

Therefore, the author's analyses reach to the detailed investigation of various types of feminisms – resulting, as I have said, in a personal, comprehensive and critical typology of these – made up on the basis of the extremely strong criterion of the type of discrimination revealed by various orientations or trends.

To conclude, all these qualities make the reading of the volume now reviewed a true and authentic philosophical experience: not only of “thinking” and “meditation”, but an emancipatory existential experience for each and every one of us. Regardless of “sex” or “gender”.

Translated by Emese Czintos

The Spirit of Geometry – Review –

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Keywords: mathematics, paradigm, creativity, interdisciplinarity, essential ideas

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Bogdan Suceavă is well-known to the Romanian literary public especially for several acclaimed novels (*Venea din timpul diez*, *Miruna, o poveste*, *Vincent nemuritorul*, *Noaptea când cineva a murit pentru tine*¹) which established him as one of the household names of the 2000s' new wave of Romanian fiction. An acute observer of Romanian cultural realities, from a vantage point that might be due to his geographical distance, the author has also been, within the last decade, a constant presence in local cultural journals. However, both culturally and professionally, Bogdan Suceavă enjoys a double-faceted status whose imprint and consequences bear upon his perspective, opinions and style of writing. Because not only has the author lived the experience of two very different cultures – the Romanian and the North-American one – but he also is accomplished in two fields the common view usually regards as perfectly separate: literature and mathematics. Anyway, the current professor of geometry at California State University, Fullerton faces neither complexes nor limitations from his dual formation and (somehow) intermediary positioning: on the contrary, he has been able to turn them into the premises of an integrate vision and a complex dialogue of domains. It is a feat that his 2013 volume, *Memorii din biblioteca ideală* (*Memoirs from an Ideal Library*)², fully succeeds in achieving.

His recently published essays resort in varying but always compelling degrees to the history of ideas on configuring an intellectual autobiography which constantly

¹ *Coming from an Off-Key Time*, trans. Alistair Ian Blyth (Northwestern University Press, 2011); *Miruna, a Tale*; *Vincent the Immortal*; *The Night Someone Died for You*.

² Bogdan Suceavă, *Memorii din biblioteca ideală* (*Memoirs from an Ideal Library*) (Iaşi: Polirom, 2013), 224 pp. ISBN print: 978-973-46-3442-2; ISBN eBook: 978-973-46-3649-5.

touches upon larger problems concerning the dynamics of creativity, the formation of the individual and the circulation of ideas, the shift of paradigms and the formative role of culture. Bogdan Suceavă recalls several personal experiences that shaped his scientific identity and describes people and books that influenced him over the years, from the Romanian childhood and youth years to the American maturity years. In short, he tries to explain – or, better said, to comprehend – how mathematics, and geometry in particular, have become, in all senses of the term, a part of his life. However his sometimes inherently nostalgic look back is neither overtly sentimental nor self-centered, as the essayist does more than merely dissect the fabric of his own formation. In fact, through personal example, Bogdan Suceavă reflects upon the wider topic of intellectual formation, as related to a given cultural context with its corresponding system of ideas but also to the role of individual innovation within that context. Consequently, there are several generic questions circulating, like a dense thematic thread, through the essayist's particular confessions. What is, beyond its technical applicability, the relevance of mathematics as a “profound science” and an “ethical model”? What (spiritual, not only practical) skills does learning of geometry enhance in school and university students? How does a scientific discipline emerge, evolve, connect with real life and eventually fade out? How do scientific ideas arise and to what extent do the individuals' “revelatory experiences” trigger them? In all such topics, the author approaches the domain of mathematics from both sides: in its advanced research potentialities as well as in its mass education valences.

Anyway, Bogdan Suceavă's dilemmas and meditations gather around two basic standpoints. One is his firm belief in the human, almost affective, irradiance of ideas. The professor of geometry, and the passionate historian of mathematics, has learned that even the most abstract of mathematical ideas are deeply embedded in personal experiences; they are often shaped by people's sudden intuitions, fostered by their particular obsessions and creativity (as was the case with Meusnier or Sophie Germain); on the other hand, it is often ideas themselves that shape people, by training their rational thinking, their logical faculties and even moulding their ontological views. Therefore, more than purely technical implications, mathematical science has a certain humanist relevance: it enables scientific progress, but also shapes ways of thinking and perceiving. No wonder then that Bogdan Suceavă argues for a more efficient integration of geometry as core discipline within the education system and discusses the adequacy of present curricula to the practical needs of contemporary students in the view of their upcoming professions. The author emphasizes in this respect the importance of foundational mathematics as compared to its analytical variants: even on the freshest of minds, for example, foundational geometry can act as a catalyst of intelligence, of logical perception and of our discerning faculties. But he also hints at a deeper meaning of mathematical education in helping people cope with the chaos of contemporary life by restoring a lost sense of clarity and order: “Mathematicians are meant to re-balance reality after politicians, administrators, religious figures and advertisers have spread their lies. (...) One of the oldest dreams of mankind has been to live in a world where things should be as clear as within a perfect axiomatic system”. In such manner, the essayist's meliorist approach acquires enthusiastic ethical overtones. He argues for the underlying values of science and describes mathematics as a sort of corrective to our world-views. In the context of the Romanian culture which has been, especially in the post-war

period, mainly literary-focused, such a *pro-domo* pleading appears as refreshingly original, so the more as it is given by a hybrid personality (a mathematician-writer) in support of a domain whose relevance our rather confined culture has not yet considered to its full consequences.

As a matter of fact – and here lies the other basic standpoint of the essays discussed – Bogdan Suceavă asserts a holistic intellectual point of view advocating for the existence of deep connections between disciplines and domains of knowledge. However, his arguments in this respect don't necessarily come in the fashion of the official interdisciplinary discourse, for several decades now a *bona fide* trend of Western education, but rather ensue naturally from the author's assumed double-fold experience. Because by finding expression in two distinct medias (through figures and through words), Bogdan Suceavă has come to understand on his own that scientific and artistic domains can resort, beyond their many surface discrepancies, to shared underlying principles, to shared stances towards reality. In his opinion, "our vision is not whole if we only focus on literature or if we only deal with one of the exact sciences. A rounded path should encompass depths from both territories". The idea of a "rounded" perspective or a "rounded version of reality" appears almost rhythmically along the essays discussed.

Indeed, despite its austere and self-referential aspect, mathematics is endowed with attributes of generality and depth which make it a privileged domain whence to imagine intellectual connections. After all, the fact of being constructed on a limited set of axioms is more obvious in the case of mathematics than of other domains. Literature is also built on certain axioms, yet they are usually buried under dense strata of poetic or fictional matter. Mathematics, on the contrary, provides the very "exercise of essentialisation, an art of precision, of retreat towards the ultimate principles of matter". However, both mathematics and literature attempt to tell the essential and reach "the truth hidden beyond the cosmetics of reality, beyond the lies we tend to believe or follow". Just like literature reveals in all its greatness when it reaches, no matter how fugitively, the essential, so does geometry become most interesting "in the parts of theory where there are only few principles left and where the scale of possible universes can lean in any side".

Actually, in the Romanian cultural history, literature and mathematics came closest in the inter-war work of Ion Barbu, a great innovator both in the field of geometry and of Modernist poetry. As expected, Bogdan Suceavă finds here an excellent terrain to investigate the extent and consequences of such a common stem of knowledge. Two of the best essays of the book analyze Ion Barbu's poetics in relation to his mathematical research, but also to the scientific paradigm dominant in the third decade of the 20th century. The essayist first points out the fact that scientific and artistic ideas circulated more tightly knit during the period, before domains acquired stricter confines and types of knowledge became more specialized. The author is thus able to reveal the literary consequences exerted by certain previous revolutions from the field of geometry upon the Modernist Romanian poetry. The most famous literary volume of Ion Barbu (*Joc secund/ Secondary Game*), a leading figure of Romanian Modernism, was elaborated under the strong influence of the mathematical system of ideas (Felix Klein's *Erlangen's Program*) the poet was familiar with and innovated within, as a researcher himself. Literary criticism generally considered Barbu's intricate poems, with

their twisted syntax, abstruse metaphors and un-referential words an extreme case of hermeticism and self-sufficient language typical of the High Modernism. On the contrary, by reading them against the background of a specific mathematical paradigm, Bogdan Suceavă proves that Barbu's poems are not merely hermetic, but have a precise substance and content, as they describe "an ideal axiomatic of the entire world". These subtle, grounded observations are no less than revelatory to Romanian literary history. All in all, they illustrate by a perfect example several theses Suceavă has been dwelling on all along the current essays: the creative side intrinsic to the scientific drive, the deep structural communication of domains, the irradiating force of mathematics and the possibility to assume it as a lived experience.

Written in the free style of remembrance and interrogation, Bogdan Suceavă's essays complete the profile of a complex intellectual figure and provide substantial topics of reflection. They deal symbiotically with the thematic of geometry and literature, both of which the author loves in full awareness. It is his pragmatic, albeit passionate approach that succeeds in persuading us that things look clearer, and closer to a "fuller version of reality", when we regard them from outside common confines of domains.

O telenovelă socialistă (A Socialist Soap Opera)*
– Review –

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Keywords: autofictional Bildungsroman, personal history, parody of propaganda, Communist regime

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Those who have already read Doru Pop's previous books will be surprised after reading his latest accomplishment, *O telenovelă socialistă (A Socialist Soap Opera)* an autofictional romance which unfolds during the last two decades of Ceaușescu's regime. Doru Pop is currently associated professor at the Faculty of Theatre and Television, UBB, and his books have covered a quite diverse list of topics and academic fields: theories of the mass media and its phenomena, ideologies and political discourses (*Mass Media și democrația* [Mass media and democracy], 2002; *Mass media și politica* [Mass media and politics] 1999), the philosophy of the visual perception and the history of its theories (*Ochiul și corpul. Modern și postmodern în filosofia culturii vizuale* [The eye and the body. Modernism and postmodernism in the philosophy of visual culture],

* Doru Pop, *O telenovelă socialistă (A socialist soap-opera)* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2013), 238 p, ISBN 978-973-23-3000-5