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ESSAYISTIC OF LUCIAN BLAGA

Abstract

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Formed under the great thinking systems cupola, the essayistic of Blaga synthesizes the most diverse trends. In our study we want to refer to essayistic of Blaga as integrant part of his work, following the way in which the philosopher personality is outlined (starting point – the papers from adolescence and youthful age; terminus point - mature pamphlets, ironic and caustics). Roughly speaking one configures a circle arch between “initial horizons” and diverse temptations that has disturbed the spirit of Blaga.

The thesis opens with *Preliminary* – that contains the argument of this work; it is followed by the five chapters which closed themselves, with separate structure *Conclusions*, in which one insists on personal contributions and complex and actual *References*.

In first chapter, *Introduction in essayistic of Blaga*, starting from the essay definition, one realizes a short “history” of its, to us, relate to European realizations in this domain, until the apparition of philosophic essays of Blaga. Without exaggeration, we can declare that in the case of philosophic thinking of Blaga there is a perfect synchronization with the European one: Paul Tillich printed at Tübingen his sketch of history of philosophy *Das Dämonische*, in the same year, 1926, when Blaga published, in volume, his essay, *Daimonion*. We propose a division in periods of progressive processes of philosophic thinking of Blaga, for delimitation of the research area, the period between 1919-1930, but with references to the papers on literature-philosophic themes, spread through the periodical magazines of that time.

In the **Second chapter** we are interested by the Blaga epistemological model identification. A first stage of this model is represented by the philosopher thesis, *Cultură și cunoștință* (1922) where he tried the enrichment of the knowledge methods with a new toolkit – cultural, different from the logic one, psychological, biological or sociological by then; the next stage corresponds to the writing of essays *Filosofia stilului* (1924) and *Fețele unui veac* (1926) which are only a pass to the definition of style from the first part of *Trilogia culturii – Orizont și stil* (1935), where appears like a hidden spiritual force, an element that engage the variety in an unity. However, in the essays before 1930, Blaga has no proper terminology, he used just a metaphoric language, but all fundamental observations, comprised in the essay from 1924, recur in the work from 1935.

What the Romanian thinker realized in his essays about style (*Filosofia stilului* (1924) – later, 1945, transformed in *Probleme estetice*, and in the following essay, *Fețele unui veac* - 1926) is in the first row a “familiarization” with elements of great cultures. It is impossible not to admire his theoretical ability, the ingenious game with different concepts and above of these his extraordinary intuition which will drive him later to his own philosophic system. Even for philosophy insiders, the Blaga’s terminology is “enigmatic” and provoked a lot of

polemic interpretations, but it must be considered the fact that Blaga uses poetic images which invoke different value judgments also.

In the second part of the essay *Filosofia stilului* (1924) - *Starea estetică și normele artistice*, Lucian Blaga, without using the consecrated terms by Eugen Lovinescu, put for the very first time the problem of *esthetic values mutation* in modern art. Without negate the critics D. Micu and Z. Ornea conclusions regarding the values mutation theory, which has been sketched by Blaga first in *Filosofia stilului*, we consider that the young philosopher delineated that theory since 1922, when he published, in Romanian, the Ph.D. thesis sustained in Vienna, *Cultură și cunoștință*. To sustain the viability of our hypothesis one offer a concluding citation: “Ancient cultures or constitutive elements of these can be refreshed – growing their value – by *functional mutations* (s.n. R.Ș.); in this sense we risk the paradox that the tradition has a reformatory importance, that the past can have a bigger importance in the future than in the past. This paradox contains the seed of a new philosophy of history.”¹ And in the same work he sustain how convicting is possible that: “The ideas has not from the beginning an imperative function, they obey the *mutation law* (s. n. R. Ș.).”² However, this initial idea is not developed, but Blaga will renew a part of argumentation in the essay from 1924, when the theory will be much more traced and explained.

The interest for the theory of values mutation has maintained till today, with the apparition of the book of Eugen Negrici, *Iluziile literaturii române*, where he affirm the relativity of the esthetic values. The works of the past don't say us anything, conclude Negrici like the classicist Lovinescu formerly. The relativism strikes in one of the most powerful and more persistent myths from our culture: the immutability of the esthetic values.

Blaga don't escape from the “mark” of successor of the two morphologists (Frobenius and Spengler): Virgil Nemoianu – far away to be a detractor, trying the recuperation of the Blaga's creation in another paradigm – in *O teorie a secundarului* arrives to formulations of the type “neo-spenglerian” and “interesting continuator, but minor (s.n.)”, of the theories of XIX-th century about value, vitality and culture philosophy.”³ In comparison with this, from the romanian literature perspective, Nicolae Manolescu in *Istoria critică...* append to them the name of doctor Jung: “Indebted to the culture morphology of Leo Frobenius and Oswald Spengler, as well as to the Jung's psychoanalyze, essayistic of Blaga's maturity keep from the

¹Lucian Blaga, p. 30.

² Lucian Blaga, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

³ Virgil Nemoianu, *O teorie a secundarului*, București, Ed. Univers, 1997, p. 178.

speculative type of culture philosophy”⁴. With all the influences, the young philosopher is neither an imitator nor such a polemic spirit that appears at first glance. He is rather a dissociative spirit, obsessed by the difference and originality. Their essayistic and philosophy include not a long series of refusals, but these, as a critic says, are never totals⁵.

Tributary, in the main lines, to Riegl, Frobenius și Spengler, especial, starting with the essay *Filosofia stilului* (1924) Blaga delineate a “style theory” which has singularized him in the central and south-east European landscape. The entire argumentation from *Filosofia stilului* is built to sustain the idea of “absolute” style towards head for, with no doubt, all the essayist sympathy.⁶ We can say that the Blaga’s theoretical attitude over the art is a manner to construct an original universe that tends to a happy synthesis between the new forms of expression and the native fond through is imposed to the creation a newest artistic permanence.

In the study *Fenomenul originar* (1925), the young philosopher is preoccupied not by the Goethe’s theories from the natural science domain, but from the unexpected perspectives that open, acting to a debate on a vast problematic of history of philosophy, in which are analyzed the beliefs of some thinkers like Nietzsche, Spengler, Strindberg, Weininger, Von Keyserling. Even he will use the born phenomenon method proposed by Goethe, Blaga will impose himself, however, the proper vision about the subject. The term “Gestalt” proposed by Goethe and enounced by Blaga in cited essay, will become, gradually, one of the key terms of the philosophy of ardelen thinker – “the mistery”.

In the III-rd chapter, **Lucian Blaga și cultura germană**, one talk, in the first part about the influence of romantism in general and the german one in special on the Blaga’s formation and in the second part, starting from the collocation “theoretician of the expressionism” we demonstrate that the young thinker was a fine connoisseur of the new tendency of german origin.

The theoretical interest for the romantism is manifesting permanently, along to his entire creation. We meet references to romantism not only in *Fețele unui veac*, but also in other essays (*Daimonion*, *Fenomenul originar*), as well as in the “mature” work – *Trilogia cunoașterii* (1943), *Trilogia valorilor* (1946) and *Trilogia culturii* (1949). This thing cannot

⁴ Nicolae Manolescu, *Istoria critică a literaturii române. 5 secole de literatură*, Pitești, Editura Paralela 45, 2008, p. 684.

⁵ The exact citation is: „Blaga never totally deny a theory, even he leaves the impression that he does. Everytime he keeps something from the refused theories.”, Dumitru Micu, *Estetica lui Lician Blaga*, Editura Științifică, 1970, p. 198.

⁶ Constantin Șăineanu, in the account to *Filosofia stilului*, say it in much hard-lines terms: „In reality, the entire study, rather unsewed and with no unitary overview, is much more a panegyric of expressionism...” in *Adevărul*, an. XXXVII, nr. 12559, 10 decembrie, 1924, p.1

be explained in another way that through the fact the Romanian writer finds strong affinities and numerous secret spiritual correspondences with the romanticism. The Craiovean critic Ovidiu Ghidirmic sustains trenchantly that: “Assimilated, as rule, by the literature history of expressionism, Lucian Blaga remains, structurally, a romantic”⁷

The essayistic of Romanian philosopher contains, consider some exegetes, on the metaphysic positions assumed, characteristics of “*arhi-romantism*”⁸ as *forma mentis*, trans-historical structure that characterizes, beyond space and time, some type of sensibility. We consider that his theoretical “willfulness” situates him rather to a post-romantic destiny, constructivist and metaphorical, visionary and intense subjective. In general, the romantics are between the only exponents of the culture that are admired by him, in the parentage of that he accepts to be placed. An interpreter nominated him “the last great romantic on the philosophy land”⁹, and literary, the expressionism of the beginning period, as well as the later come-backs to the verse of folkloric inspiration, betray, also, a romantic legacy.

A good connoisseur of occidental literature movements, Blaga cannot pass beside innovative formulas, remarking the apparition of a new rapport art – writer. His theoretical studies about “*Noul Stil*” deploy simultaneously with the utilization of innovative expressionist forms in the poetry and theater of Blaga. In his essays, *Filosofia stilului*, *Fețele unui veac*, *Ferestre colorate*, Lucian Blaga hesitates to speak about “expressionism”, preferring the term used in that period, of “*Noul Stil*”¹⁰. The history of apparition of this “current” is made, not from the social perspective, how was determined by historians and critics of expressionism, by contra, Blaga explains its apparition by the dialectic of creator spirit, that he made recognized by artistic movements successions, having as starting point the romanticism.

Blaga prepares a pertinent panorama of expressionism, along that he fixes the constitutive points of the phenomenon by a technique similar of “snowball”. Of course that is an empirical method and implicit risky: he installs oneself as onlooker in front of work of art, reflects over his own affects involved, notes the factor that generated: an aspect of the regarded object and generalizes this aspect as essence of the current. This technique has obvious weakness, but Blaga is an inspired onlooker, so we cannot signal errors in his global view of the expressionist phenomenon.

⁷ Ovidiu Ghidirmic, *Poeți neoromantici*, Editura Scrisul Românesc, Craiova, 1985, p. 78.

⁸ Bodan Ștefănescu, *Romanticism. Between Forma Mentis and Historical Profile. Revising the Epistemology of Romantic Studies*, Editura Ex Ponto, Constanța, 2001,

⁹ Dumitru Micu, *Estetica lui Lucian Blaga*, București, Editura Științifică, 1970, p. 193.

¹⁰ George Gană argues that this choice through the fact that the agents analysed by Blaga are expressionists, in the sense that has the term for the essayist, therefore he replaces “expressionism” with „*The New Style*”; see George Gană, *Opera literară a lui Blaga*, București, Editura Minerva, 1976, p. 112.

The theoretician of expressionism posture seems to be enough for a critic like that of Dumitru Micu or Amelia Pavel which designate Blaga as first theoretician of expressionism. On contrary, in our analysis, we have tried to demonstrate that, in his essays, Blaga do not confess an unconditional adhesion, because he was not a theoretician, and more over an “analyst” of the expressionism. In other words: for Blaga the expressionism was not a program, but “esthetic lesson”. The young writer extracts from expressionism just the elements that fit to the proper poetics.

In the IV-th chapter, *Între modernism și tradiționalism*, we want to highlight the main directions in the reception of ardelean philosopher, either as traditionalist or as modernist. Placed by the critics between the two movements of the beginning of XX-th century, put by Blaga himself under the question sign, these oppose the necessity of an individual artistic demarche, because, in modernism, every artist brings something particular. The metaphysic traditionalism proposed by Blaga is synthesis of the present sensibility with the primer elements of our spiritual fond placed outside of every indoctrination, so untainted neither romantism or naturalism or symbolism. In this context, of doctrines placements, the suggestion of George Gană is fundamental for the Blaga’s artistic comprehension, the interpreter observing that Blaga is formed neither under the expressionism influence, in meaning large of modernism but in parallel with it.¹¹ One of the main Blaga’s modernist characteristics would be the sensibility to modern literature manifestations. Lucian Blaga is: a conscious poet about the artist destiny, in this period of the “*second modernism*” (the term belongs to Liviu Petrescu), a system constructor, an essayist being in dynamic dialog, actual and even polemic with all the meditation themes of his epoch.

The second goal of the chapter is: the analysis of the Blaga’s relations with their contemporaries from the “Gândirea” magazine and the way in which they have influenced him in the elaboration of the Romanian ethnic specific theory; and the bringing, in the first plan, of an old dispute between the two world wars, with the insertion of a lot of testimonies, “pungency from back of the stage” from “the play” played by Blaga and the theologians on the stage of the Romanian christianity and orthodoxy, for the sake of this first specialty analysis to make the object of those who are interested and captivated by the information and the general situation sketched here. In the paragraph *Episodul pamfletelor* we try to rebuilt the historical context in that Blaga has wrote and published his polemic papers. Following the arguments of the involved parts, with “detectivist passion” we tried to solve the complicated

¹¹ George Gană, *Opera literară a lui Lucian Blaga*, chpter II, *Operă și biografie*, București, Editura Minerva, 1976.

puzzle in which the pamphleteer violence has degenerated in personal attacks, awaken disapprobation and protests.

In the last chapter, *Însemnări și reflecții asupra fenomenului cultural*, we highlight that between Lucian Blaga and the Romanian avangardism there are a lot of tangencies, on all the levels of literature experience. Their meeting was, with no doubt, favorable to Blaga – the philosopher that assumes themes (“the primitivism”, ”the technicism”, etc.) and integrate them to his work. However, the differences are more important, regarding from contemporary perspective, in diachronic. So, at these vicinities had contributed benefic, paradoxical, the conceptual confusions in the epoch, also.

In the essay *Ferestre colorate*, composed from papers seemingly with no link – but which have as logical goal, the definition of a cultural style – Lucian Blaga made an excellent selection of the painters from the period between the two great world wars, influenced by the expressionism, but touched by the other “isms” of the epoch. All that writes Blaga about the plastic works of Teodorescu-Sion contravene flagrant with what he had wrote, one year earlier, in 1925, in *Etnografie și artă*, where he turns against the nationalism extremist, against decorative ethnographic, folklorizant and exaggerated. All these certitudes, seems to be not valid in the case of the picture of Teodorescu-Sion, that abound in elements of exterior nature, ethnographic. We believe that what has imposed in the attention of the critic Blaga was the artistic high quality of the works of Teodorescup-Sion.

But, in the case of the other monographic papers, the analysis of Blaga are, with no doubt, pertinent. Meritorious seems to us the fact that Blaga refers not only to the German art when he refers to expressionism, but he has in view an area much larger (includes the French and Russian manifestations also). With no doubt, the essential quality of Blaga’s interpretations in the plastic art area is that to put the Romanian artistic phenomenon comment on a higher level, philosophic. If would must to make a conclusion, aiming strictly Blaga’s analysis regarding the plastic art we could believe that to us the expressionism was very spread in the first half of the XX-th century. However, Blaga would must insist more on the diffuse character, but real and original of the expressionist valences from Romanian art.

We consider that in the essays there is encrypted the true potentiality of European thinker of Blaga, based on his especial capacity to detect integrator the general movement of human creation, to link together the epistemological themes with ontological, cosmological, anthropological, axiological, historical and cultural interrogations, to distinguish the role of the scientific thinking underlined on the complementarily in the construction of a new spirituality.