual poverty which, says Heidegger in *Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry* stayed under the

³ A. Teodorescu, *Lucian Blaga și cultura populară românească*, Iași, Editura Junimea, 1984.

sign of a double insufficiency gnawed by negations coming from two opposite directions: “the «does not exist any more» of the run - away deities and the «not yet» of that which will come”⁴. With Nietzsche begins already an epoch that, passing the threshold which separates those two centuries, will extend even after them, an epoch whose spiritual contents have been metaphorically defined by the formula establishing the motto of our times: “God is dead”.

Could the dead or runaway gods revive and come back in this atmosphere of drought (*Zeit der Dürftigkeit*), as Heidegger asks himself? Could they come back in this *geistige Situation* - to take again a well - known formula of Jaspers - which characterises our epoch? Lucian Blaga's thought feels the effects of these circumstances, too. His philosophy tries to find its own solution to it, which presents itself as a profoundly humanist one. Lucian Blaga places the human being itself in the emptiness created by the runaway gods (gods who have been chased away or who have run away from the world and from man's consciousness, to repeat Heidegger's metaphor).

Man is left by the gods, abandoned and thrown into a mysterious and strange world drowned in an indifferent silence, a world opposed to the role itself man has to play in the universe. This idea appears in D. D. Roșca's work as the tragical conscience of life. Man creates his destiny with dignity and consequence, with the efforts of his hands and his mind. Lucian Blaga dedicated these creative efforts a magnificent philosophical eulogy in his works, as D. D. Roșca, a colleague of Lucian Blaga, does in *The Tragical Existence* (*Existența tragică*). This way his thinking integrates with the progressive process of the desecration of the world and of the continuously growing secularisation of the philosophical conscience prominent in the thinking of our century, in a period of time which follows the metaphorical death of God.

⁴ M. Heidegger, *Hölderlin și esența poeziei*, in vol. *Originea operei de artă*, București, Editura Univers, 1982, p. 207.

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Under the emblem of the discussion of all values of traditional humanism, a process which already began at the end of the last century, there is a crisis of the idea of humanism in the philosophical thinking of this epoch, a crisis that deepens gradually in more directions. "The spiritual crisis of our time - says Lucian Blaga - is a Hellenistic crisis with many aspects which can be viewed as so many advantages and disadvantages"⁵. The humanism of this century gives proof of new resources of vitality. It restructures its energies. The spiritual configuration of the epoch as well as man's spiritual statute in this special configuration becomes its basic preoccupation. Responding to the idea of a crisis it provides a remedy of the crisis of values, culture and the human being. Caught in the whirl of such preoccupations which monopolise the major lines of philosophical thought after World War I, Lucian Blaga offers his own solution: a far-reaching metaphysical interpretation which centres round man, the spiritual being destined to the creation of the material and spiritual values which form culture. The Blagian metaphysics recommends the "dogmatic eon" as a remedy of the spiritual crisis. "We believe - specifies Lucian Blaga, so that we should rightly understand his position in this context - only in a historical crisis (called Hellenistic). We imagine the dogmatic eon, at the doors of which we knock, as being endowed with all the virtues of the new. We do not see how specific Christian dogmas, their contents out-of-date in our opinion, could enter them. For the time being we do not see any other common feature between the Christian eon and the new eon other than the forms and style of the ecstatic intellect. This available ecstatic intellect will not derive its material - which is going to be transfigured in new dogmas - from a museum of antiques but from the restless conscience of time"⁶.

⁵ L. Blaga, *Trilogia cunoașterii*, in *Opere*, București, Editura Minerva, 1983, vol. VIII, p. 301.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 303.

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Creation is the central theme of Blaga's philosophy of culture and in this way the issue of the specificity of national cultural creation obtains unsuspected metaphysical resonance in the overall economy of the system of the *Trilogies*. From an interpretative point of view, in the generative centre of Lucian Blaga's philosophical conception there is his consistent effort to create understanding and give explanations to that which in its completeness is so difficult to grasp, but which, in a synthetic formula, might be called the human phenomenon. From the perspective of the views exposed in his *Trilogies*, the destiny that irrevocably marks the human being comes into being in the act of cultural creation. Creation, in all the diversity of the material and spiritual forms in which it appears, is the final aim of human existence, and this is the source of the uniqueness and supreme dignity of the human condition in the universe: "In a system, in which creation is still possible - says Lucian Blaga - creation is the utmost value. Unless all indications misguide us, our destiny is formed in a system in which creation is permanently possible and in which, consequently, spiritual values have an irrefutably creative orientation. Unless all signs deceive us, the existential system in which we are, constrains us - with the restrictions with which it submits us and by the ways towards which it guides us - authoritatively and paternally, to a demiurgical service which we hold according to the indications inscribed in our soul's anatomy, whether we know it or not"⁷.

Man's creative vocation comes into being in the vast domain of culture, this latter feature understood as the totality of material and spiritual values that are created by human activity. The phenomenon of culture largely helps us to understand man that is closely connected to it, whereas the philosophy of culture that crowns the *Trilogies* provides a key to the whole problem of human condition.

Blaga ardently supports the romantic myth of creation in his poetry and philosophy. In line with the older philosophical romanticism of

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 544.

Schelling or the literary one of Novalis, he takes artistic creation, the creation par excellence, the paradigm of all creation. Most of his poetry has a romantic atmosphere. On account of all these Blaga's work might be placed stylistically under the cultural pattern of romanticism, at least on its strictly theoretical side.

Such a preference for the idea of creation originates, of course, in the particular poetic inclination specific to the creative capacity of Blaga himself: "... Beginning with the *Trilogy of Cognition (Trilogia cunoașterii)*, the Blagian system raises its rigorously articulated scaffolding as for a temple in which hymns are sung and sacrifices of exaltation and gratitude are made to the creative spirit of the human being, to artistic (poetic) creation, to the artistic (poetic) sense as the sole sense of life. For what else is minusknowledge; what is the Luciferian mode of man, what is the transcendental censure, if not the fruitful obstacle which does not throw us in the world and 'boredom', as another contemporary philosopher would say, but in **creation**, in style, that is, in poetry?"⁸. Beginning with the study of cognition in the first *Trilogy*, *The Trilogy of Cognition*, and ending with the cosmological picture of the human being in the universe in *Divine Differentials (Diferențialele divine)*, or the sketch of the metaphysical vision of history in *The Historical Being (Ființa istorică)*, all the analyses made by Blaga confirm the idea that creation is the coordinative motive that gives his whole work a consistent meaning. A strong metaphysical feeling, which pervades the whole work of Blaga supports the idea of creation, transforming it into a genuine myth of his conception. This aesthetical - centrist feature of Blaga's work, manifested preferentially through the motive of the creation - mentioned by the exegetists many times - asks for its motivation in order to be understood and it can be explained by the preponderantly romantic stature of Lucian Blaga's creative personality.

T. Cățineanu pointed out in a remarkable study published as an afterword to the posthumous edition of *The Historical Being*, that the artistic creation is the ontic model, the similitude of which Blaga's creation

⁸ I. Negoïtescu, *Poezia în filosofia lui Blaga*, in vol. *Scriitori moderni*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1966, p. 180 - 181.

assumes. "Lucian Blaga sets up and evaluates his own philosophical system in the image of the work of art. The aesthetic inspiration of his philosophy explains the quality of some of its categories and the lines of the philosophical method as well as the process of creating a closed philosophical system along these lines"⁹.

It appears to us that, in spite of some digressions in the domain of other cultural styles, expressionism especially, the author of *The Poems of Light (Poemele luminii)* and also of *The Historical Being* is a typical representation of the last romantic trend of European culture. Blaga's literary excursions in the domain of the artistic avant-garde from the beginning of the century seem to be passing, insignificant experiences - without leaving deep and lasting scars in his lyrical vision - after which the poet returns to the romantic tone that dominates especially the last phase of his poetry¹⁰. In a way, Blaga is the most consummate romantic of our literature, even more consummate than Eminescu. If we can identify perfection with purity in the sense of the Platonic theory of ideas, then Eminescu's philosophical - poetical efforts express themselves in a diverse Weltanschauung, extremely heterogeneous in its "stock" of ideas. Blaga's poetic vision is purer, more vigorously structured, less composite.

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Responding to the spiritual crisis of the epoch, L. Blaga believes in man's creative vocation that reaches its climax in metaphysics. Metaphysical creation gains momentum under the influence of some necessities that are concerned with the structure of the human soul. "Metaphysics which has only temporary successes is in a much closer relation - and this is an enlivening, tragic one - with the creative destiny of man than science"¹¹. Lucian Blaga, like Kant, considers metaphysics a "natural feature of the human mind"; "the search for metaphysics can never

⁹ T. Căţineanu, Postfaţă. Lucian Blaga şi filosofia istorică. "Pietre pentru o exegeză", in L. Blaga, *Fiinţa istorică*, Cluj - Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1977, p. 263.

¹⁰ Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura română şi expresionismul*, Bucureşti, Editura Eminescu, 1971, p. 60 - 84.

¹¹ L. Blaga, *Trilogia cunoaşterii*, *Idem*, p. 445.

end, because the interest of human rationality is strongly connected to it ..". "We do not think it likely that the human spirit would ever give up metaphysical search altogether as it is unlikely that we would give up breathing for fear of not breathing in air that is not pure. Metaphysics will always exist and it will exist also for every man and especially for each man who is thinking ..." ¹². Metaphysical creation being a "corollary" of the specific way of being in the world, "the suppression of the metaphysical impetus - says Blaga - would be the mutilation of the human being. Metaphysical creation nourishes the soul and is therefore at least as important as the material one for animal organism" ¹³. The striving of human consciousness towards the Absolute cannot be impeded. Therefore there has not been a metaphysical interruption in the history of human spirituality until now. "Man's metaphysical exigencies can never be weaned from him. Metaphysical interregnums have always been short. We even think - goes on Lucian Blaga - that, in fact, there have been no such interregnums. We cannot live without metaphysics, be it a declared or a latent one. There has been no metaphysical vacancies in history" ¹⁴.

Lucian Blaga has never concealed his intention to articulate a "large - scale metaphysical vision" ¹⁵. Convinced of the power of metaphysics of fermenting the intellectual life of an epoch - a good example of this being Platonic metaphysics that played an important role in the revival of culture in the Italian Renaissance - he hopes, as he confesses, to build a "metaphysics for today" ¹⁶. Metaphysical concepts as well as other intellectual inventions - myths, religions, visions, moral doctrines, scientific theories, artistic embodiments - are a means of exploring and revealing the ultimate standard of mystery which makes up being: "the philosopher and the metaphysician, especially, strives for the revelation of

¹² I. Kant, *Prolegomene la orice metafizică viitoare care se va putea înfățișa ca știință*, București, Cultura Națională, 1924, p. 172, 15, 180.

¹³ L. Blaga, *Despre conștiința filosofică*, Timișoara, Editura Facla, 1974, p. 146.

¹⁴ L. Blaga, *Diferențialele divine*, București, Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă Regele Carol al II - lea, 1940, p. 14.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

the mystery of being in its totality, for a formulation of the Absolute”¹⁷. Thus Lucian Blaga comes to the conclusion that “a philosophy that does not culminate in metaphysics appears to us to be mutilated, to be a torso or at best a creature that is limp”¹⁸.

Metaphysics becomes efficient in its revealing function not so much through the force of penetration of rationally elaborated concepts but rather through the suggestive power of its extrarational means. Although Lucian Blaga does not attempt an explicit and systematic critique of the power of comprehension of logical concepts, he doubts the ability of the word to offer a proper rational understanding, especially an integral one, of the Absolute. The word is detached from the world of objects; it experiences the tragedy of being isolated in human subjectivity. It is subjective; it cannot reach transcendence. Through the word, man and his existence only become problematical. Metaphysics itself would very soon be impossible.

The Romanian thinker, like the German Romantics, cannot think of metaphysics other than as poetic. As a “handler” of words, the poet is in an exceptional situation. He does not possess words in order to make use of them as common intelligence usually does while designating things. Rather the poet is possessed and used by words. The poetic word comes from the transcendence of inspiration, as the ancients, headed by Plato, believed it, and it can re-establish the ontical relationship between man and essence that has been broken up in non-poetic words and is missing from everyday language. The poetic utterance is a bridge towards the Absolute. The poetic word does not circulate as fake money, without an ontological security; it emanates from the Absolute and confers the things that are spoken of and the human being who utters it the privilege of recovering a superior, metaphysical meaning. The poetic statement proves to be the authentic metaphysical act in this context; therefore, Blaga makes an indirect contribution to the metaphysical foundation of the poetic discourse to which he confers an ontological justification. The author of the *Trilogies* believes in the exceptional nature of the poetic state of poetry and of the

¹⁷ L. Blaga, *Despre conștiința filosofică*, p. 104.

¹⁸ L. Blaga, *Ființa istorică*, p. 209.

poet, as Vico does, who discovered the primeval, original language of nature in the poetic message. In his vision, the first historical phase of a culture is the poetic one, Homeric Greece being an example of this. If for Hegel, who opposes Romanticism in some sides of his thinking, poetry is no more than inferior metaphysics, Blaga, descendant of Romanticism, but influenced by other trends as well, considers poetry superior metaphysics. Staying with the romantic spirit characteristic of Blaga, we could also say that metaphysics is superior poetry. Blaga is quite explicit about the identical nature of metaphysics and poetry, both of which are means of reaching the Absolute. T. Vianu considers this a characteristic of the romantic mentality¹⁹.

According to Lucian Blaga and, significantly, to D. D. Roșca as well, any metaphysical endeavour that tends towards the Absolute, needs man as a whole: reason and passion, logic and imagination, cognition and speculation, order and creation together. This is why metaphysical experience becomes akin to and communicates with the different forms of the mystical - religious experience. In the great speculative construction of metaphysics reason does not appear in its pure, intact, exclusively discursive form, but it is a reason the walls of which are covered from time to time with an emotional layer of diverse consistence that has its roots in the extra-rational. The great founders of metaphysical systems, personalities of European thinking verify this statement in abundance. Face to face with the unknown within him but also beyond him, trying to give existence a meaning, the human being invents "metaphysical" ideas which transform by their verticality his being into an integral reality projecting him on the screen that gives final sense to the Absolute. Metaphysical thoughts are "inconvenient", "under their magic power we tear out our roots in order to turn them towards the azure where only the stars can breathe"²⁰.

¹⁹ T. Vianu, *Filosofie și poezie*, in *Opere*, București, Editura Minerva, 1978, vol. VII, p. 358 - 416.

²⁰ L. Blaga, *Trilogia cunoașterii*, p. 446.

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Man's creative vocation comes to fulfilment in the vast field of culture that is the totality of material and spiritual values created by human activity. The explanation of cultural phenomena offers a large and profound perspective towards the understanding of the human being as a complex phenomenon, whereas the philosophy of culture that crowns the *Trilogies* offers also in addition the key to the whole issue of humanity. We are not referring to the conditions of cultural creation, nor to the significance and metaphysical value of culture that are widely known. Nevertheless we must mention that at the core of Blaga's philosophical conception there is his constant attempt to explain and understand in its completeness that which, in a synthetic formula, could be called the human phenomenon. Summing up, the human being is a stylistic being in terms of creation.

The Blagian concept of style owes a lot to the naturalist line of contemporary European thinking. It has as its theoretical sources the utopia of natural man initiated by Rousseau and Darwin's evolutionism and the revival of interest in primitive, archaic cultures. The impact of these sources can be easily discovered by the careful reading of the Blagian concept. A culture and its manifestations are built on an archetypal basis which is the original phenomenon of the given culture, be it the "core of culture", as Spengler offers it, or the "style of culture" as Blaga calls it. Every cultural creation develops from the core or style of the respective culture. Following the steps of biological evolution from animal to pre-human being and to man itself, the birth of the latter contains the starting point of the development of stylistic categories. Man and history are being born simultaneously, as the former obtains the aura of a style by its creative act. Though style is inherent in the human being and it precedes history, it has to enter history. There is no style outside history, therefore the human being is by definition historical; he is realised only in history. Adopting a position which is that of scientific knowledge too, Blaga passably explains through evolution the sinuous way from animal to pre-human being, presenting this leap as a biological mutation. But using his

own metaphysical principles to explain the leap from pre - human being to human being proper, he is quite unconvincing by suggesting “ontological mutation”. This formula does not offer a proper scientific solution. How do stylistic categories spring up in the pre - human being and turn him into a proper human being ? Taking refuge in the realm of supratemporality, eternity and metaphysics, the naturalism of the Blagian concept of style gives an a-historical and an a-social explanation of man, style and culture. There is something eternal and unchanging in the human being, something that is neither determinable nor determined historically, that cannot be influenced by social structures. Unlike social man, natural man appears to be eternal and unchanging. Eternal man represents that part of man, which is natural from a biological point of view, which can be repeated endlessly, regardless of particular conditions of time and place. It appears as aprioric, invariable from a social point of view. .

While Kant, representing the viewpoint of the 18th century Enlightenment, considered cognition to be man’s main task, centralised in all his activities, Blaga, in the name of 19th century Romanticism, considers creation the most authentic of human activities. Nevertheless, creation for Blaga is revelation, thus it implicitly contains a piece of cognition. We could draw a parallel between Kant and Blaga, but as it is not an integral part of our preoccupations, we will conclude by saying that Blaga transfers criticism from the topmost level of conscience, the centre of cognition, to the dark subsoil of the unconscious, the ”cradle of creation”.

From an ontological point of view creation brings about a change in the contents of reality and shatters therefore the rigid frames of the old, mechanical determinism. Blaga’s explanation resorts, first of all, to the idea of the creative spontaneity of the subconscious that eludes any linear determinism. Thus, the Kantianism of Blaga mentioned above, is influenced by the Freudian theory of the subconscious. In fact, Blaga advances Kant by applying him to the new Freudian theory of the subconscious. Making an analysis of the conscious, Kant discovers in it the aprioric forms of cognition: intuitions and categories. Investigating the structures of profundity of the subconscious, Blaga discovers in its most hidden depths the aprioric forms of creation that together make up style. Cognition for Kant and, similarly, creation for Blaga designate, in essence,

emblematic activities of man. They have a similar role, that of arranging and unifying a diversity, a process that actively involves some aprioric forms; intuitions and categories with Kant, style with Blaga. Style in creation represents for Blaga the analogon of the Kantian categories of the conscious in cognition. The Kantian apriority of the conscious in cognition corresponds to the Blagian apriority of the subconscious in creation. L. Blaga gives, also, a metaphysical justification of creation that derives from the general philosophical perspective of the *Trilogies*. The Great Anonymous, the metaphysical principle of reality is the mystery - generating substratum of being. Reality is conceived as a process, it is not static, but dynamic; it is not given once and for all. Reality is therefore unfinished in its metaphysical substance and this justifies human creation, in general. In Blagian philosophy, the metaphysical condition of creation assures its place in the stylistic field, whereas the stylistic factors have their ultimate origin in the subconscious. The attempt to introduce the subconscious in philosophy and of re-introducing it in the field of human creativity has to be considered an aspect of Blaga's general reaction to abstract intellectualism. He critically opposes dogmatic rationalism which is unable to adequately solve the problem of creation. His criticism is aimed mainly at intellectualism, the most degraded form of this rationalism, highly popular in this epoch, degrading the contents of every endeavour of human creation to an arbitrary, rigid framework. Even in scientific creation cognitive conscience manifests itself through its unconscious - type components that involuntarily accompany it in the stylistic field.

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In Lucian Blaga's vision, the Great Anonymous is the metaphysical mystery - generating centre of existence. It is, at the same time, the supreme agent who sets up the cosmical regime of preserving these mysteries. This latter function is derived from an instinct of self-defence: preserving the mysteries, being surrounded by them, the Great Anonymous shelters itself behind an impugnable protective wall. The way Lucian Blaga imagines the Great Anonymous seems to reveal his "unhappy

conscience”, tragically torn by a dilemma which cannot be reconciled, similar to the “unhappy conscience” described in its religious state by the young Hegel²¹. Perhaps we can also find here the reflection of the tragedy of any act of creation and creator, the aspect of reality that deeply influenced the poet Lucian Blaga and became explicit in *Meşterul Manole*, among others. Though driven on by demiurgical passions, the Great Anonymous represses its creative tendencies all the time. Therefore it descends into insoluble, unhappy and tragic conflict with itself: it denies in a way what otherwise it asserts, led by the universal anxiety of the equilibrium installed in reality, which can be endangered by an infinite theogony. In view of such creations by others and its equals, the Great Anonymous would compete with itself, creating a dangerous pluricentralism. The Great Anonymous would therefore destroy itself as the unique metaphysical centre of being and would also destroy the universe which, for the lack of such a centre, would lose its balance, and would be threatened by falling into a total cosmic disorder which would finally push it back into a non-being state. There is a double warning involved here, which is nevertheless contradictory in its manifestations: an egoist care for its own security and fate and an altruistic one for the security and fate of the universe. The latter sheds light on the anthropomorphous character of the Great Anonymous, on his “goodness” that bears nevertheless the sign of turning towards itself. As such, the Great Anonymous satisfies its creative impulses by giving birth to “divine differentials”, its diminished hypostasis, beings inferior to its being. The Great Anonymous does not re-create itself by multiplied hypostases, by producing its equals that would threaten it, neither does it create its superior that would lead to its self-destruction. Instead, it creates something lesser, it creates its own sub-multiples, protecting itself this way.

Lucian Blaga conceives the Great Anonymous, the hypothetical metaphysical centre of being in the spirit of negative theology that makes its first appearance in European philosophy alongside the eleatism of

²¹ J. Wahl, *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel*, Paris, Rieder, 1929, p. 13.

Marmenides, as Aram M. Frenkian pointed out²². The great Eleatic tries in fact to reform the endangered religiousness of his time by providing it with philosophical grounding. The anthropomorphous God of the ancient Greeks is replaced by a unique being, the abstract concept of being which is identical with divinity. As we have, logically, only one idea of being, consequently there is only one divinity. Backed up by such an abstract ontological reasoning, the divine being might be determined only by negations: we know about its being but we do not know what it is, we know rather what it is not. The separation of being and cognition achieved by irrationalism has its origins in negative theology: God exists, but we cannot know him.

On the basis of the last Neopithagorean and Neoplatonian thinkers, of Philon of Alexandria to whom he refers several times, Lucian Blaga stresses the transcendence of divinity. The Great Anonymous, the divinity that transcends everything that exists, takes after the One of Plotinus. "The One - says Plotinus - is the privation of any form, even of the intelligible one. As the nature of the One is to be generator of every thing, it is none of the things it generates. It is no thing; it has neither quality, nor quantity; neither intelligence, nor soul; it is neither in motion, nor in rest; it is neither in time, nor in space. It exists in itself; it is an essence isolated from others, or, rather, it is without an essence for it is anterior to any essence, anterior to motion and rest because these are characteristic to being, they make the being multiple." (Enneads - VI, 9.3) According to Plotinus, we cannot specify what is the One; we can only say that it transcends everything that exists, the essence of everything that exists. We cannot know it and we cannot talk about it. This is the case of the Great Anonymous, too. Lucian Blaga himself says that it is more "a mythical - philosophical product of our thinking, of our imagination that seeks the ultimate meaning"²³. It is a myth born from the need of presenting the world with a metaphysical centre that could introduce a superior sense in it.

²² Aram M. Frenkian, *Parmenide precursor al teologiei negative*, Cernăuți, Glasul Bucovinei, 1939.

²³ L. Blaga, *Ființa istorică*, p. 211.

The Gnostics had an even greater impact on the “theology” of Lucian Blaga. The theology of Kierkegaard in the last century, Heidegger’s thinking in our century and the “dialectical theology” of Karl Barth comes close to certain gnostic ideas on divinity. Blaga himself has an extensive knowledge in the field of patristical philosophy and also about the Gnostics, as his works prove. Generally, according to the Gnostics, God is either the demiurge who has surpassed his creation and suffers because of this, as with Ptolemy or, is a stranger to creation who comes from outside as a savior who takes pity on the world, de-classing thus his creation, as with Markion. The Gnostics also call the divinity the One or the Good, for these two merge so that we cannot separate them²⁴. The good appears with the Gnostics in a more humanised version; the “goodness” of the Great Anonymous being its equivalent in a way, a goodness that manifests itself in the care for its own safety and, also, for the safety of the universe. For the Gnostics, God is completely different from its own creation as well as from the human being, it is a *theos allotrios*, a theme taken again obsessively by Kierkegaard’s theology. God cannot take part in the unfulfilment of the world, it cannot create it, for it would be contradictory for a perfect being to create a world full of imperfections. The opposite of the Platonic demiurge from *Timaios* which creates the world from a pre-existent material as a simple craftsworker²⁵, the “*theos allotrios*” of the Gnostics does not create the world, it rather de-creates it, trying to redeem it by putting an end to the evil in it. The “theology” of Lucian Blaga differs essentially from that of the Gnostics in the way it distributes some emphases. The God of the Gnostics remains completely indifferent to the world and is assimilated by the Good as an ontological and moral ideal. Lucian Blaga is inclined to grasp it rather in its appearance of “*deus otiosus*”, retired from creation, nevertheless interested in it, careful of its security from afar, arrested by the concern of preserving its mysteries. Therefore the Great Anonymous is not indifferent to the human being; it hinders human cognition by transcendental censure instead of encouraging

²⁴ H. Leisegang, *Die Gnosis*, Leipzig, 1924, p. 329.

²⁵ V. Brochard, *Les mythes dans la philosophie de Platon*, in vol. *Études de philosophie ancienne et de philosophie moderne*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1926, p. 46 - 59.

it, and it does not support the effort of cognition either. On the contrary, it is hostile to it, it hampers it, like the divinity of the Gnostics. The Great Anonymous is not identical with Christian divinity, creator of the universe, which, consequently, promotes human creation as a continuation of its own creative passion which man reproduces on a small scale, tough but also just, while mankind is touched by evil, sympathetic to its fate. The Great Anonymous is easier envious, furious, jealous, all are features of the mythical "theos ftoneros".

In Lucian Blaga's conceptual ideas the world is neutral from a metaphysical point of view as it is the scene of a cosmical contest between man and the Great Anonymous. The Great Anonymous creates mysteries within the world. Man tries to suppress them by cognition or reveals them and, consequently, intensifies them by a superior method, that of creation. The two partners, being in direct opposition, discuss the world, both of them according to his own partiality.

The Great Anonymous comes in conflict with man, the demiurgical being *par excellence*, this conflict being more acute than that with itself. The Great Anonymous censors not only its own creation, but also and mainly that of man. Man, as it is conceived by Lucian Blaga, suffers by a treble inner tension. First, he is in conflict with the Great Anonymous that hinders his cognitive and creative initiatives. In the spirit of a humanism that proclaims and protects human creativity as its utmost value, inverting the terms in such a manner that resembles that of Feuerbach, Lucian Blaga relieves this tension in man's favour. Defined in the spirit of "negative theology" mainly by privations, the Great Anonymous is a genuine metaphysical fiction that, according to the logic of the philosophy of "des ois ob" must be considered "as if" it were real. Consequently, the Great Anonymous might be understood only by way of analogy with beings inferior to it, first of all with human being, "ex analogia hominis". As a creator, the Great Anonymous appears as a hypostasis of the demiurgical powers inherent in man. Secondly, man is in conflict with the world that presents its inextricable network of mysteries and urges human ratio to revelation. Finally, man is in conflict with himself, with the demonic nature of the creative powers enclosed in him. Man lets his creative vocation take its own course; he does not suppress it, as the Great

Anonymous does. The Great Anonymous can create only beings inferior to it, so that it will not degrade itself by the self - usurpation of the privilege of cosmic centralism. On the other hand, man is ennobled by the creation of beings superior to him that vault the endless sky of eternal values above his transient being. He cannot just indulge in cloudless contemplation of his creations, as the Great Anonymous does. Forever discontented with his creation, he permanently tries to surpass his realisations, exceeding himself therefore, moving along an endless line in which individuals follow individuals, generations succeed generations towards the perfection of humanity. This treble tension that wears out man's integrity gives birth to the creation of values. At this point Lucian Blaga intertwines the thoughts of D. D. Roșca, who claims that the tension of the tragic conscience gives the creation of its intimate sphere as it is converted into values.

The mutual relationships of the three, the Great Anonymous, the world and man make up the metaphysical meaning of history. Man's state of being in the world is marked by an utter loneliness and singularity, presented by Lucian Blaga in a pathetic tone that reminds us of Pascal. Being the sub-multiple of the Great Anonymous, the human being can be looked upon as a decayed being, fallen from the divine grace, evolving from his pre-paradisiac godlike condition, exiled in the world where he tries and has to try to consolidate another order. Alone in his universe, forced in this exile, man replies to divinity through history. He appears as the cause, means and aim or effect of a historical motion. He wins back his lost identity through history, by everything he creates. His creation bears the mark of a certain style. He inevitably follows it, attracted as though by gravitation; he belongs to it. Therefore all his creations pass the threshold of history; it becomes historical. Style with Lucian Blaga becomes identical with history and, though it is aprioric, it is also human and not divine, a fact that explains also its variations from culture to culture. History is therefore the negation of the Great Anonymous; it is man's most select medium of being and of activity in which he lives, acts, comes to know things and defies the divinity, competing with him by recreating alone and on his own account the Absolute of which he has been deprived.

Contrary to traditional historical philosophies that try to assimilate the human being as a degenerate to a higher order - Christianity, for

example, tries to integrate him in the order of the divine logos - Lucian Blaga lets the human being build up his own order by way of a historical action. History acquires the characteristics of a centrifugal movement contrary to divinity. The historical movement is not a regressive one, a regrouping in the “divine medium”, to use the term of Teilhard de Chardin, but it is a progressive one, running away and withdrawing from the divine centre, through which the human being tries to regain his independence from it, not imitating but competing with the Great Anonymous. As history repeats itself, the amount of values deposited in man’s being grows, and implicitly the distance from the divine centre of being grows. History in Plotinus’ view means the passing of the divine Oneness into diversity; it indicates the tendency of an ontological regression towards nothingness. This perspective changes with Lucian Blaga; the gradual moving away from the divine One is not an occasion for decay, but the opportunity to the continuous ascension of human being. History accumulated in man becomes in Blaga’s opinion the non-divine part of him, the satanic one as we might call it, because of the principle of creativity it expresses which means decay and revolt, but, also, the hope of ascension which springs at the point where man’s efforts achieve their purpose.

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The issue of national specificity is not something new introduced by Lucian Blaga in Romanian thought. It has its own, comparatively long, rich and disputed history. It all began with the generation of intellectuals that drew up the ideology of the revolution in 1848. This generation cannot be characterised as a romantic formation, without reservations. It is mainly an Enlightenment one; it derives from the Enlightenment and continues it, adjusting to the new social-political and economic situation after 1821²⁶. Like the supporters of the Enlightenment, they believe in a uniform cultural and political model, a universal European and a preferably French one and they are convinced that this universal model must be applied,

²⁶ N. Iorga, *Istoria literaturii române în secolul al XVIII - lea (1689 - 1821)*, București, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1969, vol. I, p. 7 - 15.

peacefully or by political revolution, by imitation and cultural adaptation to the specific Romanian conditions. At the same time, the tendency of “nationalising” the Romanian culture by getting rid of foreign influences becomes more and more active, especially under the influence of the national idea put forward by the romantics. The cultural act of imitation and adaptation correlates with internal, national circumstances. Therefore, the question of national specificity undoubtedly gains momentum. The historicism that develops in the spiritual atmosphere of the European Romanticism considers that all forms of the cultural life of a people draw their innermost substance from an entity that manifests itself as an organic unity, that embodies the national spirit, the Volkgeist as a metaphysical principle. The Romantics have stressed the national character of cultures and with this they moved away from the a-historical rationalism of the Enlightenment. The more the intellectuals of 1848 let themselves be influenced by romantic tendencies, the more they foster research of the past and develop an interest towards folklore. Placing Romanian culture on the basis provided by historical and philosophical studies used to identify national specificity is the best procedure, in their opinion, to individualise culture in accordance with the data revealed by the national specificity. Romanian culture became, for a long time, a predominantly historical and philological one; the historical - philological writings display its decisive contents. The development of such research shed light on the existence of an individual national specificity, of Romanian culture, whereas the studies of Hașdeu, continued in the same spirit by Pârvan, have established the role of the autochthonous, archaic element in the formation of Romanian spirituality. The most lasting achievement of the development of historical - philological research is no doubt — as Renan masterly pointed out in the case of Renaissance humanism — the formation and sharpening of the critical spirit and, consequently, the first beginnings of an incipient critical mentality appearing within the Romanian culture.

Titu Maiorescu represents a crucial moment in the history of national specificity. Protesting against the excess of history and philology he moves the treatment of the national specificity to the field of philosophical thinking and thus the Romanian mentality of the epoch becomes more consistent. Drawing up the ideological program of the

“Junimea” group, Maiorescu calls the individualisation through “nationalisation”, the imperative of Romanian culture that can be implemented only by encouraging a major spiritual creation. The origin of this latter term derives precisely from the adherence to national culture. Maiorescu’s action appeared extremely up-to-date after the activity in 1848, an activity that consisted predominantly of imitation and the adaptation of foreign models and trends and led, in his opinion, to “denationalisation”. Romanian culture has to free itself from the network of foreign influences and of borrowings in order to have a corpus of its own; it has to individualise itself, to develop its own specificity. Maiorescu sets the Romanian national specificity against cultural imitation which produced the discrepancy between form and basis in the Romanian culture of that time. In this sense, G. Călinescu saw in Maiorescu “the first who drafted” the theory of “national specificity”, exalting popular poetry and creating a true Romanian language²⁷, whereas E. Lovinescu noted that “from 1867 already, Maiorescu lays stress on the ethnic character of art”²⁸. Călinescu thinks that Maiorescu follows in Schopenhauer’s footsteps in his theory: Schopenhauer follows the Platonic metaphysics in which the perfect Idea realises itself in the imperfect concrete material. Similarly, the metaphysical idea of the nation is incorporated in different historical nations, national literature existing only through the medium of ethnic individuals²⁹. In Maiorescu’s opinion, the corpus of Romanian culture lies deep within the fertile land of the Romanian people just as a potential statue does - to take again the Aristotelian comparison - in a marble block. The historical development of Romanian culture seems to Maiorescu an organic one, controlled by certain virtualities planted from the beginning in the nucleus of national specificity, given somehow as an aprioric base, the way in which the seed prefigures - in Hegelian terms - the grown-up plant: in other words an incomplete syllogism. Maiorescu proves to be a predecessor of Blaga through this apriorizing tendency. The consequence

²⁷ G. Ibrăileanu, *Spiritul critic în cultura românească*, Iași, Editura Junimea, 1970, p. 31.

²⁸ E. Lovinescu, *Titu Maiorescu*, București, Editura Minerva, 1972, p. 511.

²⁹ G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române. Compendiu*, 1946, p. 159.

of Maiorescian ideals consists of the fruitful creative activism that pervades Romanian culture which tries to throw light upon its national specificity and to sustain it by national creation. The flourishing of the national culture at the beginning of the century and between the two world wars, the real Romanian “Renaissance”, can be explained by this.

But Maiorescianism does not clear up an important philosophical issue: the taking shape of the rigorously drawn horizon of national specificity, the culture of a people evolving through creations that permanently bring something new. How does this creative endeavour fit in with the aprioric scheme of national specificity? Consequently, though Romanian culture follows to a great extent “Maiorescian” ideals in the second half of the last century, its subsequent evolution, at the beginning of the next century, occasionally turns against Maiorescu.

What is Blaga’s contribution to this dispute? Certainly, the creator of the philosophical system of the *Trilogies* never contested the decisive role of historical - philological research that was a progressive means of national self - knowledge. On the contrary, as V. I. Streinu remarked: “The author of *The Praise of Sleep* is our only poet until today who extracted, without methods and display, the ideal form and stable boundary of our identity within the ideal of a nation mirrored in history and who has purged the mystical breeze of poetry of orthodoxism, stiff ritual and embellishment”³⁰. He places the problem of Romanian national specificity once and for all within the field of philosophy. Though this is much more moving, it offers a much wider theoretical horizon. Philosophy itself gains a greater dignity this way, becoming the only means of the most explicit self-knowledge of a nation, the supreme form of national self - knowledge. In fact, there is a “criticist” analysis applied to Romanian cultural conscience: through Kant, cognitive conscience takes itself as the object of cognition. It becomes the knowledge of knowledge, knowledge about knowledge. Through the action of Blaga’s philosophy, the Romanian cultural conscience takes itself as the object of cognition, becoming a theoretical problem of cultural-philosophical cognition and a motion of

³⁰ Vl. Streinu, *Pagini de critică literară*, Editura pentru Literatură, 1968, vol. II, p. 86.

original cultural creation, offering the most effective way of determining the specificity of Romanian cultural conscience. The philosophy of Blaga is in essence a theory of national cultural conscience, of self - conscience, of the Romanian conscience, in other words.

Once found and formulated, the coordinative lines of national specificity have to be transposed to the corpus of the Romanian culture by the act of cultural creation. Philosophically speaking, the question is how can a national community's act of creating culture and civilisation be inserted in the cosmic and justified ontologically. This form of Romanian thought which tries to explain and justify philosophically the act of creation is represented by C. Rădulescu - Motru and L. Blaga; the former contributed to it by his energetic personality, the latter by his philosophy of culture. Essentially, they both try to reformulate the problem of creation in terms of a more flexible reasoning capable of accepting invention and also from the perspective of an ontology of opening which is not hostile towards new thinking.

* * *

The metaphysics of style led Blaga towards a theory of the stylistic specificity of Romanian culture. The theory of Romanian national specificity appears in the general "economy" of his philosophy as a completion and extension of his conception of the metaphysics of style, more precisely by the application of metaphysics to the analysis of the phenomenon of the Romanian culture. Blaga's thought descends from the sphere of abstract metaphysical speculation to a concrete basis, that of his own national culture. Blaga formulates the idea of the Romanian cultural specificity as the existence of an apriorism. His considerations follow spiritually the Măiorescian aprioristic standpoint. "In fact, this apriorism - says Blaga - is nothing else other than a more pregnant philosophical circumlocution of the statement about the existence of some active stylistic elements which leave their indelible mark on the products of our ethnic genius"³¹. In terms of this apriorism, "Romanianness seems to us an

³¹ L. Blaga, *Trilogia culturii*, p. 332.

aggregate deriving from latencies and achievements”³². The theory of national specificity set forth in *Spațiul Mioritic* - debatable, especially because of its lesser organic articulation in a speculative metaphysics of style - is, in its profundity and proportions, an unsurpassed achievement of Blagian philosophy, offering a deeper and more subtle understanding of the phenomenon of the Romanian culture³³.

The Blagian theory of national specificity, organically integrated in the system, sheltered from immanent criticism by its organicity, seems to us less resistant in some of its seams. Nevertheless this does not diminish its overall value and importance.

1) Irrationalists and rationalists alike have reproached Blaga for having placed the stylistic element in the unconscious. N. Crainic, for example, ad - hoc defender of the conscious, says that the unconscious, often confused with the instinct, is the part of man which “eludes scientific investigations and the control of mind”³⁴. From the opposite side, M. Ralea notes that “the unconscious is a depression, a falling from a superior and recent state of mind in a primitive and early state, a fall due to the tiredness of nervous centres”³⁵. The introduction of the unconscious in philosophy is equivalent with the birth of a primitive and antisocial state of mind induced by a nervous state and annulling of the topicality of conscience”³⁶. Blaga considers the unconscious to be analogous with the conscious, not vice versa. The unconscious has a power of organising and creating, its structure is not characteristic but cosmotic; it is the object of “abyssal noology”, a special scientific discipline.

Blaga considers that man is part of the great cosmic order that emanates from the Logos not only by his own, individual logos, by the

³² *Ibidem*, p. 334.

³³ We do not insist on some minor aspects of Lucian Blaga’s doctrine on national specificity. They are properly explained in *National Specificity in Romanian Aesthetic Doctrines*, by T. Popescu. (Cluj - Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1977, p. 205-234)

³⁴ N. Crainic, *Nostalgia paradisului*, București, Editura Cugetarea, 1940, p. 248.

³⁵ M. Ralea, *Problema inconștientului*, Editura Viața Românească, f. an, p. 43.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

intellect, by the conscious but also by the unconscious which, in his opinion, is not radically opposed to the conscious. It is not the total negation of it. On account of the style that originates and ascends from the unconscious, as such, appears as the centre of some cosmic forces that integrate the human being, with the superior order of cosmic rationality. Although Blaga accepts the hypothesis, scientific in his time, of a psychism, of a positive unconscious, his explanation of the stylistic elements by the unconscious is not wholly rational. It has the “*obscurum per obscurior*” logical error.

2) Blaga, a thinker of neoromantic style and a descendant of the Romantics, accepts the proteism of historical and cultural forms brought in different national communities. He justifies the national tendencies of becoming independent and autonomous by attributing it to the result of spiritual life of humankind which divides the lines of national cultures. Though his speculations on this theme enrich the nationalistic ideal, the abstract naturalism of his philosophy of style cannot give a proper explanation for the switch from the level of general metaphysical speculations on style to the level of the concrete realisation of style, that is, the level of national cultures. Culture manifests itself in national forms. How can we explain the differentiation of original stylistic categories that lead to the variety of national cultures? A satisfactory explanation needs a reference to social - historical elements that motivate these differences. It also requires the renouncing of metaphysics.

3) Blaga deduces the “stylistic matrix” of the Romanian culture from what he calls “minor culture”; this matrix functions especially on the level of “folks culture” and from this level it is extended to “major (town) culture”, too. The concept of the stylistic matrix of Romanian culture is limited to its premodern ethnographic basis; it is restricted to a given epoch, namely, the premodern, and to a given place, the village³⁷.

4) The Blagian theory of the Romanian “stylistic matrix” suffers from a-historicism that endows it with a static metaphysical character which causes conflict with general activism that pervades the whole

³⁷ H. H. Stahl, *Eseuri critice. Despre cultura populară românească*, București, Editura Minerva, 1980, p. 71 - 148.

creation of the great poet and philosopher. According to Blaga, the subconscious as the source of stylistic elements, evolves in a given historical situation. Once evolved, it remains unchanged. Nevertheless, as Ath. Joja writes in his substantial essay, *The Spiritual Structure of the Romanians*, “the original nucleus had not been a mere gift, accepted passively, but a *creation* of the Romanians who, using elements from their immediate ancestors, turned them into their own original property”³⁸. In this difficult discussion, the truth lies, in our opinion, from the historian’s standpoint. As the same Ath. Joja says: “The moral aspect of the Romanians and of any other people, has been formed within its history; that is, within social and economical boundaries, determined by its production, by habits, by the political and juridical organization, by favourable or unfavourable circumstances, by relationships with other peoples and by battles and wars”³⁹.

³⁸ Ath. Joja, *Logos și ethos*, București, Editura Politică, 1967, p. 291.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 281.