

The Anti-Mioritic Space. The Transfiguration of Romania as a “Weak” Transfiguration *

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Abstract: Besides the categories of major and minor cultures, Cioran introduces the category of intermediary culture, innovatively modifying the dichotomy “major – minor culture.” The idea passed hardly noticed among the exegetes of Cioran’s work, although it plays a crucial role in the entire demonstrative endeavour in *The Transfiguration of Romania*. In the absence of this premise, the thesis of the transfiguration of Romania could be read as the utopic product of a radical thinking. In fact, the ideal proposed by Cioran is the entrance of Romania in history, the escape from the ahistorical or, changing the title of another of Cioran’s books, the *ascension in time*. Compared with this ideal, the departure from the minor register of the Romanian culture is only a necessary means, a relative purpose and not a purpose in itself because the stage of history grants no role to minor cultures. Only that, it is not exclusively major cultures that play on the stage of the grand history, as we could think considering the dichotomist classification, but also the intermediary cultures (e.g. Spain, Italy). Considering this linking element, this intermediary step represented by the category of the “intermediary cultures”, Romania’s leap in history can be read, better, as a “weak” transfiguration. Another idea of the article is that the publishing of *The Transfiguration of Romania* is, to a great extent, a reply to the theory of culture elaborated by Lucian Blaga, who, in the same year, 1936, publishes *The Mioritic Space* and is admitted in the Romanian Academy. This proximity (temporal, thematic and professional) between Blaga and Cioran has not drawn attention so far, although we consider that the fathoming of its implications is more clarifying than the positioning of Cioran in the line of Școala Ardeleană or even Ion Budai-Deleanu, as Marta Petreu does.

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1. *The* inter-war battle: heroism and inner rounding off, the obsession of synthesis, tragic sensitivity

The first generation after the Great Union in 1918 finds, in development, the problematic of defining the identity of Romania. A problem in the least discovered or invented by the young generation: it had already had an entire history behind, marked at short intervals by significant moments, a history whose course carries us back to the movements of the national emancipation in 1848. The Union of the Principates of Moldavia and Wallachia under the rule of Alexandru Ioan-Cuza, the independence from under the Ottoman Empire and, finally, the fulfilment of the Great Union in which Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina returned to Romania under the rule of King Ferdinand – all these had taken place against the background of some lively disputes related to the national identity of Romania, to the national particularity or, more exactly, to the "filling up" with an adequate content of new state forms, more and more clearly delineated. In less than seventy years, in an extremely sensitive area of Europe, on the battlefield of three great empires: the Ottoman, the Tsarist and the Austro-Hungarian, there appears a new country, of significant dimensions, and an independent and sovereign state.

Unlike the previous generation, the generation after 1918 feels itself liberated from the national ideal that conferred a unity of action to the preceding generations. A generation without an ideal? Not exactly. On the contrary, the lack of an urgent historical mission leaves it entirely open to the fulfilment of a spiritual mission, of a cultural achievement. Heroism, Mircea Eliade remarks, acquires now an exclusively spiritual dimension. More precisely, the generation after 1918 is now focussed on accomplishing a Great Romania on the cultural level. Another type of heroism is teething now: the spiritual heroism that sets itself to impose Romania on the map of grand history and culture. This movement of spiritual edification was feeding on the unsatisfied need of an external acknowledgment of the Romanian culture, since the political acknowledgment of Great Romania had not been doubled by a cultural and spiritual one. Quite the contrary, one might say, if we consider the fact that, from their immense reputation, philosophers of culture like Spengler or Frobenius, draw a world map in which the Romanian culture, besides other South-Eastern European cultures, find no place at all. Guiding themselves on this map, the young intellectuals could not refrain from noticing, with a hurt vanity, that, on the one hand, their country had not been represented at all, and, on the other hand, that they cannot recognize themselves in any of the mapped cultural areas. For the philosophy of culture of those times, Eastern Europe meant only one place: Russia. The distance from which appreciations were made, together with the gigantism of the "empire of steppes" made everything between Russia and the West fade away. The division of the world by Spengler remained completely irrelevant for the integrative aspiration of the young Romanian intellectuals. It is true that, besides a short list of cultures (the Ancient, Arab and Western ones), Spengler elaborates a long one in which he enumerates six cultures: the Ancient (the isolated body), the Arab (the cave), the Chinese (the road in nature), the Western (the three-dimensional infinity), the Egyptian (the labyrinth way), the Russian (the boundless plan). One

dichotomy was, as schematic as comprehensive to include the Romanians too, together with their neighbours: “major culture–minor culture” or “monumental culture–ethnographic culture”. One need not specify explicitly what category the Romanian culture fits in. A vexing categorization, unconformable to the aspirations of the young intellectuals and therefore unacceptable. It is not by chance that it is exactly this dichotomy that constitutes the theoretical background of the debate on the problem of national identity in the works of Lucian Blaga and Emil Cioran, in the published work of Mircea Eliade, as well as in Eugen Ionescu’s articles.

The passion of the whole debate is given by the fact that, properly speaking, the spiritual being of a country was at stake. As long as the inclusion in a minor culture is a form of exclusion from culture, this marginalization will trigger a natural “complex of superiority” among the Romanian intellectuals, a complex which will emphasize the merits of the Romanian culture, its exceptional characteristics and even its uniqueness, will justify its lack of “monumentalism” due to the accidental but constant adversary historical conditions, and will put it on the same level with the western cultures or even...above them.

No matter how this reaction of the intellectuals was articulated, one may say that all shared a common idea or intuition: in order to claim the title of major / universal / European culture, for the Romanian culture, they had to prove its autonomy, its universal value. Lucian Blaga saves the spiritual autonomy of Romania (and its universality) by an ingenious theory of the adoptive ages in which childhood, under whose sign there stands the minor culture, has an equal value as that of maturity, under whose sign there stands the major culture. Mircea Eliade, the leader of the “young generation”, starts the fighting signal in his programmatic articles from the cycle called *Spiritual Itinerary*. The fight for the spiritual independence of a country can be won only with the weapons of knowledge, of talent and culture, of “experiences” and “authenticity”. In short, with weapons whose target is no longer headed outside, but inside. A culture cannot become major unless it suffers an inner transmutation of its creators, or in psychological terms, by means of a maturation of the creators of that culture. Some points can be detached from this programme announced by Eliade and followed, to a great extent, by the young generation: 1. If the achievement of Great Romania was an external objective that required, mainly, taking actions on an external level, the achievement of a major Romanian culture requires an inner change and, therefore, “actions” in the sphere of interiority, the so called “experiments”; 2. Such a change affects first and foremost the one who causes it – the creator of culture who, like an alchemist, can operate transmutations of the external realities, namely the Romanian culture, acting upon its own spirit; 3. The spiritual growing of age of the creator of culture is therefore indispensable for the fulfilment of a major cultural work and, extrapolating at the scale of the whole generation, for the fulfilment of *opera magna*: the transformation of the Romanian culture, as a whole, in a major culture; 4. Associated to this spiritual maturation there stands the image, often invoked, of the universal man, the plenary man, fulfilled on all levels of the spiritual life, the image of the encyclopaedic man, the erudite, of Leonardo da Vinci, Mihai Eminescu, Bogdan Petriceicu Haşdeu or Nicolae Iorga; 5. A major culture is a whole and consequently it implies wholeness, the achievement of synthesis, both at the level of the creative individual and at the

level of the whole culture, unity and multiplicity; 6. Heroism is a necessary condition in order to achieve this goal, an inner heroism developed against an inner multi-faceted enemy: negligence, melancholia, depression, the “Moldavian” attitude, scepticism.

In one of his articles, Eliade places his generation in the line of a number of professors who “admitted a tragic awareness of existence, and who, however, have found a heroic sense of existence, which must be accepted and borne.” The three professors Eliade refers to are Nicolae Iorga (who acknowledges the curse of work), Vasile Pârvan (the curse of solitude) and Nae Ionescu (who “has never concealed from his audience any of the paradoxes, curses or dramas of human consciousness”). Such a consciousness “does not annihilate itself, however, in despair or scepticism” – on the contrary, it made the abovementioned “intervene in the history of the Romanian people, bringing in their writing and speeches an extraordinary capacity of hope.”¹

Eliade is the first to understand that an exit from sub-history of the Romanian culture is also an exit from the “sub-tragic.” Eliade sanctions firmly the diffusely elegiac affective tonality of the Romanians, the easiness with which they fall prey to a sterile and dreaming melancholia, their appetite for a an idle and soporific sadness, the indulgence in the sour sweetness of dolour. Rather than a philosophical attitude, the famous Mioritic / Romanian “resignation” is exposed as a “deadly sin” of our national being and thus as a temptation one must resist with all one’s forces.²

A good deal of the signification of Eliade’s “heroism” refers to this unending battle that the Romanian intellectual or creator must endlessly fight against a “midday daemon” that runs through his veins. As once the fathers of the desert did, Eliade’s hero does not give in to the attacks of sentimentalism, nostalgia, or the “Moldavian style” (as it is relevantly portrayed in Ionel Teodoreanu’s *La Medeleni*.) The adopted strategy is not, however, a defensive, but an utmost offensive one. More precisely, the Eliadian hero converts the vaguely elegiac frame of mind of the Romanians in a lively and strong feeling of tragic existence. If the tragic has a sadness of itself, then this is not a depressive one: it is an exciting, not an inhibiting presence, while its outcome is action (protest, maybe) and not resignation.

The idea can be detected entirely in Emil Cioran’s first works, but only in *The Transfiguration of Romania* would it find an ethnic application and be exploited with the meaning inferred by Eliade. The reforms suggested by Cioran addresses firstly the Romanian affectivity (and therefore only consequently can they be labelled as socio-economic or political reforms), but all these reforms start in an affective revolution: the replacement of the elegiac sensibility with a tragic one. The longing and the “doina” (exalted by Lucian Blaga as manifestations of the uniqueness of the national being, in his attempt to prove its autonomy and

¹ Mircea Eliade, “Profesorul Nae Ionescu” (Professor Nae Ionescu), *Vremea* 463 (15 November 1936): 7–9; Also in Mircea Eliade, *Profetism românesc* (Romanian prophetism), vol. 2 (Bucharest: Roza vânturilor, 1990), 179.

² See Mircea Eliade, “Împotriva Moldovei” (Against Moldavia), *Cuvântul* 1021 (Sunday, February 19, 1928): 1–2; in Eliade, *Profetism românesc*, 95–99.

“perfection”) are repudiated by Cioran in *The Transfiguration of Romania* as being expressions of an elegiac sensibility and, implicitly, a-historical. The solution for entering history will therefore be the development and the assertion of a tragic sensibility. Not only is history tragic, but the tragic is historical as well... In order to become historical, Romania must become tragic.

2. Introduction into the problem of transfiguration

According to Marta Petreu, Cioran’s political conversion from an assumed a-politics by his generation and theorized by Mircea Eliade in *Spiritual Itinerary* starts in November 1933, more precisely with his Humboldt scholarship in Berlin. To support this idea, Petreu invokes a series of articles and letters in which Cioran expresses his admiration for Hitler’s regime. While in Berlin, Cioran attends the lectures of Ludwig Klages whom he compares with Nae Ionescu.¹ Petreu justly considers that “the carving of Cioran’s political ideas from their metaphysical foundation deforms them and makes Cioran’s option for the Romanian Extreme Right remain incomprehensible. Moreover, Cioran’s interest in politics was the consequence of his early and spontaneous preoccupations for the philosophy of history and culture.”² Cioran’s scholarship ends in the summer of 1935, when he returns to Romania and at the end of which he is enrolled. Starting with the end of 1935 and all throughout 1936, he publishes in *Vremea* and *Actiunea* (in Sibiu) “texts which – purged from references to the European and Romanian political actuality – will later be included in *The Transformation of Romania*.”³ Marta Petreu claims that, until the volume whose title it is, the collocation “Transformation of Romania” appears in Cioran only twice: in an article published in *Vremea*, April 29th, 1934 (year VII, no. 335), “Letters from Munchen. Romania Facing the Overseas” and in *Cartea Amăgirilor* (The book of delusions, Cugetarea Publishing House, 1936, p. 78), “a book elaborated simultaneously with *The Transfiguration of Romania*.”⁴ Before Cioran, regarding the same problem of national identity and modernity, the expression had been used, with negative connotations, by Rădulescu-Motru, in *Cultura română și politicianismul* (Romanian Culture and Politicianism, 1904) and, with positive ones, by Dumitru Drăghicescu, in *Din psihologia poporului român* (On the Psychology of the Romanian People, 1907).⁵

At a close analysis, we can notice that Marta Petreu’s assertion as to the use of the expression “transfiguration of Romania” by Cioran divides into three affirmations: firstly, the complete expression “the transfiguration of Romania” appears only once (in the article “Letters from Munchen. Romania Facing the Overseas” from *Vremea* 1934); secondly, there is an identity between the linguistic

¹ See Cioran, “Prin Universitatea din Berlin” (Around Berlin University), *Vremea* 318 (Christmas 1933); cf. Marta Petreu, *Un trecut deocheat sau Schimbarea la față a României* (A compromised past or the transfiguration of Romania) (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2004), 12.

² *Ibid.*, 6.

³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 21–23.

expression “transfiguration” and the notion transmitted herein; thirdly, the word “transfiguration” (lacking the attribute) also appears only once (in *Cartea amăgirilor*).

All three assumptions prove false and we shall attempt to deconstruct them:

1. The collocation *the transfiguration of Romania* is used, literally, by Cioran, besides the text indicated by Marta Petreu, in an article published before the release of the book, “Maglavit and the other Romania”, in *Vremea*, 6 October 1935.¹ The complete fragment runs as follows: “If people from there (Maglavit) have found so much energy to transfigure themselves, they will find enough resources in them to transfigure Romania as well.”² The assertion that the article “Letters from München” gave the title of the volume *Transfiguration of Romania* must be regarded now with circumspection justified by this new aspect ignored by the author of *Un trecut deocheat*. This happens because the invoked reason – the partial taking over of the article “Letters from Munich” in the volume – proves insufficient: the article “Maglavit and the other Romania” is partially taken over in Cioran’s book.³
2. There is no identity between the linguistic expression “change of face” and the notion it transmits. The perfect synonym for “change of face” is transfiguration.⁴ Even *Transfiguration of Romania* proves that the two expressions are interchangeable, since Cioran substitutes one with the other, without differentiating between them.
3. Therefore, the occurrence of the notion, of the term communicated by the word “transfiguration” is much more numerous than Petreu pretends. As “transfiguration”, this constitutes a veritable reflection theme for Cioran in his first two books.⁵

The enormous importance of this key-concept of Cioran’s thinking I have discussed elsewhere as well.⁶ I resume the ideas expressed there:

- Transfiguration is the qualitative and therefore ex-tatic jump (to another ontological level, from negative to positive, from despair to beatitude, from a theoretical attitude to a heroic one, from death to life);
- Transfiguration can be attained only by means of the so called “method of agony”, introduced by Cioran in *Pe culmile disperării*, taken over in *Cartea*

¹ See Emil Cioran, *Singurătate și destin. Publicistică 1931-1944* (Loneliness and destiny. Journalism) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1991), 284–289.

² *Ibid.*, 288.

³ See Emil Cioran, *Schimbarea la față a României* (The Transfiguration of Romania) (Bucharest: Vremea, 1936), 74–75.

⁴ The title of the French translation of Cioran’s book is *La transfiguration de la Roumanie*.

⁵ In *Pe culmile disperării* the verb “to transfigure” and its derivatives appear 18 times. In the same book, there is a chapter entitled “Banality and transfiguration.” See Emil Cioran, *Pe culmile disperării* (On the heights of despair) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2008).

⁶ See Horia Pătrașcu, “Agony as Entrancement: Dying out of too Much Life: Emil Cioran and the Metaphysical Experience of Death” in *Death And Anti-Death, Volume 9: One Hundred Years After Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911)*, ed. Charles Tandy, Ph.D. (Palo Alto, California: Ria University Press, 2011): 199–226.

amăgirilor, so that it would be proposed as “state policy” in *The Transfiguration of Romania*. Placed within a religious horizon, the “method of agony” could be reduced to the scheme of death-rebirth, the death of the old man and the birth of the new one. The agony Cioran speaks of is, in fact, a death of the “death” of life, consisting in an excitement of its devitalized, reified, alienated and automatized forms and in the refashioning of the link with the lively core of life.

- There are beings that do not need the experience of agony – those natural, spontaneous, naïve and graceful beings in which life pulsates in an almost subconscious way. The conscious beings have but only two solutions: some adopt a theoretical attitude, cold, detached, ‘wise’, ‘sceptical’ (by means of which one tries the falsifying of the metaphysical conflict between consciousness and existence, there not being in them vital resources sufficiently strong to experience it in an authentic way), or some adopt a heroic, tragic attitude to sufferance and revolt. Compared with the theoretical attitude, the heroic one expresses a more powerful vitality, a more intense participation in the “sources of life”, in the rhythm and dynamism of life, while the theoretical attitude denotes a lack of vitality, a morbid soul, “inertia.” The tragic feeling would be, paradoxically, the sign of the spiritual sanity of an individual or of a nation.

In broad lines, the scenario of transfiguration is taken over in *The Transfiguration of Romania*, the roles being distributed, however, in conformity with the thematic of the work, to some historical ‘entities’, namely to nations. The beings in which life pulsates subconsciously are here the nations endowed naturally for History (the great cultures), while the theoretical beings are the peoples lacking vitality, exhausted, sceptical, a-historical, like the Romanian people. If the Romanians want to participate in the life of history, they will have to adopt the heroic attitude and give up the sceptical one, of a millenary tradition, in order to become a conscientious and heroic nation, lucid and active, despaired and dynamic. For this, the Romanians need to accelerate the rhythm of their inner life, to intensify at the maximum the tragic feeling of life, in a word, to extend the application of the method of agony at the scale of a whole nation. Either he speaks about the necessity of dictatorship, or he exalts the utility of any extreme idea that inflames the individuals’ minds to dementia, Cioran has in view the “transfigurative” and ecstatic leap from death (a-history, primitivism, involution, and dullness) to life (history, development, progress, becoming, modernization, actualization, conquest, expansion, extension.)

Although, unlike Romania, Russia is a major culture (“destined to a monumental fate in the world”), its late entrance in history (as late as the 19th century) makes it, only from this perspective, similar to the Romanian situation. From the modality in which “the Russians have wrestled to obsession the problem of their destiny” all along the 19th century, the Romanians have to learn whether they “truly want to cut their way into history.”¹ It is not about borrowing external forms specific to this country, but about the intensity of experiencing the problem of its

¹ Cioran, *Schimbarea la față...*, 17.

own destiny. The finality is not the transformation of Romania in a major culture, since a major culture is ‘major’ by its very nature, it is destined from the very beginning to have this status and therefore a minor culture cannot transform into a major one. Russia can serve only as a catalyst of Romania’s transfiguration into an intermediary culture, such as Spain, for example.

It is here that the concept of transfiguration undergoes an essential mutation as compared to the signification present in Cioran’s first two books. In the latter, transfiguration refers to the ecstatic overcoming, by means of agony, of the schematic forms, of the abstract categories towards the irrational and inexhaustible foundation of life. As a consequence, the transfiguration is strong, radical, a total conversion, without compromises. The permanency of the ecstatic state is, as such, one of the irresolvable problems that Cioran is faced with.

Things are totally different in *The Transfiguration of Romania* when Cioran extends the field of reflection on the historical life and, especially, on the historical life of the Romanian people. The analysis of the phenomena of culture obliges him to accept the existence, besides the major and minor cultures, of a middle category, named of the ‘intermediary cultures’ (defined as partial accomplishment of some values, unlike the major cultures that are total accomplishments of some worlds of values and, also, unlike the minor cultures, non-value.) The intermediary cultures are the Spanish, Italian, or Dutch ones. The major cultures are limited numerically since the worlds of values that they express are limited. The consequence is, as we have seen, that a culture cannot become major if it does not have this status from the very beginning.

However, it may happen that some of the minor cultures have a fundamental dissatisfaction as to their status, a “dissatisfied consciousness.” The Romanian culture is part of this species – detached already by this disaffection from the minor cultures (because it strives to fulfil itself in terms of values), but unable to be a major culture, due to the above mentioned reasons. For a country that finds itself in such a situation, there appears to be no salvation, being doomed to wander endlessly at the crossroads of the major and minor cultures.

Aspiring to know the life of history, the Romanian culture must accept, lucidly, the place and role of the intermediary culture. In a completely untypical way, Cioran seems to admit a compromising solution, a weak transfiguration, a half redemption. It is a surprise that the exegetes of Cioran’s work have registered only transiently the presence of this category of the intermediary cultures, without paying the necessary importance to the extremely important consequences that derive from here for the entire Cioranian philosophy expressed in *The Transfiguration of Romania*. This is also the case of Marta Petreu who mentions only twice the category of the intermediary culture, without catching its signification and relevance.

The signification of this category is essential because, if we ignore it, we risk placing *The Transfiguration of Romania* among the utopias, an interpretation so widespread, yet so erroneous. It is not by chance that the most quoted fragment from Cioran’s book is: “I would like a Romania with the population of China and the fate of France.” What is known to a lesser extent is that this sentence which supports the labelling of the book as a utopia is a truncated quotation. The whole quote runs as follows: “I would like a Romania with the population of China and the fate of

France. But I do not want to transform the future of my country into a utopia...”¹ What is even more surprising is that Marta Petreu herself prefers to quote partially, distorting the meaning of the Cioranian fragment.² Lucian Boia does the same, enlisting Cioran’s assertion among the philosopher’s “extremist points of view.”³ Cioran, however, is as explicit as possible as to the feasibility of his ‘utopia.’ To a man who pretends to be lucid, utopia is what stands as most repugnant: “Romania will save itself from this wretchedness, but it will never be able to escape the ambiguity of the intermediary cultures; it will remain undecided, mid-positioning itself between the major and the minor cultures. A Spain of South-Eastern Europe, without its ardour and romantic allurements, but with the same historical level. And without a Cervantes to describe a Don Quixote of our bitterness.”⁴

Consequently, there will be no surprise in the procedural aspect of the transfiguration proposed by Cioran for Romania. The weak transfiguration presupposes a reforming of the Romanians’ mentality, although we would position ourselves closer to the spirit of Cioran’s assertions if we wrote the reforming of the Romanians’ sensibility. The object of this reform is a certain way of perception (intense, dynamic, lively, and heroic) and only after that a way of thinking and of existence. In order to achieve this, there must be cultivated a conjuncture messianism (because a minor culture lacks, by its very nature, messianism since it does not stand under the sign of any universal idea in which to believe, which it could propagate and impose), constructed around some myths (it does not matter which ones) whose single value is given by the capacity of inducing a vital tension in the sensibility of the Romanian people. The image of Bucharest as the centre of South-Eastern Europe, as a new Constantinople, may substitute the absence of a universal idea. An intermediary culture must be satisfied with an intermediary supremacy.

3. The ‘etymological’ significations of the title

The link between the signification of the title of Cioran’s book and the significations of the biblical episode it makes reference to cannot be ignored. In her book about *The Transfiguration of Romania*, Marta Petreu prefers to dispatch this aspect in a first instance explication, in which what matters the most is the metaphorical meaning of “brightness” and a curative meaning of the Tabor light: “Placing the much wished-for transformation of his country under this biblical symbol, Cioran was asking his country – directly, but also symbolically – to reveal itself to the world with superlative brightness and value. Since only such a divinely ‘transfigured’

¹ Ibid., 96.

² “Firstly, he bears in mind the ideal image of a dynamic country that ‘launches itself in the world’ by means of ‘modern ways’ (p. 103), of a country ‘with the population of China and the fate of France’ (p. 96), that passes from the agrarian and village form to the industrial and urban form of life (p. 109-110), of a country in which the place of the atemporal peasant is taken by the industrial worker(p. 110).” (Petreu, *Un trecut deocheat*, 217.)

³ Lucian Boia, *Capcanele istoriei. Elita intelectuală românească între 1930 și 1950* (The traps of history. The Romanian intellectual elite between 1930 and 1950) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2012), 25–26.

⁴ Cioran, *Schimbarea la față...*, 101.

country, as Jesus himself suffered transfiguration, would have healed the wound of having been born a Romanian.”¹

The first meaning of transfiguration is the revelation of Jesus as Messiah, as Saviour.² The transfiguration unveils Jesus Christ to his disciples as the Saviour. Consequently, *The Transfiguration of Romania* means the revelation of its messianic role, a role to which the Romanians will have to consent. However, unlike the messianism of major cultures (such as the Russian one) that cannot accept the world to exist but as gravitating around them, the messianism of an intermediary culture, like the Romanian one, will have to accommodate the soteriological ideal, to reduce its proportions to a part of the world, namely to the Balkan space. Given the fact that an intermediary culture is not an entire world (since it embodies only one or a few values), it cannot set up itself as a saviour of the whole world, but only as a saviour of the non-world of the minor cultures. Hence the image of the new Constantinople, with its headquarters in Bucharest.

The religious signification of transfiguration also leads, in an obvious way, to the signification of light. Transfiguration is a phenomenon of light. The light that enshrouds Jesus is the uncreated light. Cioran speaks about Romania in the terms of the dimension of its “uncreated” energies. One of the most striking differences from the other nationalists, forerunners of, or contemporary with, Cioran, a difference constantly invoked and underlined by the Romanian thinker is that the Romania he has in view has never existed before and does not actually exist. The light of transfiguration is, for Romania, as it was for Jesus himself, the “uncreated” light.

The Tabor light is, also, a pastoral, spiritual one, and Cioran confers to the hegemony of Romania in the Balkans a meaning which is preponderantly spiritual. That is why one can read in *The Transfiguration of Romania* not just a desertion of its author from the spiritual creed expressed in his previous writings, but, on the contrary, an enforcement and enlargement of it. The rebirth of Romania is essentially a spiritual, and not a political one.

The transfiguration does not mean the ablation of Jesus’ human nature in favour of the divine nature, but the appearance of the face of Jesus in the light of His divinity. Transfiguration is not a change at the level of face; it is not a replacement of one substance with another one. Jesus Christ is equally man and God. The two natures, contradictory, coexist in one and the same Person. *The Transfiguration of Romania* will not alienate significantly from this signification of its religious etymon, either. Cioran’s book will insist on the continuity between present, (in) existent Romania and the future Romania, between the present nothingness of Romania and its future existence. The mental and psychological determinants that made the Romanians not exist (not to matter in history) are one and the same “matter” that, correctly transmuted, will confer them being and historical value. The weak meaning of transfiguration is supported by the very religious signification of the transfiguration. Transfiguration means the revelation of the agreement between the two natures, the bringing into light of their coexistence.

¹ Ibid., 24.

² Matthew 17:1-8.

But *The Transfiguration of Romania* means, equally, an announcement of the end of Jesus, since this is the topic of conversation among Moses, Elijah and Jesus Christ.¹ A reputable connoisseur of the philosophy of culture and a keen reader of Spengler could not escape the consequence of the Romanian culture's entrance into history. Any important culture is born, develops and dies, like any living body. The Romanian culture has been exempted, due to its inexistence, from knowing the Passions of Death, which, from now on, will not be able to avoid. The transfiguration of the Romanian people as a messianic nation is, at the same time, a pre-figuration of its inexorable end. That is why, the Romanian culture will have to confront and experience the awareness of its death, an awareness that will lead to an authentic feeling of the tragedy of life it had not experienced until then due to a subconscious (under)living in the a-historical.

The significations of the biblical episode of the transfiguration are in accordance with the use of the term by Cioran and, moreover, with the use of the term transfiguration with a weak connotation.

3. Another book on transfiguration: The Dogmatic Aeon

Within a different problematic horizon, transfiguration occupies the central role in the *Dogmatic Aeon*, a book Emil Cioran was familiar with and whose review he wrote in 1931.² Cioran was 20, and a fourth year student at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, University of Bucharest, the department of philosophy. 1931 is Cioran's debut year in *Mișcarea*, with the article *Voința de a crede* (Will to believe)³, where he will publish other four texts by the middle of the same year.⁴ The relation between Emil Cioran and Lucian Blaga is insufficiently or not at all known and valued in the research on Cioran. In *Un trecut deocheat sau Schimbarea la față a României*, Marta Petreu does not pay any attention to this relation. However, it existed, and for the young philosopher Emil Cioran, the works of Lucian Blaga, on the peak of his creative maturity, played a significant role, a proof of this being his eulogizing references from reviews and other articles. It seems that Emil Cioran's admiration did not pass unnoticed by Lucian Blaga. From this perspective, in the collective volume, *Întâlniri cu Cioran* (Meetings with Cioran), Anca Sârghie signals the existence of an autographed copy of the *princeps* edition of *Cenzura transcendentă*,⁵

¹ Luke 9:28-36.

² Published in *Revista de filosofie* 3–4 (July–December 1931): 349–350, the Review Section; see Emil Cioran, *Singurătate și destin*, 30–33; 341.

³ Emil Cioran, “Voința de a crede” (Will to believe), *Mișcarea* 76 (25 February 1931): 1–2.

⁴ Emil Cioran, “Intellectualul român. I-II” (The Romanian intellectual, I-II), *Mișcarea* 78 (27 February 1931): 1. and 80 (1 March 1931): 1; Idem, “Psihologia șomerului intelectual” (The psychology of the unemployed intellectual), *Mișcarea* 134 (8 May 1931): 1; Idem, “O formă a vieții interioare” (A form of inner life), *Mișcarea* 184 (8 July 1931), 1; Idem, “Despre succese” (On success), *Mișcarea* 193 (18 July 1931), 1 (cf. Emil Cioran, *Singurătate și destin*, 341.)

⁵ Lucian Blaga, *Cenzura transcendentă* (Transcendent censorship) (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1934).

having Lucian Blaga's dedication to Emil Cioran: "To Emil Cioran, a chapter of metaphysics and the entire friendship. L. Blaga."¹

Considering in his review of *The Dogmatic Aeon*, the first text written by Cioran about Blaga, that Blaga is an "elite thinker", whose work deserves to be translated, Cioran thinks, however, that Lucian Blaga "will never write a philosophy of life" due to his tendency "to maintain himself on a level of abstract reduction of the live elements."² A proof to support this is the very way in which *The Dogmatic Aeon* deals exclusively with the "formal making up of dogma" without deepening the "problem of the metaphysical mystery".³ For Cioran, the metaphysical mystery is nothing more than a foundation of existential irrationality accessible to the "intuitive experience", which experience, "though not offering generally valid certitudes, still offers the fundament, the originary and lively centre for activity in the construction of metaphysics."⁴

Obviously, it was impossible for Cioran, when referring to dogma, not to recall the key-concept of Blaga's transfiguration, since dogma "is born out of two procedures: the procedure of establishing an antinomy and the procedure of its transfiguration."⁵ Unlike the dialectic antinomy, the "transfigured antinomy" splits "the logical solidarity immanent to the structures of concepts", modifying the reports among notions. Also, unlike the dialectic antinomy that discovers in the concrete 'a supreme justification', "the transfigured antinomy" does not "verify itself in the concrete."⁶ All in all, in this review the notion of transfigured antinomy is mentioned explicitly three times, in various combinations.

In the end of his article, Cioran expresses his disagreement with one of the strong theses in Blaga's book, namely that we are on the point of "the dogmatic aeon's" appearance, that dogma characterizes the beginning of a new world. By contrast to Blaga, Cioran believes that dogma characterizes both a world in decadence and the actual one as well. Another distance from Blaga takes the shape of addendum: perceived from an anthropological or cultural-historical perspective, the dogmatic "seems to result from an inner crisis and unbalance; in the essence of acknowledging the dogmatic (understood in a rather narrower meaning), there resides an act of tragic determination." The case of Kierkegaard illustrates this "intimate dogmatic attitude."⁷

We can say that the notions of transfiguration and "leap"⁸ were assimilated by Cioran when he was 20, as consequence of the essential reading of the *Dogmatic*

¹ See Anca Sârghie, "Semnificația unui autograf blagian" (The significance of one of Blaga's autographs), in *Întâlniri cu Cioran* (Meeting Cioran), ed. Marin Diaconu and Mihaela Gențiana Stănișor, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă, 2011), 269.

² Cioran, *Singurătate și destin*, 31.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁷ Ibid., 33.

⁸ In Lucian Blaga, "ecstatic leap". See Lucian Blaga, *Eonul dogmatic* (The dogmatic aeon) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), 124–125.

Aeon. Although differently signified, the term “ecstasy” plays an overwhelming importance in the works of both philosophers.

5. Definitions: major culture, minor culture, intermediary culture and the “English monster”

In the first chapter of *The Transformation of Romania*, entitled “The Tragedy of Minor Cultures”, Emil Cioran asserts that the conscious man cannot overcome history except by means of ecstasy, only in this way being able to reach a state which the ignorant experiences naturally. The conscious man cannot withdraw himself from the necessity of “ruling” history both as a judge of the past and as a prophet of the future. The conscious man is connected, Cioran believes, “by the invisible links” to the metaphysical actuality of history. Consciousness is, in its essence, historical, since history, according to Hegel, is the “fulfilment of consciousness.” The meaning of history is the “progress in consciousness”, since consciousness makes the past actual. A macroscopic perspective is therefore preferable since the detail lacks relevance, “second hand phenomena” being “either trainings for, or consequences of the central phenomena.”¹ The macroscopic vision is justified by the nature of history itself which is nothing else but the result of the dynamism of the major cultures. Cioran applies the same essentialization to the luxurious phenomenology of the major cultures, reducing them to the “inner core” and to “their predetermination towards a specific form.” There is, similarly to the ontogenesis in biology, an ontogenesis of cultures. Major cultures are under the sign of a fatal organic impulse that makes them overcome the resistances of the external environment. Minor cultures, lacking specific forms and therefore ahistorical by definition, are left with being subdued to the major cultures. Major cultures not only have a destiny of their own, but they stand as a destiny for the minor ones. The inner form refers to the world of values that a major culture accomplishes.

The numerical reduction of the major cultures (Egypt, Greece, Rome, France, Germany, Russia and Japan) is explained by the limited number of the “worlds of values” that they embody. A culture is the complete answer to all the questions man asks: “Each major culture is the complete answer to all the problems.”² That is the reason why major cultures constitute well-defined configurations, while minor cultures are versatile, uncertain, and ambiguous (Cioran exemplifies them by the following countries: Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Serbia.)

The value of a major culture is inherent and incontestable since it is the very embodiment of a world of values. The value of a minor culture is no longer tautological, but it could result only from the aspiration to overcome the anonymous condition, against its own nature. Lacking the subconscious grace of the major cultures, the minor ones have to gain their value by fight, by conscious effort. Aware of their inferiority, not having a proper rule under whose sign to develop themselves, minor cultures try to compensate the lack of essence by a borrowed one, external, configuring themselves by relation to the prototype represented by a major culture.

¹ Emil Cioran, *Schimbarea la față a României*, 7.

² *Ibid.*, 9.

Major cultures possess a “historical” instinct by means of which they fulfil “the potentiality of the spirit.” Minor cultures compensate the lack of spiritual potential and of the historical instinct by what is called “historical feeling” – a sceptical lucidity of the historical development, a theoretical look on the historical becoming. Major cultures develop their “historical feeling” only in their epochs of decadence, fatigue and dissolution, as a natural anomaly of their degeneracy. In the second *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche asserts that the historical feeling is what harms the most the historical action. “The creative élan” belongs to the historical instinct while the sterile understanding and the “sterile lucidity” belong to the “historical feeling” of the minor cultures and – under the name of historicism – to the decadent major cultures. The loss of the historical instinct by major cultures re-enacts, at a different scale, the cosmic tragedy of the human being. The irreconcilable distance between ‘to be’ and ‘to know’ has its word here: the history creator transforms himself, as a consequence of a weakening process of his inner force, a process of de-vitalization, in an observer, a subject, history no longer being the intrinsic correlative of his nature, but only his object of observation. Paradise means here, as everywhere else in Cioran’s work, the non-separation from life (assimilated here to History), while falling names the instauration of a relation subject–object. The tragedy of the minor cultures – like the Romanian one – is given by the fact it has never possessed a historical spirit (like the major decadent cultures), but, the most, a will to make history. If the former had made them assert themselves naturally and waywardly, irresponsibly and irrationally, the latter makes them advance in their (sub) history in a “rational, conscious and abstract way.”¹

Being the accomplishment of a world of values (a totality of levels: political, spiritual, economic), an essential trait of the major cultures is messianism – the desire to become axes or centres of the entire world. The rivalry of the major cultures is irreconcilable: there cannot be two centres (redeeming, saving) of the same world. The most typical messianisms are those proposed by the Germans, the Russians and the Hebrews. The French messianism is more discreet because the French nation has a longer history than, for example, the German one that tries, reactively, a cultural domination of the world. Fed on the inner fibre of a people, messianism does not exhaust it, but enforces it, invigorates it. The Hebrew messianism may stand as a good example as long as the Hebrew awaiting of God interweaves naturally with a good placement among the worldly matters. “No other people has profited more on God as this (Hebrew) one.”² For a Hebrew, metaphysics serves for some mundane purposes very well; he brings together the earth and the sky so that he makes earth more celestial and the sky more mundane than they should be. Unlike the Hebrew messianism that sets as a goal its own redemption, the Russian messianism is more generous, proposing a universal soteriology.

Although he was a great admirer of Shakespeare’s work while he was writing his book, Cioran does not consider the English culture as being a major one, the most eloquent sign being the lack of messianism, a symptom of the major deficiency at the spiritual level. Describing it in comparison with the Roman

¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

² *Ibid.*, 22.

Empire, Cioran notices that, although there is a British imperialism, this is not either messianic or spiritual, but utilitarianist, purely external, subdued only to material interests.¹

Cioran eliminates from the major cultures those which, although encompassing the remarkable achievements of some exceptional individuals, do not constitute worlds in themselves. A major culture is, as we could see, the embodiment of a world of values, autonomous, closed in itself, perfectly defined, spherical. As a consequence, its creative individualities do nothing but individuate and express the “genius” of the culture they belong to. The isolated genius of a creator like Shakespeare, no matter how brilliant and powerful it may be – himself an entire world – cannot transform England into a world. England is “the country of the most ordinary empiricism”, “It has not fought for an idea to be surpassed”, it does not suffer for a belief, but it functions “by means of the automatism of interests.”² Although it had the world at its feet, this possession is an external one, relating to gigantism rather than to an “inner assimilation.” Disinterested in imposing a certain belief among the submitted populations, England exercises itself as an exploiter only. Amenable to the immediate, lacking metaphysics and an ideal, embracing an “exaggerated individualism” and without having the “ardour of a fanatic collective spirit”, the most serious reproach that can be brought to England being the cult of parliamentarism. This “English gift” did nothing but to “confound” the world, making that countries with less cold blood (it is also the case of the Romanians’ hot, Latin blood) stagnate. England is an example of “as a major culture should not be”³; it is a “monstrosity”⁴ that belongs to no one of the three categories Cioran enumerates: it is neither a major culture, nor a minor, nor an intermediary one.

Besides the major and the minor cultures there is, therefore, the category of the intermediary ones. For example, Italy enters history on a spiritual level once Renaissance starts. In order for a major culture to exist, a superlative manifestation on a single plan is not sufficient, but reaching the absolute on all levels: spiritually, politically and economically. That is why both the Italian culture and the Spanish or Dutch ones cannot be included in the category of the major cultures, but in that of intermediary ones. They excelled on only one plan against the others, as it is the case of Spain that, politically, was much under the spiritual in which, especially by means of mysticism, it asserted itself.⁵ We shall have to arrest this category of intermediary culture as being very important for the following implications it has on the problem of “the transfiguration of Romania.” It seems that the role played by “the intermediary culture” in Cioran’s demonstration has escaped the attention of the

¹ Ibid., 13.

² Ibid., 29.

³ Ibid., 30.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ In passage, Cioran exempts the Spanish conquistadors from the ‘culturocid’ guilt since the Maya culture, an intermediary one, would have disappeared anyway, a century before the arrival of the Spanish, without any external help, since it missed the moment in which a people becomes a nation, being politically incapable of entering history, though spiritually endowed.

exegetes of this work. Marta Petreu, for example, only mentions it, without signalling, however, its relevance, considering that Cioran, like Spengler, confers real value only to major cultures.¹

6. Looking at Russia (major culture), Romania must aspire to become a Spain of the South – Eastern Europe (intermediary culture)

The Transfiguration of Romania is published in the same year (1936) with *The Mioritic Space* of Lucian Blaga. The former appears at the end of the year², while Blaga's book appears in April 1936.³ At that moment Blaga was at the peak of his notoriety, having been accepted in the Romanian Academy. Many of the references obviously critical to Miorita and the Romanian "mioritic" state of mind allow us to believe that *The Transfiguration of Romania* is, at least to a certain extent, an *anti-mioritic Space*, a reply – rebellious, contradictory – given by the 25 years old, young philosophy teacher from Brasov to the theses expressed in his book by Lucian Blaga. Although the name of Blaga is not mentioned anywhere in Cioran's book, many of the arrows of his criticism (aiming at some "Romanian intellectuals") seem to have Blaga in view. The lack of a direct polemic is justified by a natural sparing of a philosopher once admired. It is also likely that the separation from Blaga have a political background: the author of the *Dogmatic Aeon* was a protégé of King Carol II, who supports Blaga to become a member of the Academy and to obtain a teaching position in Cluj, while Cioran and great number of his generation positioned against Carlism.

An explicit disagreement with the theses announced in *The Mioritic Space* has in view the problem of messianism. Contrary to Blaga, Cioran believes that what allowed Russia to enter history was, firstly, the passionate sufferance for its destiny, the Russian messianism which Blaga does not see with good eyes either in the horizon of the steppe or in that of the typical Romanian realm called 'plai'. The fragment, placed immediately before the closing paragraph of *The Mioritic Space*, is worth quoting in extension: "The animators of the Romanian culture, flames of sacred élan at the gate of winds, have been extending to one another, for more than a century now, the heritage of urgings. None of them can be reproached the loftiness or the self-forgetting of having attributed our people a messianic mission in the world. They have kept themselves away from such hybrid ecstasies, and well they did. We are quite familiar, after our peregrinations through Europe, with the risible enlightenments and the grimaces, pathetically lacking the spirit of self-irony, of some of our messianic neighbours. The God of common sense has saved us from this sterile inner fire. Let us hope that we shall be able to duly fulfil our role under this part of the sky without necessarily wearing the cloak of messianism. For some time this cloak seems a confection piece of clothing, which does not lend a nice

¹ Marta Petreu, *Un trecut deocheat*, 101.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, 111.

³ Cf. Lucian Blaga, *Trilogia culturii II. Spațiul Mioritic* (The trilogy of culture II. The mioritic space) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), 198.

pattern even to the peoples with a world scale power of induction. Until now, no people has become famous by starting from a messianic programme.”¹

The Transfiguration of Romania, the book of the young high school teacher, seems a ruffling reading of this *magister dixit*. Cioran proves exactly the “loftiness” and the “self-forgetting” of “attributing our people a messianic mission in the world.” Cioran does not recoil from these “hybrid ecstasies”, but, on the contrary, invests the ecstatic moment with a central role in the process of Romania’s transfiguration. Russia is an example exactly because of its messianism and slavophilism. The last thesis enounced by the academic Blaga is directly contradicted by the rebellious Cioran, lying at the basis of the whole demonstration in *The Transfiguration of Romania*: “No people has become famous without starting from a messianic programme.”² For Cioran, messianism is not just a “confection piece of clothing” that the body of a nation could put on or not, risking not to make “too nice an appearance”, but an inherent trait of a (major) culture, springing from the depths of its spiritual body.

The views expressed by Blaga in the end of his book coincide with those of Cioran as far as the “sphere of influence” is concerned. Like Cioran, Blaga anticipates the coming of Romania out of the “minor plan” and its entrance into the “major plan” of culture.³ Both for one and the other, the centrality of Romania reports to the South-Eastern Europe. Both reclaim the critical lucidity and reject any mirage of utopia. A centre of discrete spiritual irradiation in this “forgotten corner of the world”,⁴ in Lucian Blaga, the future Romania will become, for Cioran, the “new Constantinople” of the same “corner of the world.”⁵ Both philosophers show themselves, unwillingly, tributary to the stylistic matrix of the world between the worlds, the significant divergences regarding the modality in which Romania can obtain its hegemony in an interval area.⁶ Blaga opts for “discretion”, “common sense”, “propriety”, for the transmission step by step, “like a spark”, of the spiritual irradiation.⁷ On the contrary, Cioran chooses a forceful solution: “South-Eastern Europe, without a focal point, has no reality. Sofia, Athens, and Belgrade do not irradiate more than those countries need it. If Bucharest does not become a centre of attraction for this entire marginal area of Europe, then we would better demolish it now.”⁸

The agonistic method, “documented” in the first books of the young Cioran as well, proves similarly efficient here too: in order to obtain the leap in a new ontological plan you must suffer to transfiguration, to agonize to ...ecstasy. This is exactly what the Russians did and this is what the Romanians have to do as well. The cultural backwardness as to the other major nations was an occasion of intense and enormous sufferance, which had, however, an incentive, galvanizing effect, not

¹ Ibid., 219–220.

² Cioran, *Schimbarea la faţă...*, 23.

³ Lucian Blaga, *Spatiul mioritic*, 218.

⁴ Ibid., 220.

⁵ Cioran, *Schimbarea la faţă...*, 230.

⁶ Lucian Blaga, *Spatiul mioritic*, 219.

⁷ Ibid., 220.

⁸ Cioran, *Schimbarea la faţă...*, 231.

a depressing one. Romania must pluck itself out, like Russia, from the temptations of Byzantine immobility, present both in a country as well as in the other.

The Russian culture did not have itself a style, an aspiration to form, to limit or definition. By the extreme vitality of its fundamentals, the Russian culture managed, however, to establish itself as different from the minor cultures; it manifested its vitality by the constant reclaiming of a messianic role, by the desire to become the saviour and redeemer of the other nations. Messianism solicits, however, a soul structure dominated by pride and not by humility, as in the case of the Romanians.

The Romanians, belonging to a minor culture, and thus lacking an internal law of historical development, must, in order to enter history, fight against themselves, must shape themselves and create themselves. However, this “leap” in history is not entirely contrary to their nature because, Cioran thinks, desire itself appears as a consequence of some previous data that qualifies the solicitor for obtaining what he wishes for. The historical leap is not entirely artificial, forced, but, to a certain extent, natural, because “I cannot become anything else than what I already am.”¹ The leap that the Romanian culture has to make does not refer to a transcending of its natural data, but to the fulfilment of an evolutionary leap for the fulfilment of these data. The historical leap that the Romanian culture must undertake is a leap inside itself.

The ones personally and directly responsible for the solving of the minor status problem of the Romanian culture are its very creative personalities. These cannot save themselves but only together with the culture they belong to because individuality cannot exist separately from its nation. The belonging to nation is fatal, while the individual cannot exist, without failing, outside his nation. This is the conception of the young Cioran, an image we know he would change during his French period when he made the apology of the metec, of the man freed from the burden of citizenship. The (creative) individuality is inseparable from the nation it belongs to because in his vision, an organist one, part is nothing but the expression of the whole, the separation of the part from the whole being equal to its annihilation. The Cioranian scheme runs as follows: the world of values – nation – individual.

The individual can expose a world of values only because he belongs to a nation. That is why the concern with the destiny of his culture is, for the creator, a concern with his own destiny, with his own individuality. Humanity is sheer abstraction and, saints excepted, no one can fulfil himself detached from his nationality because the nation is the world. As any world is a total configuration of values, a complete answer to all possible questions, a closed, finite assembly of values, each nation will claim the universality of its formula of existence which it will try to impose on all the others, with the right of appeal. A nation cannot tolerate another nation, in the same way in which a world cannot tolerate another world. The difference between people and nation springs out clearly now; a people lacks the feeling that its values are universal. On the contrary, a people becomes a nation when it considers that its values are universal.² Aggression is self-understood. A

¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

² *Ibid.*, 50.

nation (powerful and aggressive) is different from a people (peaceful and weak) because it is unable to understand and tolerate other values and other realities except those that define it and which it will impose, forcefully, actively and poignantly, over the other historical entities.

The belief that Romania can detach itself from the orbit of the minor cultures does not remain a utopia, provided that the rebirth of Romania took place under the sign of a ‘collective genius’ and not under the sign of a meteoric apparition of some exceptional creative individualities. Romania must not borrow the model of the cultures within which exceptional personalities had developed, such as the Danish one (with Kierkegaard), the Dutch one (with Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Hobema and Ruysdael), or the Norwegian or Swedish ones (Strindberg, Ibsen, Hamsun). The model which the Romanians must consider is that of the major cultures, which produce individualities that express, each and distinctly, the same common background, the same “national genius”, the same feeling of life typical for that particular culture. Life individuates in nations, while nations individuate in creative personalities – this is the explicative scheme used by Cioran.¹

Because Romania has nothing original, it has nothing to impose externally, it cannot transform itself into a major culture. In spite of all this, the messianic idea will have to be cultivated in the Romanian mentality, being indispensable for ascension on the great stage of history. In the case of Romania, the messianic idea will be justified only by the prophesizing of a future reality, since nothing of those present or past justifies the assumption of a messianic role. In order to become a nation, you must accomplish a world of values inside which and in whose name you shall exclusively live. That is why, outside glory (the feeling that the existence of a nation is not only necessary, but indispensable to the run of history) there is but failure (“The mediocre role”, “slow rhythm”, “breathing lacking amplitude”, “order”, “honesty”, “morality”, “comfort”). The solution is simple: prophesizing, messianism, exaltation and fanaticism. These are the ingredients indispensable to the elixir of Romania’s transfiguration, of the transformation of a people into a nation, in the alchemic recipe conceived by Emil Cioran. Their action is “vitalizing”, effervescent. The force and aggression of a nation, however, must be founded spiritually, not materially or pragmatically. Only because it reflects a world of idea or of values, a nation has the right to expansion into the ‘sensitive’ world.

The passage from people to nation is, normally, achieved by mediating a natural, certain political instinct, while the political instinct means: “the unreflected drive to assertion, to assertion of itself, not preoccupied with the barrier of values; the force and the triumph as finality, outside the restrictions of ethics; the desire of primacy and uniqueness; the cult of organization and of objective forms.”² The stage following immediately the constitution of a nation is, fatally, its transformation into a major power. Hence the necessity of war, since it is impossible that nations should mutually tolerate their “supremacy.”

The tragedy is not to be found here, among the nations that, equally endowed and formed temporally simultaneously, fight for their supremacy. The greatest

¹ *Ibid.*, 98–99.

² *Ibid.*, 54.

tragedy belongs to the peoples that, like the Romanian people, fight to become nations and thus to leap into history when nations fight each other in order to obtain hegemony. The entrance on the stage of history is the only solution for these not to be annihilated by this cylinder and “swallowed by the major powers.” The favourable moment for such an affirmation is the decadence of the major powers, their crepuscule. The greater vitality of the younger peoples is of an “equivocal fecundity” if it is not put in the service of some “spiritual meanings”, of some ideas, of a mission.¹

The aspiration towards a major culture comes from “the demiurgic thirst”, “the desire of the absolute”, from the desire to create a world. The hero is the one who feels such a demiurgic thirst because the hero is the individuality that embodies the universal, the whole of a culture, an existential synthesis of the universal and the individual. When the individual consciousness pushes its limits until becoming universal, man feels himself as God and he experiences the ecstasy of his force.

The unleashing of the ecstasy of the inner force in a minor culture (not endowed naturally for this because of a deficient vitality) is produced by provoking the agony of this culture. The agonistic method – the one that potentiates suffering to the transfiguration of its depressing valence to a stimulative one – is prescribed by Cioran as an efficient method of provoking the ‘leap’ of passage into the great history. To his readers who, familiarized with the theories of the philosophy of culture valid in those times, could be puzzled by attributing the lack of vitality to a “young people” such as the Romanian one, Cioran answers with a personal vision on the equation youth – vitality, much different from the common one, present in the philosophy of culture. There are, says Cioran, two levels in the force of a nation: a historical level and a biological one. The morphology of culture believes simply that the biological resources of a nation exhaust as it fulfils itself historically, so that at the end of its destiny it becomes exhausted, powerless, fatigued and finally dead. Quite contrarily, Cioran believes, the two levels condition mutually so that “the historical level” of a nation feeds its biological force. A ‘young’ nation, but unfulfilled historically, lacks, because of this, more vitality than an older one, historically fulfilled. The power obtained externally is a spring that freshens permanently the inner force of a nation.² The Romanian people enters history in a weak condition and not fortified by its millenary sleep.

In another chapter of the book (III), Cioran explains the project of transfiguration of Romania: we can only dream that Romania should ever reach the level of a true major culture, but what can be hoped is that it rises at least to the level of Spain or Italy, “which means marking its existence by means of ephemeral glories.”³ Romania is destined to remain an intermediary culture, ‘at the contact realm between the major and the minor cultures’ since there are only a few value patterns which are materialized by the major cultures, while trying to embody the same world of values, already achieved at the superlative mode, means walking already trodden paths and placing yourself in the shadow of the major cultures.

¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

² *Ibid.*, 34.

³ *Ibid.*, 99.

Although a utopian temptation impels him to dream of a Romania with the population of China and the fate of France¹, lucidity makes Cioran only hope that Romania will probably become “a Spain of South-Eastern Europe, without its ardour and charm” and “without a Cervantes to describe a Don Quixote of our bitterness.”² More famous and much more quoted, though incompletely³, is the first one, which shows how largely is the perception of the book under the sign of the extreme solutions of a radical thought and how much ignored is the continuation, the true outcome that Cioran has in view for Romania, a solution which is more moderate, more lucid and applied, more coherent and non-utopian assumed than a common reader of Cioran’s work may expect.

The transfiguration proposed by Cioran for Romania is therefore a weak transfiguration, a passage from the regime of a “minor” culture to the regime of an “intermediary” one. In spite of all this, the ideas further exposed by Cioran present Romania in the terms of an absolute void. The passage from void to existence cannot be but a strong transfiguration. We shall see, however, in the third section, *The Possibility Conditions of the Wallachian Void*, how the thesis of the weak transfiguration is fully reconfirmed.

7. The *ex-nihilo* creation of Romania

As any other world before being created, Romania is nothing. The beginning at which it finds itself is complete, behind it there being nothing to make a continuation possible nor a replay, and that is why Romania obliges to demiurgic gestures, creative per se. Romania is a void in front of which each and every Romanian will have to feel thrilled with creative élans. In spite of this, the purity of the beginning is maculated by the impurity of the state of mind of the “creators” who, aware of their belatedness in relation with the other major cultures, do not benefit their naiveté, unconsciousness and creative grace. On the contrary, the Romanian beginning stays under the sign of lucidity and willingness. The creation of Romania is accompanied by an unhappy consciousness, by suffering and strain.

The condition of the Romanian is an “adamic” or “adamitic” one (as it appears in the first edition) since its creation enters easier the register of production, of realization by deliberate, conscious effort. The adamic situation of the Romanian is an invidious one since the Romanian is an Adam who has never known Paradise, an Adam who, from the very beginning, wakes up separated from the Eden of history. For this sui generis Adam, the finality of his creative efforts does not consist in recuperating or reiterating what he had had and what he lost; he must conquer what he had never had. The future reveals to him in a disconcerting nudity since the ideal he aspires to does not have any fundament in his past.⁴

In a different chapter of the book (chapter III, “The psychological and historical gaps of the Romanian people”) Emil Cioran returns to this problem and he

¹ Ibid., 96.

² Ibid., 101.

³ Cf. Marta Petreu, *Un trecut deocheat*, 217.

⁴ Cioran, *Schimbarea la față...*, 40.

asserts that the Romanians individuate themselves because they “enjoy” lucidity from the very beginning, without “suffering from too much naïveté.” Turning the evolution order of a major culture upside down, the stage of lucidity appears with the Romanians not in the crepuscule of the historical becoming, but at its very beginning, due to a structural deficiency of vitality.¹ Lacking the “psychological conditions of naïveté”, the Romanians have known only the external forms of a naïve socio-political organization: the society instead of the state, the people instead of the nation, the village instead of the city. A significant discrepancy is traced between Romanians’ external form of existence and their inner disposition: crepuscular souls living in auroral dwellings... The entrance in culture could not therefore be but frenetic, removing by a stroke of hand this external falseness, these “forms without an essence” and putting into accordance the interior and the external, the soul life with the social life: instead of the village – the city, instead of a people – the nation, instead of a society of individuals – the state.

The Transfiguration of Romania is not radical, it rather shows like a (re)positioning in accordance of the external forms with the inner foundation of the Romanian people. The psychological foundation of the Romanians corresponds and predisposes them to an urban existence, their ruralism having to be removed as a falsification of this. “The leap into history” is not a leap beyond its proper being, it is not a “loss of being” (as Mircea Vulcănescu reproached him in *The Romanian Dimension of Existence*), but it is a leap “into” the being of the Romanian people. Although starting from different premises, Lucian Blaga offers an unexpected support of the Cioranian point of view. In the chapter “Evolution and involution” from *The Mioritic Space*, he exposes a historical theory in which the Romanians’ ruralism is perceived as being accidental, determined by specific historical conditions (“barbarous invasions”), like a “retreat from history”, “in a life not lacking culture, not deprived of forms, but ahistorical.”² More exactly, the population from Dacia Traiana, ripe for history, receives the blow of the barbarous invasions that obliges it to leave the level of historical, urban, manifestation, set on a major plan, and to retreat on a minor level, in the ahistorical, rural plan. Such a retreat in the “atemporal” allows the Romanian existence way to survive, safe from the roller of history. The Romanians retreated “gasteropodically”, “boycotting history”, brewing the “pearl of the first determinants of the Romanian stylistic matrix.”³ Therefore, both for Blaga and Cioran, the ruralism of the Romanians, their ahistorism and their atemporality are not consubstantial, for the former –because they are adaptation reactions to situations adversary to a natural evolution of the history of the Romanians⁴, for the latter – because the Romanians have a lucid and tragic consciousness, which contravenes to the “naïve forms” of existence.

Blaga prefers a historical explanation of this breach between the foundation (predisposed to major manifestations) and the minor forms of existence, while Cioran prefers a metaphysical explanation (of a vitalist origin): the congenital

¹ Ibid., 92.

² Lucian Blaga, *Spațiul mioritic*, 171.

³ Ibid., 175.

⁴ Lucian Blaga, *Spațiul mioritic*, 170.

deficiency of vital energy of the Romanian people makes, on the one hand, Romanians have not enough energy to manifest themselves historically on a major level (since History is Life)¹ and, on the other hand, the same deficiency intensifies at the maximum the state of tragic consciousness (resulted from the breach from life), a consciousness which is inadequate to the rural style of life, yet totally adequate to the urban one. The same consciousness represents the ferment of the Romanians' historical manifestation.

Both Blaga and Cioran speak about Romanians' historical sleep. For Cioran, it is a continuous sleep, from which the Romanians had just awoken, suddenly; for Blaga, there is an alternation between the historical sleep and the historical awakening, which follows certain rhythms, comparable to those of breathing. At each favourable moment (which means a relaxation of the external pressure), the Romanian historical being manifests itself, "making exercises of expansion."² The voivodates and principalities from the 19th century are examples from this perspective. Inhibited in Transylvania by the unfavourable positioning of the Hungarians and by "Pecheneg and Cuman pressures", "the Romanian stylistic matrix awoke and tried to manifest and fulfil itself" firstly in Eastern Wallachia (Muntenia) (under the rules of Seneslau, Tihomir, Basarab and Mircea the Elder), then in Maramureş and Moldavia ("from Dragoş to Bogdan, then under the rule of the Muşatini, up to Stephen the Great"), with a dynamics that resembled the "freshly germinated seed."³ The rule of Stephen the Great represents the climactic moment of Romanians' entrance into history, a moment in which one could foresee "the creation of a Moldavian space of imperial length and proportions."⁴ This moment of historical glory of the Romanians was, however, brutally interrupted by the "Ottoman expansion", obliging Stephen to resort to "defence, reaction, the consolidation of what he already acquired."⁵ There follows a new retreat of the Romanians from history, a "new boycott of history", "an ahistorical life, rural culture, cultural matrix with flourishing, sometimes of a respectable density, but on a minor plan", a number of centuries of "non-cooperation with history."⁶ In another historical region and in another period of time, the place of Stephen the Great is taken over by Michael the Brave.

Cioran, without saying that "the strives of Stephen the Great or of Michael the Brave lack importance and a certain dramatism", believes that, without being subdued to an idea, "they have not overcome, however, the character of an existence reaction and they have not surpassed at all the limits of defensive."⁷ That we find ourselves in the middle of a full polemic dialogue between Cioran and Blaga is proved by the fact that the superlative presentation of Stephen the Great is minimized on the level of his ecclesiastic constructions. For Blaga, "under the rule of Stephen the Great, the architectural styles, the Byzantine and the Gothic ones,

¹ Emil Cioran, *Schimbarea la faţă a României*, 83.

² *Ibid.*, 179.

³ *Ibid.*, 179-181.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁷ Cioran, *Schimbarea la faţă...*, 78.

adapt amazingly to organic necessities and to the local matrix [...] There are so many possibilities that vanquished once the rule of Stephen the Great ended, under which the East and the West meet in a melting pot so favourable to a new architectural and metaphysic vision. The very Romanian nature was on the point of becoming, due to the churches and monasteries that integrate so graciously and manly in it, a “church-nature”, picturesque and solary-sophianic.”¹ For Cioran, the small churches from our past are many, but all are “sad and small”, “improvisations of piety”: “Stephen the Great exercised occasionally a feeling of piety and built on the spot so many churches, minor and miser locations of deserting from the world, and no monumental construction to intensify a feeling of life and to give it the dramatic and vibrant unending that invades the soul in any gothic atmosphere.”²

The difference between the perspectives on the history of Romania in the case of the two thinkers concerns not only the past, but also the present and the future. Cioran rejects categorically the idea that we can find historical manifestations or quasi-manifestations in the past of Romania. The present and the future of Romania cannot be anchored in any of the facts of the past. Disagreeing with Lucian Blaga, but also with the current nationalism in his epoch that, like any other ideology, reclaimed from a tradition, Cioran conceives a different type of nationalism, founded exclusively on the future, whose own expression is the *prophecy*. For such nationalism, Romania is the ground zero from which everything must be constructed, having a status comparable to the initial nothingness. A nationalist must not be proud of his country for what that used to be or for what that is (because it was and is nothing), but he must be proud only of what his country will be. An authentic nationalist believes that “we, Romanians, have not created history so far”, that Romania is a minor culture and, in spite of this, it “wants, fanatically, the transfigurative leap”³ on the orbit of the major history. Prophetism means that – by revolting against this nothingness, by negating it – you believe in the possibility of a destiny for Romania. Only such love, born out of despair, has any value for Cioran.

Conversely, in Blaga, the key word for the present and future of Romania is: “Be patient!” The shell (the Romanian village) needs time in order to “fill up with thoughts and forms proper for the frames of the village” in modern Romania, the village designed following the “political unity of the Romanian people” in 1918. The manifestation of a people on a major scale of history is dependent on the ripening of its popular ‘sub-stratum.’ Between the village and the city there is not, according to Blaga, any solution of continuity such as Cioran thinks, on the contrary. Between the village and the city there is and there must be a “natural evolution”⁴ – a term frequently repeated by Blaga – that annihilates the possibility of any revolution and of any historical ‘leap’ that, as we have seen, Cioran conceived as the only valid solution for Romania to enter the great scene of history.

Contrary to Lucian Blaga who defined the minor culture, therefore, the Romanian culture as well, as carrying some stylistic structures typical for childhood,

¹ Blaga, *Spațiul mioritic*, 182–183.

² Cioran, *Schimbarea la față...*, 83.

³ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴ Blaga, *Spațiul mioritic*, 190–191.

Cioran asserts that “Spiritually, the Romanians have never been children and they will never be.”¹

The Romanian culture has not known the natural and smooth beginning of the major cultures – associated with naiveté, grace and innocence – but, on the contrary, it knows a brutal start, coming into life with an already mature consciousness, after a prolonged sleep. The Romanian culture developed biologically, comatose-like, in a historical sleep from which, waking up and realizing its condition, tries to recuperate – by a leap – the belatedness as compared with the other cultures and with its own historical level.

Again, the benchmark country for Romania is Russia, which itself has experienced a millenary sleep entering history abruptly, by a leap, in the 19th century. Romania should be obsessed with her destiny, just like Russia. Romania has a messianic aspiration that should, if to change in a true messianism, be doubled by a proper mysticism in order to assert the uniqueness and the specificity of the Romanian’s condition. Such a task can be accomplished by inoculating some myths in the Romanians’ consciousness, with a quite beneficial effect: the fanatization of this consciousness. Judged from a pragmatic political perspective, myths are validated as ‘vital truths’, since they will lead to the enhancement of the power of a nation, and power is the only element that matters in the fight for the historical existence. The fanatization that Cioran proposes for the minor cultures corresponds to the “innocence” of the major cultures, whose absence it comes to compensate. As a minor culture cannot feel naturally and instinctually, like a major culture, its own value and its ontological centrality, it must be made to learn them, by the assimilation of a specific mythology.

Coherent with what he already advocated, Cioran believes that such a mythology cannot be grounded on the past, but only on the future. The myths that can fanaticize the Romanians cannot root themselves in a golden, passed age, because of the vigil consciousness, of the lucidity impossible to cheat in the individuals that are part of a minor culture. That such a mythology has been experienced (the legionary ideology as well) without too many significant results – this is obvious enough. The foundation myths must be placed in the future, not in the past, and hence their intimate link with the idea of mission and prophetic spirit.² Romania deserves to exist only from the perspective of what it will be. Atypical nationalist, Cioran thinks, in accordance with his own system of ideas, that the history of Romania is not past, but future, that the Romanian present is supported by the future, and that the subjective temporality must be dominated by waiting and not by memory. Transfiguration is achieved by the spontaneous actualization, by leap, of the virtu(aliti)es of a nation.

The reason for Cioran to hope for a great future for Romania, completely incompatible with the present and the past of the country is the irrationality of life. Faithful to the vitalist philosophy, Cioran asserts the irrationality of life, which allows someone to hope without a particular reason, or, better, against any reason whatsoever. The example is also provided by the Russian philosophers, who

¹ Cioran, *Schimbarea la față...*, 44.

² *Ibid.*, 46.

separated from the Hegelian philosophy the finality of history from its rationality. Rationally speaking, Romania would not have any chance for a major history because it lacks the premises, the fundamentals, and the preliminary conditions necessary for such a future. However, life is not rational and life, believes Cioran, takes leaps. And if life makes leaps, history will be able to do the same. If, for Eminescu, the past was glorious, the present was decayed and unhappy, while the future was supposed the grandiosity of the past, for Cioran the past and the present are as inexistent, while the future continues to be a great one. Paraphrasing Eminescu, Cioran could wish a personified Romania: “to your great void, may you have a great future!”¹ The national recognition is obtained by means that connect to the register of irruption: “explosion”, “leap”, “metamorphosis.”

8. The stylistic matrix of the Wallachian void

Coherent with his idea announced from the beginning of the book, according to which the past and the present of Romania represent nothing, Cioran starts, in the third chapter of his book, “The psychological and historical gaps of the Romanian people”, to explore the conditions of possibility of this void. The last chapter of the *Mioritical Space* is entitled “Romanian Apriorism” and we know about the decisive role that Lucian Blaga confers to the subconscious stylistic determinants, a priori, reunited in the constellation of the stylistic matrix. We believe we are not far away from the truth whether we shall also place the Cioranian attempt in the Romanian transcendentalism as counterpoised to Blaga’s attempt.

The question that concerns Cioran is not “how it is possible for what already exists to be” but “how it was possible for what did not exist not to have existed.” The question is how life, irrational and unpredictable, cannot bear such questions regarding the realities it endlessly creates; the “inner conditions”, “the psychological determinants” of a people, responsible for the “gaps, insufficiencies, the negative side of a destiny.”² Cioran sets off in search of those a priori categories that make possible the phenomenon of the “Wallachian void” so that, by negating them, he could obtain the assertion of the Romanian being. How can this transfiguration, this transmutation be obtained? By the conversion of the negative into the positive, as Hegel proved it in his *Logics*.

Passing from a metaphysical to a psychological plan, Cioran knows that any external change results from an inner transformation and that any external behaviour derives from an inner attitude. The struggle with the Romanians’ “idols” is therefore related to the preliminaries essential for any change of their becoming. There is, however, an inner drive of the Romanian people in which the idols originate and in which the idols do nothing but manifest and justify themselves: the lack of vitality. As compared with other nations, the Romanian people has a shortage of vitality, on which one can intervene but indirectly, by the augmentation of its passionate state, whose shortage is its last effect. The Romanian people must not necessarily be taught to think ‘positively’, but to maximize the negativism it naturally possesses

¹ Ibid., 47.

² Ibid., 59.

until it becomes an ecstatic negativism:¹ doubt must be pushed to despair, self-despise – to the (heroic) unacceptance of the present condition, fatalism – to the belief in its own destiny. The transfiguration proposed by Cioran proves, once again, a weak transfiguration and not a radical one: the transfiguration of some mental data on which there is operated a transmutation by the so-called agonic method, by their exacerbation or potentiation.

1. Lack of vitality. The Romanian people is not, like other peoples, endowed with the grace and spontaneity of a natural belonging to the flux of life. Instead of the happy consubstantiality with the world of life, there interposes “an initial emptiness”, “an inadequation”, a “nonconformity in sources”, a “substantial deficiency.” In the Romanian people, as in the conscious individual (from his first books), life “suffers from the lack of a primordial dynamism”, of an “originary insufficiency.”² “The originary sin” of consciousness is, both in the case of the individuals, and in the case of the peoples, caused by the break that separates them from life. From this “initial emptiness” there derive all the other types of historical emptiness, absences, failures and deficiencies of the Romanian people. “The leap in history” is indispensable without a leap beyond the originary, ontological break, which separates an individual or a people from the flux of life. There is a paradoxical situation rounding off in here: the situation of the one that must overcome its very conditions of possibility. The deficiency of vitality can no longer be overcome but only by an exacerbation of the very process of individuation, by an assumption of the tragical, heroic attitude and not of a theoretical, sceptical one. The Romanians cannot obtain the creative naiveté of the major cultures, a naiveté which either you possess from the very beginning, or you do not have it at all; instead, they can obtain the exaltation, the exuberance and the creative effervescence of the tragic, suffering, divided hero. Out of three attitudes in front of life (naïve, heroic and theoretical), the Romanians (did not) live for 1000 years embracing the last, since the first was not destined for them, while for the second they did not have enough vital force. Hence their self-irony, their banter, resignation, “stoicism”, the retreat in front of life, the “a-historism.” From the theoretical attitude, Cioran proposes to the Romanians to plunge into the heroic attitude in front of life, in which the tragicness of history is experienced with the greatest intensity and lucidity. The idea (mentioned by Blaga in the *Mioritic Space* as well) that the evil events (wars, defeats, vicissitudes) explain a certain attitude of a people, is turned upside down: the attitude of the people itself explains the unfavourable times.³ The Romanians are guilty of all the evils of the theoretical attitude in front of life: they are “too lukewarm”, “balanced”, “calm”, “reserved”, “lacking contradictions”, and “unfulfilled.” The blood of the Romanians must be heated by the fire of the messianic exaltation. Although they did not have history, the Romanians are equally alive and fresh as any other peoples, claims Cioran, contradictory to what the representatives of the philosophy of culture supported in those times, as well as to Blaga who saw in the non-cooperation with

² Ibid., 59.

³ Ibid., 60.

the history of the Romanians “a comforting proof of vitality and conservative spirit.”¹ One proof of this is the peasants’ faces that seem to express the lack of life, atrophy, a constitutive weakness.

2. *Scepticism*. The lucidity of the Romanians is manifested in the cultivation of scepticism. We are already familiar, from Cioran’s previous writings, with his extremely negative opinion about scepticism, at least in its theoretical version. An irony of fate made that Cioran should be labelled as “sceptical”, especially starting with his French period, a label that persists even nowadays.² The negative valorisation of scepticism continues here as well: scepticism is only “the first step in a process of transformation.”³ If the Romanians do not go further, they will become “convenient spectators of their inertia”, superficial, bantering, self-ironical in a “facile and sterile way.”⁴ Scepticism cannot ensure the energy necessary for the “transfigurative leap”, scepticism being, by its very nature, inertial, sterile, and immobile. In his first book, *Pe culmile disperării*, Cioran associated scepticism with the theoretical attitude in front of life, the least valuable one, the other two attitudes being the naïve and the heroic ones.⁵ Given the fact that the naïve attitude is incompatible with the lucid nature of the inhabitant of a minor culture, the only efficient modality of achieving the transfigurative leap into history is the adaptation of the heroic attitude. Therefore, indifference, passivity, the sterile lucidity are not recommendable: despair, dramatism, despondency – all these are useful. As in *Pe culmile disperării*, here as well scepticism can ensure however the “adoption” of the heroic attitude provided that doubt stops being purely theoretical, detached and indifferent in order to become organic, passionate and concerned.⁶ The Romanian scepticism is not comparable with the French one, which does not address a diminishing of vitality, as in the case of the Romanian one, but, quite the contrary, it is life overpouring in ironies and witticisms, in a refined and sparkling way. The “depths” of the French scepticism are at the surface, hiding in fact a very profound participation in the flux of life, while the Romanian scepticism, poorer in intellectual subtleties, derives from an authentic and profound separation from life. The clearest proof is the very sterility of this type of scepticism, coherent to the end. The Romanian scepticism is “telluric and subterranean”, “suffering, wry, lacking comeliness and elegance.”⁷

3. *The cult of resignation* – the most evident and detrimental aspect of the theoretical attitude must, in the vision of the mentality reformer, be completely unveiled and desacralized. One of the most cherished idols of the Romanians, resignation, will

¹ Blaga, *Spațiul mioritic*, 184.

² Marius Dobre, *Certitudinile unui sceptic. Emil Cioran* (Certainties of a sceptic. Emil Cioran) (Bucharest: Editura Trei, 2008), 11.

³ Cioran, *Schimbarea la față...*, 48.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See Horia Pătrașcu, *Lirismul metafizic. Teoria și clasificarea emoțiilor în Pe culmile disperării* (The metaphysical lyrism. Theory and classification of emotions in *On the heights of despair*), in *Studii de istorie a filosofiei românești* (Studies in the history of Romanian philosophy), ed. Viorel Cernica, vol. 7 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2011), 38–44.

⁶ Ibid., 48.

⁷ Ibid., 65.

have to be disintegrated in front of everyone, so that, finally, the Romanians could worship the true, lively, God of history. For Cioran it is not difficult to provide examples of idolization of resignation in the Romanian culture: the equivalence of resignation with wisdom, the famous quote of the chronicler – “time is not under man, but man under the times.” *Miorița* itself is a “poetic and national curse”, resulted from the “passive abandonment of fate and death”, from the “disbelief in the efficiency of the individual and the force”, from the “minor distance from all aspects of the world.”¹ Entering history means regaining life, because life is duration, believes Cioran, in a very Bergsonian and vitalist manner. The Romanians must habituate to the “taste of becoming” since life itself is becoming. Resignation is indeed a deadly sin, the sin against the “promethean élan of the spirit.”² Not even abdication is as detrimental as the resignation since abdication denotes an “active refusal of the world” while resignation is nothing but “an inertia of the soul.” The vegetal resignation in front of death is directly responsible for the resignation in front of history. The Romanians totally lack a tragic feeling in front of death, they do not protest against it, but accept it per se. Cioran’s conclusion is somehow surprising: the resignation of the Romanians in front of the defeats of history, their humility in front of the oppressors derive from this initial acceptance of death.³ Instead of piety, the Romanian cultivates humility, “the most ahistorical feeling to be conceived” since “it deprives both the individual and the world of their charm and value.”⁴

4. *Self-contempt* is another specific note that enters the composition of the Romanian “stylistic matrix.” The Romanian self-contempt, unlike the Hebrew or Russian ones, lacks “tragism” and is even somehow euphoric. The Romanian tramples rough-shod over himself with a certain satisfaction, not in the least showing the Hebrew pride or the Russian suffering. In spite of this, however, even this self-contempt (which derives from the “consciousness of their own void”) may represent the launching point for the Romanians’ leap into history as long as this attitude does not become permanent, but only a temporary stage. The cold self-contempt must be heated up, felt with pain and divulsion in order to trigger a real transformation in the Romanians. Messianism is essential in order to transform the negative consciousness of the Romanians into a positive one. The Romanian must be determined to believe in himself, in his mission in order to free himself from the deadlock of his negative feelings about himself. The Romanians seem to have all data to help them enter history, except the “optimal temperature” to ensure the fusion of all these disparate elements. The necessary temperature can be obtained only by the inoculation of the messianic idea in the Romanians’ consciousness. In the absence of messianism, the Romanians remain superficial, shallow, lacking the appetite for mystery and therefore unacceptably discreet, “too simple”, “too transparent”, distrustful of ideals, unwilling to sacrifice themselves for any ideas, maintaining themselves in a

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., 66.

³ Ibid., 86.

⁴ Ibid., 87.

comfortable and vegetative doubt about each and every thing. More than that, the very condition of being a Romanian serves them as a pretext for their complacency in passivity, as an excuse for any failure. Romania is invoked as a barrier against any type of success, in a perfect circle of helplessness.

5. *Fatalism*, the belief in destiny, is another determinant of the Romanian culture. It is not about the psychological meaning, the internal one, which the modern cultures have given to destiny as an internal force that determines a certain manifestation in a certain form of life (a meaning not assimilated by the Romanians), but about an external, ontological fatality, responsible for the order of things.¹ The Romanian culture is a culture of the ‘immediate’, of the contingent, of the “here and now”, in total accordance with a “circumstantial vision of life”.² The lack of idea, of the participation to the transhistorical is the fundamental vice of the Romanian positioning in front of life. Space and time are accepted as they are, without the Romanians trying to conquer them in any way, to subdue them to their own will, as it happens in the case of imperialisms. For Blaga, this situation has been clarified in favour of the “mioritical space” that contains, in its stylistic matrix, besides the subconscious spatial horizon of ‘plai’, a certain feeling of the destiny, similar to the first.³ Blaga remarks that the Romanian does not see “definitive enemies” in the powers of nature or in those of destiny, this leading to “on the one hand, a muted fatalism, on the other, a never excessive trust”⁴, similar to the up and down, swinging rhythm of a ‘doina’. The Romanian fatalism is not “fatalism with a tragic accent”, but a “positive” fatalism, due to which “one can say that there is no situation that could drive the Romanian to an annihilating despair.”⁵ The same feeling of destiny can be found, according to Blaga, in Mihai Eminescu’s poetry, symbolized in the image of the sea and of the waters.⁶ It is useless to underline that the same situation, the absence of despair from the Romanian fatalism is valued at the opposite pole by Cioran. That is why Cioran sees in despair (entertained at the intersection between the fever of the messianic exaltation and the coldness of lucidity) the key to transmuting the external fatality into an internal destiny.

6. *The lack of passion*. The Romanian is guilty for the low temperature of his blood, insufficiently warm. The lack of personality is expressed most eloquently when a proper religiosity misses. Any nation produces a personal religion and, even when it accepts it from somewhere else, it confers that religion a specific note so that it can be taken for a creation of its own ethos. It is the case of the Germans, the Russians and the Latins, but also of the Catholicism assimilated specifically in the Latin countries. Although religion is, in its essence, reactionary and not revolutionary, opposing eternity to time and being, out of “all forms of the spirit”, “the most

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., 83–84.

³ Blaga, *Spațiul mioritic*, 17.

⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁵ Ibid., 121.

⁶ Ibid., 202.

inclined to automatization, inertia”, the birth moment of the religion of a people makes the religious phenomenon “a true vital force”, unleashing “an unusual vibration and dynamism.” The capacity of religion to raise the historical level of a people is, however, exclusively auroral. The Romanian Orthodoxy has, from this perspective, one important contribution: it was the only form of spiritual living experience of the Romanian people, conferring it the “apprehension of other worlds”, together with the national consciousness. However, Orthodoxy can no longer ensure today, in Romania, the conditions of redefining in a “modern and grandiose vision.” It could be useful in an ahistorical or sub-historic epoch of Romania, becoming completely useless during its historical period. The Romanian religiosity is “approximate”, “tolerant”, lacking fanaticism and therefore false, given the fact that “the true religiosity is fanatic, prophetic and intolerant.” The lack of passion is obvious in the religious experience specific to the Romanian people, “circumstantial, faded and non-dangerous”, having a “labile and gelatinous”¹ style. But the greatest guilt of the Romanian Orthodoxy is its a-historism, the complete absence of the “gothic” from its stylistic structure.²

A true religiosity would have been accompanied, even if against its natural tendency (centripetal, reactionary) by a progress in history. The minor character of the Romanian culture is explained by Cioran by “a sensitivity in a minor key”, a “static thinking”, a “passive vision of life” and “the traditional burden of the contemplative spirit” of which, only now, due to the presence of an “instinct of becoming”, the Romanian culture frees itself in favour of the politics.³ Generosity, a characteristic that the Romanians highly praise, is nothing but a “mediocre virtue, which cannot be an acme but for people lacking personality. Instead of generosity, it is ardour that should be promoted. And in order to startle ardour nothing is too much and no ideal, however mean or compromising, should be rejected. “The ascension of a country is its only morality.”⁴

The assertions above can be read as arrows shot to clouts spread almost everywhere in the *Mioritic Space*. The lack of Romanians’ religious originality is also registered by Lucian Blaga, but he registers it together with the positive psychological traits. Unlike the “western peoples, especially the Germans and also the Russian people” in which the “schismatic tendency” and sectarianism are general, “the Romanian does not quite make the leap in the spiritual schism”, being satisfied with the assimilation of Christianity in its specific stylistic matrix (of an organic nature), either Christianising pagan themes, or transforming Christian themes pagan within some visions that do not go that far to schism, proving “spontaneity to be a dreaming moderation and a great discretion.”⁵ And if, for Cioran, the inexistence of the gothic is an unforgivable sin of the Romanians’ spirituality, for Blaga this is one of its most remarkable virtues, manifested architecturally in the existence of the threshold and the

¹ Ibid., 77.

² Cf. Lucian Blaga, “Perspectiva sofianică” (The sophianic perspective), in Idem, *Spațiul mioritic*, 73–104.

³ Cioran, *Schimbarea la față...*, 78.

⁴ Ibid., 89.

⁵ Blaga, *Spațiul mioritic*, 112–113.

external frescoes of the churches. These elements, typical, claims Blaga, to the religious Romanian architecture, link and bring together the dimensions that the walls of a Gothic or Romanic cathedral separate and divide: the nature and the sacred, the earth and the sky, humanity and divinity.¹ The sophianic perspective is, for Blaga, one of the greatest achievements of the Orthodox spirit.

Cioran claims for himself the condition of a reformer, more humble, yet more efficient than that of a utopian. What he proposes for Romania is not the embrace of a utopia, but of a feasible ideal. This is also the meaning of discussing the mental, cultural and psychological preliminaries that condition the Romanian realities or unrealities. Ignoring these data would transpose us on the pure but impossible realm of utopia. However, in order to reform an existent reality you need to keep your eyes open on it, no matter how inconvenient or contradictory to your purposes this would reveal. Anyway, the Romanians are too little inclined to utopia due to their “excess of lucidity.” After all, the transfiguration, even if it means an *ex nihilo* creation, is liable to some determinants of the creator. In their demiurgic hypostasis, the Romanians will create Romania, they will bring it into being, but this process is the expression of an inner conversion, of a qualitative leap, of a negation of the inner void. Transfiguration refers to the creative moment, to the passage from the negative of these attributes to their positive or affirmative.

History is, for Cioran, the creation of a spirit which is not detached from life. The privilege of the naïve creativity is hold only by the major cultures. The Romanian culture is destined to enter history following a different path: of the creativity resulted from a tragic sensitivity, from a complete lucidity to which its own lack of vitality predisposes it. The transfiguration of Romania is a weak transfiguration.

¹ *Ibid.*, 127–128.