

Historical Time as the Historian's Time

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Abstract: The paper tries to present the way in which the Romanian historian, Alexandru Lapedatu (1876–1954) at the beginning of the 20th century tackled the present he was living in, which was situated at the intersection between the past as the space of experience and the future as a horizon of expectation. His meditation on the present time elaborated in 1902 evaluated the period subsequent to 1900 – period which went through all the millenarian and eschatological outbursts at the borderline between the two centuries – as a favourable present, as a time of progress and fulfilment. Alexandru Lapedatu affirmed that the present he lived in was characterized by a breach between tradition (conservatism) and progress (modernity). The relationship between past, present, and future can be brought back to balance, this breach can be left behind by resorting to some values which must be cultivated in the public space: respect for traditions, valorising the positive experiences of history, the reconstruction of collective identity which must be centred on cultural historical and ethnical unity and on the ideal of the Romanian territory's political unity.

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1. From a favourable present to a better future: time – history – historicity

The first years of the 20th century brought to the Romanian world in Transylvania and in the Old Kingdom – more than in other periods – an intense and persevering “self”-reflexivity, as the expression, first of all, of a historicism, which, in turn, presupposed “the self understanding of the spirit inasmuch as this creates itself in history”.¹ This reflexivity, as self-questioning, triggered a great debate regarding the contemporary confrontation of the Romanian nation with the past as an essential element of an identity code, while the historical component of the collective identity remained one of the “leading ideas” which animated this debate. It is not superfluous to mention the fact that in this period a series of discussions and studies were issued on the subject of “Romanianism”, the “Romanian soul”, the “Romanian people's psychology”, the authors and participants being the great personalities of the age, such as Ovid Densusăianu, Bogdan Petriceicu Haşdeu, Nicolae Iorga, Garabet Ibrăileanu, Vasile

¹ R. Dudău, “Istorism – historicism” (Historism –Historicism), *Revista de istorie socială*, I (1996): 294. The analysis of the relationship between historicism and self-awareness see in Alexandru Zub, *Istorie și finalitate. In căutarea identității* (History and Finality. Searching for the Identity), (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 19–30.

Pîrvan, etc.¹ This debate and reflexivity was subsequent, as the time of reflection and self-analysis, to a time of action between 1859 and 1900, a time of the great institutional and political reforms realized in the Old Kingdom. A suggestive passage was therefore made from the time of construction to the time of meditation, from the time of action to that of reflective respite.

In 1901, Alexandru Lapedatu,² one of the future leading figures of the history school of Cluj University in the interwar period, elaborated a lecture entitled *Cîteva idei conducătoare în viața noastră românească* (Some Leading Ideas in Our Romanian Life), a lecture held in the Historical Society of the Students in Letters at the University of Bucharest. In this lecture he analyzed some regulating and guiding ideas of the Romanian public life such as: conservatism and the value of tradition to which he associated the cult of the ancestors, as *mos maiorum*, or as *in spe prisca honoris* opposed to the cosmopolitanism and servility of the present, the idea of the nation's unity as the leading life norm of the present, patriotism as the "love of nation" and civic spirit constructed and animated by the "the choicest virtues of the good citizens who work, fight, and sacrifice themselves for our common good". These leading ideas as stimuli and regulating factors of public life were placed by Alexandru Lapedatu into the context of a present "in which a betterment is stirring". On the other hand it must be mentioned that this lecture by Alexandru Lapedatu carried out a reflective, founding, and introductory act, similar contributions being elaborated by the history school of Cluj University in the interwar period.

The Romanian problem, from the perspective of our collective identity and of the self-reflexivity directed to the encounter between this identity and history, as a meeting between destiny and time (destiny representing the identity and time representing history) belonged to a set of ideas and sensibilities of the early 20th century full of significations. We refer to a big debate triggered at that time and focused on a *new historic time*, a new system of historicity which was elaborated in this period. Starting from the concept of historicity as a "common function" of an implicit existence, aggregated by a kind of solidarity and "interrelations" between people which obliges to and determines a change and a delimitation of the "collective condition" in the sense of freedom as will and choice,³ historical time was converted in a particular and lively self-consciousness. From another perspective, this lecture by Alexandru Lapedatu can be associated with a reckoning at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, a reckoning which transcended the "intellectual" and conventional rationality of chronology, and, because of this, tried to fill humanly a time as a historic time. It was a

¹ Cf. Dumitru Drăghicescu, *Din psihologia poporului român* (From the Psychology of the Romanian People) (București, 1907); Garabet Ibrăileanu, "Românismul" (Romanianism), *Viața românească*, I (1906): 431; Vasile Pîrvan published the journal *Românismul* in 1913; Ovid Densușianu, "Românismul nostru" (Our Romanianism), *Viața nouă*, I (1905); Nicolae Iorga, "Sufletul românesc" (The Romanian Soul), *Neamul românesc*, December 4, 1909; Nicolae Iorga, *Sufletul românesc* (Iași, 1917); Constantin Rădulescu Motru, *Românismul*, 2nd ed. (București, 1939), etc.

² Alexandru Lapedatu (1876–1954), University Professor in Cluj (1919–1938), he founded with Ioan Lupaș the Institute of National History in Cluj (1920), member of the Romanian Academy, Minister in several interwar governments. He was a political prisoner in the Communist prison of Sighet, where he died in 1954.

³ Charles Moraze, *La logique de l'histoire*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 59–61.

forerunner of René Remond's work *A Look at the Century*, which a century later analyzes historical time as a qualitative, axiological, and human time, if "there is no fatality, people are those who make the history they live".¹

Lapedatu's lecture was delivered in the moment or in the age when a *better – future – time* was envisioned and systematized in Romanian public discussions. The millenarian and eschatological outbursts and especially the psychosis of the year 1900 were left behind, being followed by an age of *joie de vivre*, of exuberance, and the religion of progress, consumed and regurgitated in a stimulating but paradoxical public space.² It was an age when the chiliast prophet was substituted for or converted by the "good missionary", as an allegory of the good time, herald of an era and time of welfare and good deeds. A description of this allegory of the good time we can find in a literary and fictional essay suggestively entitled *After 1900, around Noon* by Mircea Horea Simionescu. Thus, the good missionary comes by a "varnished berlin with an emblem, escorted by eight riders", or arrives by a "train in the third carriage, surrounded by counsellors and experts". With "a bright face, in his eyes glittered the warm light of humanity and good will", he comes by his bicycle with Michelin tyres, the back wheel surpassing the height of a robust man. In another example he is brought by a "white ship with a flag flying in the wind, and on the deck, the waited for man answers the cheers waving his white colonial hat".

The emotion accompanying the waiting for, the encounter with, or the exultant entrance of the "good missionary", the herald of a new time is counterpoised rationally and moderately by the analyzing and evaluating observer in the position of objective recorder, who can be taken for the historian-witness as a imperturbable *raisonneur*: "pardon me, dear contemporaries, if I cannot participate with you in the joy of welcoming the one looked for. The profession. Greatness. My task in this revolving scene is to record the events strictly from a statistical point of view. Scientific coolness is my climate and a curious placidity my method".³

These are sequences which illustrate, on the level of a scenography and a chronotope which comprises in one time and space the cultural and technical achievements (boat, train, bicycle, stagecoach), a melioristic optimism and fever. This social time as a human representation and sensibility, benevolently and epichronically demands self-evaluations and ethical-cultural orderings. The hedonistic mechanics of time, despite all its melioristic projections, elaborated in the first years of the century, did not reject realistic self-reflection; on the contrary, this relaxed time provoked and encouraged it. It was an occasion to assume History efficiently and beneficently, from "Chronos" to "Cronos", that is, from an imaginary time to a real time. This chance is offered to those who "were able to find by right means the correct distance from the time of history, and who, because of this, obtained the joy of being in a time where they feel free to create; this joy is not only the joy of finding the time, but also of finding reality, for time is where the self relates to reality."⁴

¹ René Remond, *Privire asupra secolului* (București: Nemira, 2008), 120.

² Doru Radosav, *Sentimentul religios la români. O perspectivă istorică (Sec. XVII–XX)* [Religious Feeling at the Romanians. A Historical Perspective (17–20th Century)], (Cluj: Ed. Dacia, 1997), 11.

³ M. H. Simionescu, *După 1900, pe la amiază* (București: Ed. Eminescu, 1974), 5–9.

⁴ Alain Besançon, "Chronos et Cronos", in *Histoire et expérience du moi* (Paris: Flammarion, 1971), 212.



Ana-Maria Călinescu, *Sunday*, Tempera on paper (420 × 297 mm.)

Consequently, this meditation and reflexivity which belongs to the so called *regime of historicity*¹ are demanded by the present time's chances of change, of amelioration, and implicitly by the renewal of collective identity. The regime of historicity questions our relationship with time, and starting from the different time experiences, it can give the measure for the exact understanding of both the collective identity as well as of the present of this identity. The understanding through time or through experience (historical experience) of the time of this identity is questioned, especially during the so called "temporal crises" when past, present, and future are not clearly articulated.

In the optimistic atmosphere after 1900 the projection of the Romanian collective identity and the provocations of the future regarding this identity were encouraged. The approach of the future to the present in this period at the beginning of the 20th century was demanded by the break between the field of experience (the past) and the horizon of expectations (the future). The outlining of the horizon of expectations, encouraged by the optimism of the age, requires a restructuration or perfecting in the present data of the Romanian collective identity. The imperatives of such a restructuration burden the present with new responsibilities and potentialities. Alexandru Lapedatu, in the above mentioned essay, prevalently commanding with regard to the present change of the Romanian identity due to his historic training, articulated harmoniously the projection of the future through the imperatives of the present, and also through the legitimacy and exemplarity of the past. The present was approached to the past by reducing the maximum limit of the break between the past and the future by an appeal to traditions and to the exemplarity of the predecessors' deeds.

This effort or imperative to reconstitute a "historico-political continuum" in the Romanian identity was dominant in Romanian public discussions at the beginning of the 20th century, and the phase shifts in the modernity of Romanian society generated the break between the past and the future. Alexandru Lapedatu's resorting to a few "leading ideas" in our Romanian life was an attempt to refill the present with the values of the past, as well as an attempt to mark the horizon of expectations in the Romanian public space. The wishes for the political unity of the Romanian territory remained the dominant elements of such a discussion and the rationality line of this horizon of expectations. Political action as a present and future time resorted for legitimizing to the past, to history, which offered unceasingly and at any time leading ideas for the Romanian life. The unification of time (past–present–future), as a dynamic immanent to any regime of historicity, corresponds in great lines to the Romanian public discussions from the beginning of the 20th century, to political unity. In Lapedatu's view *temporal unity* is fulfilled and objectified in *political unity*. This is, in our opinion, one of the most profound and refined interpretations regarding the regime of historicity (a contemporary concept frequently used nowadays in the theory of history) produced by Romanian historian a century ago.

The historical particularity of "leading ideas" is related to Lapedatu's historical training, but this historical particularity has "its own history", if we refer to 19th century Romanian political thinking and action, when important personalities of Romanian

¹ François Hartog, *Regimes d'historicite. Presentisme et experience du temps* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), 26–30.

public life were preoccupied with writing and making history,¹ which, in a current variant, can be interpreted as a suggestion to those who are familiar with history and make history. More precisely, to know the history means to make history from your own present time.

Starting naturally from this historicist and political mark of “leading ideas”, the generation of historians represented by Alexandru Lapedatu made an intense analysis on time in its past, present, and future forms. We refer, first of all, to the modality in which experience regarding the past is relevant in the present, and which involves a certain form of experiencing time and the discourse on time. Lapedatu started from a critical consciousness of the present time, for this present was in a crisis of sense. Consequently, this was a temporal crisis as a crisis of sense.² In such a critical state discussion on some governing ideas which would reorder the present was welcome. These “leading ideas” “have occurred and have been observable – for a rather long while – in the conservation of all those good Romanians who realize the deficiencies of our national life, who feel that in the core of the Romanian society a betterment is stirring since the present, and those who understand this betterment which cannot happen unless when the Romanian soul gets free from the complete disorientation in which it has been struggling for whole decades, gaining a unity of views with the aim of a unified action, which any enlightened nation – especially ours – must have as the final goal of its perfect national life.”³

Consequently, the present time, optimistic and melioristic, in the acceleration of historical time, and, consequently, more and more detached or distant from the past, metachronic, advancing from its cultural-historical and ethical bases, must be bound to some leading ideas. In conformity with the opinion of *belle époque* French historians it can be stated that “the present has an infinity of principles”⁴ depending on the founding distance of the past. This metachronic advance of the present eludes, due to its extra-national and cosmopolitan construction, that “sensus historicus”⁵ which serves as a basis for the organic and unitary passing of time. The advance of the present triggers discussions such as the one launched by Alexandru Lapedatu on the reconnection of a present, directed exclusively towards the future, with a past which offers not only exemplarity, but also a History converted into identity self-consciousness.⁶ These analyses by Alexandru Lapedatu are similar to the 19th century views of Johann Gustav

¹ Cf. Alexandru Zub, *A scrie și a face istorie* (To Write and to Make History) (Iași: Junimea, 1981); Alexandru Zub, *Istoria și istorici în România interbelică* (History and Historians in Interwar Romania) (Iași: Junimea, 1989), 91 et sq.; M. Chioveanu, “Istoricii și politica în România interbelică” (Historians and Politics in Interwar Romania), in *The Yearbook of the A. Xenopol Historical Institute* (Iași: 2002–2003), 592–612.

² Cf. Jean Chesneaux, *Habiter le temps. Passe, present, futur: esquisse d'un dialogue politique* (Paris: Bayard, 1996).

³ Alexandru Lapedatu, *Cîteva idei conducătoare în viața noastră românească* (Some Leading Ideas in Our Romanian Life) (București: 1902), 1.

⁴ Jean Leduc, *Les historiens et le Temps. Conceptions, problematique, ecriture* (Paris: Seuil, 1999), 58.

⁵ Horst Gunther, *Le temps de l'histoire* (Paris: Ed. De la Maison de sciences de l'homme, 1996), 232.

⁶ Reinhart Koselleck, *Le futur passe. Contribution a la semantique des temps historiques* (Paris: Ed. De l'Ecole des hautes etudes en sciences sociales, 1990), 43.

Droysen,¹ which associated history to identity or the expression of self-consciousness. This reconnection aimed at the reordering of time starting also from the “sociological coordination and integration” functions, in Norbert Elias’ opinion,² is realized by means of metamorphoses and the conformation of the present, metachronic and with unruly events, to a processual historical time. The starting premise is that events do not only happen in time, but also along time.³ This ordering and conformation between an excessively event-centred, fervent present, projected futuristically and a processual historical time can be translated as the conciliation of *pathos* and *chronos*.

From another perspective, this rejoining of the present with the past and of the *events* with *history* requires an integrative reconstruction of factuality, of the event, and of diversity. The disorientation of “the Romanian soul in which it has been struggling for decades” imposes on the solution of “a unity of views with the aim of a unified action” in order to “perfect national life”. The same ideas were repeated by Alexandru Lapedatu later, on November 6, 1919, in the opening lecture of the lecture course in Old Romanian History at the University of Cluj when, beyond the configuration and preservation of national unity through history-knowledge, he affirmed both the political and identity postulates of studying the past. The historical legitimation of these postulates determined, through the conformation of the present to the past, and modified, within a regime of historicity, the relationship with the future. The future is refilled with the present by the achievement of political unity, while the historical discourse is marked by the political discourse. Thus Alexandru Lapedatu affirmed that “the study of the unfolding of the entire Romanian people’s unified history is imposed on as a postulate of our future political unity; today this study is imposed on as a necessity of this unity itself, which from a problem of the future has become a reality of the present”.⁴

In these circumstances, the object of history-knowledge, namely political unity argued and perceived historically, becomes a common law subject, namely, the politically unified state Romania. The transformation of the object into the subject of the past and the future in an encounter fulfilled in the present consecrates, in an original way, the presentistic dimension of the regime of historicity which replaces the futuristic one. A “potential and positive” future was “presentified”.⁵ In the conditions of a “dilated” present, according to Pierre Nora’s formulation, the present takes over from the past the collective self-consciousness or the “understanding of the self”.⁶ At a distance of over 15 years, in 1919, Alexandru Lapedatu, at the interference between the experience of time (history as political events) and the experience of historical knowledge, realized the itinerary of a new regime of historicity in which the historical writing left behind the self-referential pattern and drew anew the start line of a new experience of time, concomitant with its becoming exhausted and declassified in the field of public debate. Associated so far to the experience of time (namely until the achievement of political unity in 1918), historical writing became from this moment

¹ Cf. Johann Gustav Droysen, *Historik*, (Berlin: 1943), 325.

² Norbert Elias, *Du temps* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), 66.

³ Hartog, *Regimes d’historicite...*, 117.

⁴ Alexandru Lapedatu, *Scrieri alese* (Selected Writings) (Cluj: Dacia, 1985), 66.

⁵ François Dosse, *L’histoire ou le temps reflechi* (Paris: Hatier, 1999), 63.

⁶ Pierre Nora, *Le lieux de memoire*, Tome III, vol. I, (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 25.

much rather an intellectual than a political experience, an experience from the area of “the progress of science itself, pure, high, ideal”.¹

Beyond the ethical-political significations of such a discussion, in the field of historical epistemology a meditation can be started on that which nowadays is called in the theory of contemporary history “countertime”. This is a heterogeneous, polyrhythmic present and past reality with different temporalities, with anachronisms and telescoping of time. Reality as countertime² must be temporalized, historicized, demultiplied. An inductive immixing is necessary, such as that of history in a disoriented present in order to rediscover the sense of historicity, to integrate the contemporaneity of time and to produce the *integral identity of time with itself*.³ The altered, disoriented distribution of events in the present must be oriented, as Lapedatu affirmed, towards a future of the “perfection of national life” and towards a “future work of national regeneration”. This type of sublimity of the future time produces a futuristic recomposing of the present time, placid and hedonic, circumstantial and domestic. In fact this was the spreading out of “leading ideas” as utilizations required by “our justified future aspirations”. On a secondary level, the political markings of time can be discovered in Alexandru Lapedatu’s view. The present, consecutive to a past fractured by the modernity of the 19th century, which tends to institute a cosmopolitan and disintegrating regime of historicity, must critically recover the past, as it must approach and must approach responsibly a future time eminently political. This means a balance between the *approach* to the past and *approach* to the future, a balance which can be realized in the work of the present.

These leading ideas which Alexandru Lapedatu puts at the basis of Romanian public life are essentially the future projection of the present. Starting from this statement, it can be stated that Lapedatu gave evidence of attempt developed around a “past future”, as it was understood in our age by Reinhart Koselleck,⁴ namely that “in each present, the temporal dimensions of the past and the future are related”. The past future consists of the present prefiguration of the future. From the projects of the past and until they can be named the “feasibility of history”⁵ circumscribed by the syntagma *making history*, a discourse is unfolded the authorial dispositive of which is divided between a voluntary and injunctive pole and one impersonal and objective. Starting from a past which has the role to activate and to project the future, Alexandru Lapedatu in 1902 elaborated a project of the future caused by some leading ideas, a project addressed to a community of students at the University of Bucharest. The forms and ways of existence and flexion of this future can be allocated to a gradual temporal structure: from the *far future* (“we shall have a great part in the work of national regeneration”) to a *near future* (“what can be expected in the nearest future”) and to a *past future* (“only approaching them and working for them we shall attain our justified future aspirations”). If the far future marks a complete and *idealized* future, near future marks a *predictable* one, and the past future presses together the past and future by means of a *voluntaristic* present, that is, the space of experience (past) and that of the horizon of expectation (future). Withdrawn from the perception of the regime of historicity, this temporal

¹ Lapedatu, *Scieri alese*, 76.

² Régine Robin, *La memoire saturee*, (Paris: Stock, 2003), 37.

³ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴ Koselleck, *Le futur passe...*, 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 239 et seq.

structure which illustrates Alexandru Lapedatu's reflections situated in a late modernity connotes the over-dimensioning of the horizon of expectations as compared to the space of experience.

What must be remarked, however, is a particularization within this discourse or speech on the past, the eminently political-ethical particularization of this gradual future. The political projection (national regeneration) and ethical legitimacy ("justification") of the future are articulated by the cultural-historical identity ("they must not be separated from our entire nature"). This meditation on the future time coming from a historian recovers, in a *sui generis* way on a discursive level, the relationship between the past as experience (as *res factae*), as history of the historian and the future (as *res factae*) as a horizon of expectations. The political recalibration/result/repercussion of such a meditation resuscitates an organic theme of the historical writing, namely, its public, political, legal institutionalization, or the placing of the historiographical discourse beyond the academic circles in the configurations of the agora and pretorium, on a trajectory marked by document–testimony–deposition–confession.¹

Beyond the political recalibration/result/repercussion of the meditation on time, which throws an external glance on historical time, there is, however also a look on historical time from the interior of general time. Either this general time is superposed to the historical time in which the messianic and soteriological dimension of the course of the world is lent to the historical time and, from where the assertion that "evolutions are not abstract and time is political" (historical time theorized by revolutions and the totalitarian regimes) arises, or time is historically temporalized under the conditions of the time-world or of the globalization of time, we perceive the multiplication of history's rationality lines. Because of this, a nonlinear, open, multiple, and democratic historical time is recomposed. Starting from here, it can be stated that political time is exchanged for a *political culture of time*,² which means a creative historical time, open towards the future. Similarly, a civic and democratic time management is realized; a consolidation of the present time with the cultural time that can be turned into a cultural heritage; a reformulation of the dialogue between the historical time as a human time and natural time as time of eco-philosophy.

2. The thematic outline of the leading ideas of the present time: 180 years of identity debated between conservatism and estrangement

Following tactically in the line of the teachings popularized during the revolutions of 1848 referring to the 18 centuries of history to which the history of Romanians in the wider sense is superposed, not necessarily ethnically, from the antiquity up to the present, Alexandru Lapedatu configured a regime of historicity in its component of experience and view of a time of collective identity, linear, homogeneous, closed, and hermetic: "for one who looks at the unfolding of the Romanian people's life, in all respects, in the course of the 18 centuries of its existence on this earth, a too characteristic fact is revealed: its *conservatism* (the emphasis is mine, D. R.). directly

¹ Cf. Marc Ferro, *L'histoire sous surveillance* (Paris: Calman-Levy, 1985); Henry Rousso (dir.), *Le regard de l'histoire* (Paris: 2003); Carlo Ginzburg, *Le juge et l'historien* (Lagrasse Verdier, 1997); Jean-Noël Jeamene, *Le passe dans le pretoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1998); François Bedarida, *Histoire critique et responsabilité* (Bruxelles: Complexe, 2003); Guy Zelis (dir.), *L'historien dans l'espace publique* (Louvain et Labor, 2005).

² Chesneaux, *Habiter le temps...*, 269 et sq.

and indirectly, subjected to so many foreign influences which tended to annihilate it both on an ethical and social field, as well as on a political and cultural field, the Romanian people has held out, it wavered sometimes, but it has never fallen.”¹

The correlations of Romanian historical time with a Christian and Christological historical time unrolled in the course of 18 centuries involve correlations between history “in itself”, as a *historia civilis* and *historia sacra* which becomes a history of salvation adaptable then as a history of progress.² Thus, Nicolae Bălcescu, in the introduction to *Românii supt Mihai Voievod Viteazul* (The Romanians under Mihai Voivode, the Brave), starting from the time of the Christian history of the 18 centuries, projected on this chronological horizon the history of “the Romanian nation”: “18 and a half centuries have past since Christ succeeded in turning over the old world, the pagan civilization, which represented the outer, objective principle of nature and constraint, substituting it for another world; another civilization based on the subjective principle, on the absolute development of human thought and action in time and space and through the identity between the essence of man’s spiritual nature and the essence of divine nature... he discovered to each individual the law of freedom...”³

The 18 centuries represent history, namely “the absolute development of human thought and action in time and space”. In the recapitulative succession, the 18 centuries mean the divino-human history in the context of an external natural history, that of the old, pagan world of “nature and constraint”. Christian history as human history is in fact a history of human freedom in the Hegelian sense. The 18 centuries represent, however, also an evolution of the world in the sense of that “ethos of justice”⁴ in which history as justice and law is providentially and soteriologically directed towards that *judicium maximum* of Augustinian conception, towards the end of time. Those “18 centuries of toil and suffering of the Romanian people on itself”, as Nicolae Bălcescu formulated, are given a solution by divine justice, “the too high aim which God hides from us and where he awaits us”.⁵ Similarly, these 18 centuries in his formulation determined by the ideas of 1848 represents a *break* between the space of experience (of history) and that of the future (of progress). The regime of historicity, in this case, re-dimensions in its favour the future by means of the association between present and future. The year 1848 with its recreations inaugurated a double age of progress, present and future, of the *progress from progress*, of an active and irresistible future time: “and each of these successive transformations was a progress as compared to the former state and each gave birth to progress”.⁶

Alexandru Lapedatu assimilated and assumed in a moderate manner this teaching of the 1848 generation, showing a temperance resulting from 50 years of experience, from half a century of a past during which the barricade harshness and radicalism had attenuated, weakened. The historical perspectivism produced and maintained by the temporal and visual distancing as well as the one induced by the critical spirit which galvanized the public discourse of the age or the “critical disposition

¹ Lapedatu, *Cîteva idei conducătoare...*, 5.

² Reinhart Koselleck, *Conceptul de istorie* (The Concept of History) (Iași: 2005), 62 et sq.

³ P. Teodor, *Evoluția gândirii istorice românești* (The Evolution of Romanian Historical Thinking) (Cluj: Dacia, 1870), 163.

⁴ Reinhart Koselleck, *L’expérience de l’histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 163.

⁵ Teodor, *Evoluția gândirii...*, 166–171.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

of the age”¹ – when critical historiography expressed itself plenarily and centrally in one of the most important journals of the age, *Convorbiri literare*, led between 1902 and 1906 by the historian Ioan Bogdan – was assumed with great dexterity by Alexandru Lapedatu.

The thematic circumscriptions of the leading ideas outlined by Alexandru Lapedatu in his lecture in 1902 were eminently *cultural-identitary*. The strictly historical system of the leading ideas was greatly blurred by the dominants of configuring collective identities and the public spirit “of our Romanian life”. The entire discussion on the orientation of public life launched by Alexandru Lapedatu was projected on a “space of experience of the 18 centuries”. The 18 centuries delimit a time which is both of history and of tradition, as the field of reference is divided between “our fathers and forefathers” as “traditions of a people” (tradition) and “the forebears of our people up to the Romans” (history).

Against such a cultural indentitary background the dominant theme corresponding to the leading ideas was the *conservatism* of the Romanian people. This “fact too characteristic” to the Romanian people can be recognized through “the tendency which has been and must be to us as well a principle of life, *to build forever the new life on the old one* (the emphasis is mine, D. R.), to preserve a line of continuity”.² Therefore, the conservatism stated by Lapedatu is moderated, he accepting the “new life” only connected to tradition and the history of the long duration. This cultural-historical continuum was interrupted in the second half of the 19th century by the process of modernization. The physiognomy of modernization, beyond the political, institutional, social acquisitions and achievements (freedom, independence, the union, the constitutional acts, putting the serfs in possession of land, the kingship, etc.) carries in itself, however, a too great break between tradition and modernity. The modern construction of Romania belongs, as it is indirectly suggested by Alexandru Lapedatu’s statements, from the tendencies inherent to the national spirit (“the time of national rebirth will come in the age called the age of nationalities”) being the expression of an autotelism which directed Romanian history confronted with the “spirit of the age”, which seemed to dislocate gradually the strictly ethnical and national frames of these modernization.

Alexandru Lapedatu appears through these analyses an anti-modern personality according to the current meaning of the theories circumscribed to anti-moderns. More precisely, he is a modern who approached modernity critically, someone who cultivated “doubt, ambivalence, nostalgia”,³ or, in other words, “the anti-modern quality does not consist of the flat refusal of modernity, but of an ambivalent attitude towards it, in an inner fret. We may say that the true moderns are those who have reserves, who are critical towards modernity, and not those who adhere to it unconditionally”.⁴

The exclusive cultivation of modernization and the uncritical adoption “of the newest western civilization was our *estrangement* (the emphasis is mine, D. R.)” which

¹ Alexandru Zub, *De la istoria critică la criticism* (From Critical History to Criticism) (București: Ed. Academiei, 1985), 28.

² Lapedatu, *Cîteva idei conducătoare...*, 5.

³ Antoine Compagnon, *Antimodernii. De la Joseph de Maistre la Roland Barthes* (Anti-Moderns from Maistre to Roland Barthes) (București: Ed. Art, 2008), 13.

⁴ M. Martin, *Prefață la Antoine Compagnon...* (Preface to Antoine Compagnon), 5.

produces a collective identity and a *cosmopolitan* public spirit.¹ On the one hand, there is the national, traditional spirit, on the other hand, a cosmopolitan spirit of the utopia of “universal fraternity... which disdain everything that is national”. There is behind this confrontation some themes dominant in the European and Romanian public space, such as the dispute between *nationalism* and *democracy*. In a climate of great political and national dynamism, as the one represented by the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, the relationship nationality–democracy–common law was debated and theorized by the well-known representatives of the sociology of nation and European political philosophy, such as Rudolf von Ihering, Pascal S. Mancini, Ludwig Gumplowicz.²

An admirer of Aurel C. Popovici, of the political actions and thought of this exceptional leader of the Romanian national movement, the author of such works as *Principiul de naționalitate* (The Principle of Nationality) (1894), Alexandru Lapedatu extracted from his works the ideas which strengthened his polemical debate regarding the relationship nationality–national specificity–cosmopolitanism. The philosophy of nationality, as Aurel C. Popovici affirmed in his work entitled *Naționalism și democrație* (Nationalism and Democracy), is opposed to “all the authorities of political and scholarly philosophy of democracy and of its cosmopolitan civilization”. He mentioned his open admiration for Aurel C. Popovici several times in his writings.³

This polemics between nationalism and democracy, expressed in one of its variants, namely that between tradition and cosmopolitanism, marked the anti-modernist European intellectual circles, to which belonged Ernest Renan, quite popular in Romanian culture, whose work, *The Intellectual and Moral Reform* was a guide for anti-moderns. Ernest Renan, from within the positions of an “intellectual oligarchy” besides Hippolyte Taine, Joseph de Maistre, Gustav Flaubert, vituperated against materialism and democracy; he, from the perspective of a right wing liberal and conservative platform, aimed at the restitution of a French royalist and aristocratic democracy.⁴ The view of a national identity recovered through tradition and past requires the rejoining of an organic historical course brutally interrupted in the case of France after the age of Philip the Fair by the “annihilation of the aristocracy”,⁵ as in the case of Romanian history, as Alexandru Lapedatu pointed out, “that characteristic break in the life of the people” took place “towards the beginning of the 15th century” when “the patriarchal life of mutual support between the two Romanian elements, peasantry and the boyars ...

¹ Lapedatu, *Cîteva idei conducătoare...*, 8.

² George Em. Marica, *Studii de istorie și sociologie a culturii române ardeleni din secolul al XIX-lea* (Historical and Sociological Studies on the Transylvanian Romanian Culture in the 19th Century), vol. I (Cluj: Dacia, 1977), 292–298; Doru Radosav, “De la Memorand la Marea Unire. Evoluția discursului politic” (From the Memorandum to the Great Union. The Evolution of Political Discourse), in *Memorandul 1892–1894* (The Memorandum of 1892–1894), 2nd edition (București: Ed. Progresul românesc, 1994), 295.

³ Alexandru Lapedatu, “Aurel C. Popovici”, in *Miscelane. Cuvinte comemorative, panegirice ocazionale și politice* (Miscellanea. Commemorative Words, Occasional and Political Panegyrics) (București: 1925), 39–41; Lapedatu, *Scriseri alese* (Selected Writings) (Cluj: Dacia, 1985), 152.

⁴ Compagnon, *Antimodernii...*, 45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 45–46.

began to be annihilated”.¹ Therefore, consequently to some similar breaks a regime of historicity is projected, which confers a common and at the same time comparative distance. Similarly, on the level of cultural-historical and political discourse, the Romanian region shares with the European world the mechanism of communication vessels regarding the dominant ideals and turmoils of the public space or of the great debates.

On the trajectory of conservatism lost because of conservatism, estrangement, and democracy in the Romanian world the diagnosis of Romanian disorientation and identity crises can be found. Alexandru Lapedatu recomposed kaleidoscopically the proselyte fair of both cosmopolitan and radical currents of ideas and typology of the Romanian world, those which deepen and in a protean manner disorientation: “these groups also lack orientation. On the one hand, the latest relentless nationalists and irredentist revolutionaries, fierce or moderate anti-Semites, or defenders of the forgotten peasantry; on the other hand: Bakunian nihilists, anarchists, and revolutionary or evolutionary socialists, and God knows how many other kinds of such stray groups, atheists destroying the ancient faith, etc.”² This cultural and political diversity has consequences mainly on an ethical level, producing “disorder in the field of moral life”. The plurality of cultural, ethnical, and political identities with evident attacks against the homogeneity of the Romanian social body requires, from the perspective of a populist direction, the re-establishment of the relationships between the leading class and peasantry, so as it is in Transylvania and Bucovina where this class is not “divided from the vigorous peasantry”, as the divisions of cosmopolite modernity can be diminished by cultivating traditions and national specificity.

The appeal to the space of experience (the experience of traditions) and to an ethnic present time recreates the lost identity rationality, as well as the appeal to an ethnic time as a predestined time – fate – will lead to a better present and future, renewing and beneficent: “The people will escape this as well, for it is written for it in the book of nations that must fulfil a beautiful mission and it must live exactly with this aim by God’s will and merit. Already *better dawns* (the emphasis is mine, D. R.) appear. Today it can be seen in almost all our manifestations that a *renewal* (the emphasis is mine, D. R.) can be felt.”³

The superposition or convergence between ethnic time and historic time represents a kairotic moment.⁴ In the sense of this notion (*kairos*), historical time coincides with opportunity, more exactly, *chronos* coincides with *kairos*. From the perspective of the temporal triad (past–present–future) future is elongated in the present, as we have demonstrated above, a regime of historicity in which the idea of time as progress is dominant. Becoming familiar with the contributions of John Stuart Mill’s and Herbert Spencer’s English philosophy in the lecture courses held by Titu Maiorescu⁵ which developed, one from the perspective of positivism, the other from the perspective of organicism, the image of a better, developed, happier world. Lapedatu launched

¹ Lapedatu, *Cîteva idei conducătoare...*, 6.

² *Ibid.*, 8–9.

³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴ Cf. Ilie Bădescu, *Timp și cultură* (Time and Culture), (București: Ed. Științifică și enciclopedică), 1988.

⁵ “I attended also as regularly the course on English philosophy as well (Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer) which he held for the students in philosophy”, Lapedatu, *Scrieri alese...*, 157.

explicitly the idea of an “ever better” future, in conformity with the scientific conception of the age regarding time.¹ This better future recalibrates the unfolding of history in favour of the horizon of expectation. It is a dominant of the future or of the scientific future time, the prediction which affirms a given future as compared with *ekstasis* as a future projected as an exit from the present.²

If at first these leading ideas are passive, latent, limited by certain negative factors of modernity, there is, however, a set of powerful active ideas which can resuscitate the collective national identity. Alexandru Lapedatu in his elaboration on these leading ideas associates a postulate form and an active-historical form. Thus, according to the view of historical territorialism shared by Lapedatu, there is a *geographical-territorial* unity of the Romanian territory represented by Moldova, Transylvania, and Wallachia, “a perfect unity on the two sides of the Carpathians”. This geographical and spatial entity of the Romanian territory, from the perspective of the historical geography school promoted in Romania by Simion Mehedinți, represents the first essential element (*terra*) on which a series of other historical factors are superposed among which ethos (“the perfect ethnic and physical unity”) is plays the most important part, representing in fact the consciousness of Romanian unity elaborated and crystallized in time on the trajectory represented by the consciousness of the people’s unity, the consciousness of national unity, and the consciousness of political unity.

¹ Alexandru Dragomir, *Caietele timpului* (The Copy Books of Time) (București: Humanitas, 2006), 318.

² *Ibid.*, 50.