

The opinions of three Romanian thinkers regarding Romanian spirituality -a philosophical perspective- ¹

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Abstract:

This article refers to points of view that Mihai Eminescu, Constantin Radulescu-Motru and Mircea Vulcănescu had concerning Romanian spirituality. In their writings, they have identified those specific elements of the Romanian people, through which we can characterize very well in terms of spirituality.

The purpose of this study is to show that Romanian spirituality allow the existence of a native Romanian philosophy, as well to remind that those special characteristics that define us as a nation.

Key words: Romanian spirituality, thinking, philosophy, identity, national specificity.

Introduction

The philosophy wants to give a true and objective conception about the world by removing any subjective residue, making it

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as scientific as possible. From this point of view the ethnic characteristics can become an impediment for the purpose. This explains why when the existence of a logical dissonance it is found inside a system, it is made either on the account of prejudice or national specific traditions. However, these dissonances should not be treated lightly, but analyzed with objectivity and scientific rigor, firstly to explain them as appropriate as possible and secondly, because they are the ones that characterize a specific spiritual moment of a nation.

That's because every nation has on its own, besides the traditions and idioms, some typical and personal characters, specific ways to react in special moments, including certain ways of viewing things and certain ways to express them (Petrovici, 2004).

According to Mircea Florian, the philosophy is starting to nationalize in the XIII century by addressing a new philosophical language, thought and used in order to facilitate the masses access to the philosophical principles that the French Revolution has built. Therefore in the late century that was mentioned above, philosophy *"also suffers the following principle of the independence of the nationalities proclaimed by the French Revolution"* (Florian, 1992). Therefore *the philosophy customizes, focuses between national boundaries as far as nations awaken to a life of its own and become aware of their past. The philosophy of the nineteenth century it is transformed from a European one into a national one; since 1800 we meet the German philosophy, French philosophy, English philosophy, Italian philosophy, American philosophy, etc..- the mentality is nationalized. Instead of a European value system, philosophy raises the flag of the national particularism, of the religiosity, of the respect for the past"* (Ibidem).

We have a German philosophy which is characterised by the spirit of the system, a system that is specific to the German intellectual space, besides which (the system) it could not have been developed. We are talking here about the German

metaphysics that has as central figure Immanuel Kant whose philosophical vision means depth, synthesis, discipline, a systematization in which, in the opinion of P. Ionescu, stand the pure forms of reason, along with the pure forms of sense and mystics (Ionescu, 2003).

In England, we meet empiricism, which begins with F. Bacon, continues with J. Locke, G. Berkeley, D. Hume and J. Stuart Mill. This philosophical current reveals to us the essential characteristic of the English people, which is the passion for sure things.

In America, it is considered true any idea that proves its usefulness, laying the foundations of pragmatism, which is considered the current that is specific to the people with a practical temperament, such as the US people (Bișa, 2004).

About the French (philosophical) thinking we can say that it is characterized by clarity, rationality, irony, skepticism, humor, the grant of an important place for the interest in social, political, human and an unrestricted freedom of thought combined with a struggle against prejudice (Iacobescu, 2005).

In his attempt to identify a specific way of the Romanian thinking, Alexandru Surdu wonders if we as a nation, we have a specific way of experiencing and to give voice to the suffering in the form of metaphysics and discovers that in difficult moments of great inner tension, Romanians listen again the sound of the bells, turn back to religion and build places of worship by the spirit of place, considering that this defines the Romanian spirit and that religion/faith perfects it (Surdu, 1998).

Radulescu Motru believes that we can characterize a nation by using his ethnic elements, and asserts the fact that *“The ethnic is the balance between the soul and the body, that a nation realizes through adaptivity to the geographical environment. In his characters we find climatic influences and earthly regions, the cultural surroundings and the dispositions of the race, etc., influences which are offered by the nature and*

not by forcing the nation. The ethnic is the accumulation, the vocation is the creation. On the base of the ethnic, the soul of the Romanian gains the right to have a place in the ethnographic museum of the humankind. The right to participate in the historical life of the humanity is given only by Romanian vocation awareness"(Motru, 1992).

Given the above, we believe that Romanian way of thinking has its own characteristics which customizes and gives it a unique and well-defined structure compared to other current (types) of thinking. I do not know if we can talk about a Romanian philosophy, but we can certainly discuss about a original Romanian way of thinking, using its own inner instruments, to provide answers to the great questions of philosophy fully consistent with the feelings that characterize our nation being. In the pages that follow, we will use a series of Romanian thinkers who were concerned to demonstrate the existence of a Romanian spirit that is reflected in the way we live, think or work. We hope that their opinions provide a clear and well defined and contoured image of the specific Romanian thinking. We believe that such an approach is important because, in the full process of globalization, these features gradually disappear. Either the globalization does not mean giving up on the identity, but aware of our own cultural characteristics, it will make us use this to enrich the cultural heritage of mankind. Finally, we have searched in order to note the opinions of those figures in a certain chronological order, to show the way in which the opinions about the way of being of the Romanian nation have evolved over time.

Mihai Eminescu and the Romanian philosophy:

Mihai Eminescu is known as a poet, journalist and writer, his work in the philosophy field is being passed on the second place. After all he studied philosophy for five years in Berlin and Vienna, where he attended the courses of philosophers known

as H. Bonitz, Th. Vogt and R. Zimmerman. Obviously, we are not talking here about creating a philosophical system or personal philosophical works, but rather we agree with G. Călinescu who believes that "*Eminescu is a philosopher, but not for his contemplative attitude of poems, but for the valences of method that we discover in his thoughts and which are cemented between the speculative parts of the work*" (Călinescu, 1970). However, we must admit that his concern for a philosophical Romanian language, led to the creation of modern philosophical language (Botez, 2005). Faced with the poverty of a philosophical Romanian vocabulary (and scientific) almost non-existent at that time, he was compelled to create it to be able to translate from Kant, Hegel or Schopenhauer. In fact, Eminescu campaigning for the use of understandable language in all spheres of creation, to facilitate the access to culture for the masses. He points out this shortcoming of language underlining the fact that "*The nonsense language of the cultural classes was so different from that spoken by nation, that the literature of upper-class family was totally inaccessible to the lower classes. The natural consequence was the lack of circulation of the character and science in all classes of the social body, which are not different from the cult one to the ignorant one, only by rank, not by the way of being as like the lack of circulation of the exchange of ideas through a language and a literature that is common to all, the only one that transforms the population into a nation*" (Eminescu apud Murgeanu, 2008).

I insisted on the role played by Eminescu in creating a cultural language accessible because he believes that the language of a nation can reflect the spirituality of the respective nation. Speaking strictly of Romanians, he believes that the language, honest and generous inclinations, common sense and the native genius are making the Romanian people to be "*smart, courageous and pure at heart*" (Eminescu, apud Jucan, 2007). He also underlines the fact that the unity of the

Romanian nation is given by tradition, manners, language and that the peasantry is the most positive social class in the meaning that it preserves through language and traditions our entire national unity. Through the specific Romanian characteristics, that we define ourselves as a nation, it explains the pastoral occupations under the mark in which is established the spiritual universe of the Romanians. *"The Romanians – Eminescu argues that – were a nation of shepherds, from there it has the many kinds of the beautifulness, from there it has the goodness of the Romanian person as a shepherd had a long time to handle himself, from there it has the dutiful and full of figures language, from there it has the deep sense of the beauty of nature, his friendship with the woods, with the beautiful horse, with the rich herds, from there it has stories, songs, legends, with only one word, from there it has a nation full of originality and full of young power formed by a pleasant work without toil"* (Eminescu, apud Jucan, 2007). In other words, this occupation allowed us to return to ourselves, to look at ourselves both as individuals and as parts that compose and are part of the universe. The conclusions that we have reached to and which we have put in songs, in verse, in the game, in dirge, in customs, traditions, rituals and everything related to popular culture. Without a scientific language, like Western cultures, the Romanian peasant found the means to express his own feelings and metaphysical findings that he tried over time. Eminescu is not doing anything else than to highlight through the above mentioned issues, by this eliminating the problem of spiritual synchronism with the other cultures of the world.

Meanwhile, Eminescu is not avoiding to characterize in a direct mode the personality of the Romanians, saying that the Romanian is a *"man whose distinctive feature is the truth: smart without guile, bad - if it's bad - without hypocrisy, good without weakness, It does not have an intellectual or physical humpback seeking to hide, it does not have the weak human's habits; it lacks that hint of weakness that predominates in our public life*

phenomena under a sleek form of Byzantinism and expedients ... All those hypocritical and evil forms, sly, without intelligence, all those which hide a duplicity in the figure of speech, something hybrid, those do not fit in the scene of the Romanian concept" (Eminescu, 1984). Probably most of the people who read the above statement, consider that it is a purely subjective opinion that has no scientific support. Given that Mihai Eminescu is considered a true man of the Romanian culture, moreover, Lucian Blaga admits that there is even an idea in which Eminescu "*was conceived under Romanian astrological signs*" (Blaga, 1983), while Mircea Eliade believes that everything that was created after him lays under the mark of Eminescu's genius and that a nation was rarely found in the work of a writer more than showing that "*he enlightened our meaning and joy of misfortune of being a Romanian*" (Eliade, 1992), we can accept that statement of the national poet is based on some long time observations and pondered, which were filtered by his conscience and crystallized in a perspective that reflects the true inward face of our nation.

Obviously the opinion can be challenged, but that does not mean that it shouldn't be promoted when we are discussing about the spirituality of the Romanian people. We consider this useful for this article any point of view which calls into question the way of being of the Romanians, whether positive or not.

Constantin Radulescu Motru and Romanian Peoples Psychology:

The personality of Constantin Radulescu Motru is a very complex one and it stands in the Romanian culture as a cultural leader in the sense that not only he cultivates a scientific specialty, but he handles the destiny of the national culture, feeling responsible to the whole orientation of the Romanian civilization in the context of that era. (Vaida, apud Ghise, 1980) He outstands in the era as a founder of the of

specialized periodicals, in which he seeks to promote the cultural elite of those years. Thus, in 1905 he established *Philosophical Studies* that after the war changes into the *Philosophy magazine*, and publishes *Annals of psychology*, that in 1937 to establish the *Psychotechnical Journal*. He is also the one that puts the bases of the *Romanian society of philosophy* in which employs a large part of the reference thinkers of those years.

Individually, it is characterized by a very interesting and original contribution in psychology, but especially in the field of metaphysics, where we meet two specific concepts of the Romanian philosopher: personality and energy. These, along time with each one of his systematic work, will gain more and more depth and breadth creating a unitary conception about the world and life that bears the name of *energetic personalism* (Bagdasar, 1988). This new theoretical perspective on existence, lies in the affirmation of the structural human with the world. Basically, the fundamental problem of the energetical personalism is that of the identity of individual consciousness with the unity of the Universe, specifically, he seeks to highlight the structural identity between the micro-cosmos and the macro-cosmos (Cernica, 1999). Because of the lack of space we avoid to extensively treat in the pages of this article the concept of energetical personalism, but we emphasize that it "*is counted as a Romanian philosophical perception because it unifies the science of time with the mysterious beliefs that were born from the experience of the entire Romanian nation* (Cernica, op. cit.)."

In the following, we will briefly refer to the opinions that the Romanian philosopher has on the Romanian nation, using in our approach the claims that he makes in his works which correspond to this article, noting that the books were written on the base of the following opinion of the Romanian author, who believes that "*in Europe, everywhere, nations challenge their spiritual qualities that were gifted by nature to secure a historic*

role. Today it is recognized that the only life power of the historical life of the world is the power of the soul. The nations with the strongest characters are better armed for the future” (Motru, 1992).

The first work to which we refer is "*The Romanian culture and politicianism* " where Radulescu Motru demonstrates that the government of those years adopted reforms that were not suitable with the local spiritual specifics and instead to "*facilitate the organic development of our people's spiritual life (...) on the contrary, prevented her, and troubled he.*" (Motru, apud Bagdasar). He believes that in culture it can be seen the best spiritual traits of a nation and that is the most favorable environment in which these features can work together, can develop and evolve for the benefit of the respective nation. "*In it we find all the characteristics of the society, summarized, all the great and original creations emerged from its soul. The memories of the days lived and the ideals which are projected into the future; impressions coming from the outside world and those stemming from the spontaneity of the soul, merge in it as a whole which is harmonic and invisible. The perfect culture establishes a permanent differentiation between nations. It is undoubtedly the highest expression of individuality*" (Idem). By adopting reforms which were modeled on western countries, the politicians from those times have adopted a wrong policy, removing Romanians from their national individuality. Radulescu Motru identifies the politics with the spiritual decline of the Romanian nation, a nation which has other inner lane grooves than those promoted by the political class, its own evolution is only possible if the Romanian nation is returning towards his spiritual background of which it belongs in a rightful way, a background with a fingerprint that completes his personality. Without it, the Romanian nation is just a substitute of something that defines a nation, namely, the originality of his own being.

He talks deeply about this “originality” in his book called “*Românismul*”, published in 1936, where he identifies three ways in which the personality of the Romanians is granted in principles with the subtle energies of the nation’s soul.

The first direction is concerned to the rehabilitation of Christian spirituality, especially to the orthodoxy, thinking that it is a part of the intimate structure of the personality of the Romanian nation and the fact that its development as a nation is possible only in terms of reporting to the customs of this religion.

The second direction makes reference to “*the rehabilitation of the traditions and of the native institutions in which the Romanian nation lived*” (Motru, op. cit.), this being the queen or the source from which the Romanian thinking is starting.

And the third direction on which it is built the soul of the Romanian nation views “*the biological part and the ethnical part of the Romanian population. The caring for the biological patrimony, for the physical and moral health of the population becomes [...] the rationality of being of the nationalism. [...] The new Romanian nationalist sees the real situation of the Romanian man and on the reality of this status it is creating all future plans. Not exactly what would be good in terms of ideal, but something that can actually do good in the real meaning. It forms, henceforth, the base of his cultural policy.*” (Motru, op. cit.)

Adopting these directions in the everyday way of thinking, it establishes on a level of social attitude a own experience for the Romanian people, that corresponds to a vocation and to a well established destiny that belongs to the local nationality which is well determined in the human history. Also, the personality of the Romanian people may be characterized if we refer to these constants that seem to accompany the Romanian people throughout history.

Thus, in "*The psychology of the Romanian people*" Radulescu Motru, succeeds to identify those specific elements of the Romanian spirituality and to take them above, showing that the populations which rise at a level of national culture, have in them, the ability to customize the historical experience inside the spiritual kind of institutions, institutions which are once entrenched, are taking over their spiritual life, subsequently managing, to conduct by the rules dictated by their own will, both the events that are related to the heredity factor and those which are related to the influence of the geographical factor. He also underlines the importance of the soul which has a role in knowing a nation, showing that there is a national soul which was formed inside the bounding between the spiritual experiences of those who lived in the past and the experiences of those who live and that this spiritual image is representing the face in which we embody in front of other nations.

In order to reproduce exactly the perspective of the Romanian thinker about the personality of the Romanian nation, we allow ourselves to reproduce a longer quote from the work above:

Therefore, the Romanian seems "*to be concerned about what others will say; to take decisions easily under the influence of a crowd; Religious and nationalist in the eyes of others and generally always pointed on what others will do, the Romanian man seems to live a spiritual life more with a group consciousness than with his personal consciousness. Inside the group consciousness he finds even the cheapest motives of his daily life already done. His house is pleasant after the Romanian habit and not by his personal taste; also is his table; His clothes, too; even the grave of his parents as well. The Romanian does not seek to approach his external nature with the thought of transforming it and differentiate it after his individual character, his own person does not require special*

distinctions from Mother Nature, but she is thankful with that which has acquired the habit of the nation [...].

The fixation of his personality, the Romanian is not seeking it in time or in space [...]. When the Romanian had something to keep, he entrusted it to the world. He shed the fire from his heart in a world like his own, and he always has been avoiding to talk to himself, or to carve his own thought on stone or on metal. The nation which has been called in order to know his taught, it was the nation which he talked to; the nation which he can sing with, play with and work together; it is the nation that is visible for him and which can fully absorb his individuality " (Motru, 1992) In other words, Motru believes that our soul is a gregarious one. "From the gregarious soul, the nation understands something else than a solidary soul. Solidarity is the work of a conscious sacrifice, while the gregarism is a condition imposed by circumstances and traditions" (Motru, 1992). Given the conditions created by history, the gregarism is considered by the Romanian author, to be " The most appropriate weapon. Without this gregarism, the unity of the language and of the church could not have been kept. Without him, the political organization would have been more divided as it was. The gregarism stopped the differentiation of the personalities and with this, of the culture, but instead he kept us the whole of our nation and of the poorly Romanian culture as it was " (Motru, 1992).

The Psycho- sociological studies that Radulescu Motru makes, demonstrate its concern for the knowing of the specific of our spirituality and of the knowledge of the Romanian culture, to its assertion in the context of world history (Motru, 1999). As a keen observer of the evolution of society, it advocates for the transformation of the „gregarious” soul into a „solidary” one, but we cannot do this passage unless we know ourselves, the entire depth of our spiritual world as a whole, which we must and accept with both good and bad parts.

Mircea Vulcănescu and the Romanian dimension of existence:

Mircea Vulcănescu is (re)known in philosophy for two of his important contributions to the brought on this domain: a series of theories related on the philosophy of the religion and promoting a original philosophical project (Huțuleac, 2009). In the following present study, we will focus on those original elements which are identified by Vulcănescu, which are characterizing the Romanian philosophy, this one felt that there are spiritual elements in our popular way of thinking which are transposing us in a metaphysical space that is particular for the Romanian nation. We must say that even from beginning that this „intuition” is not left without a scientific support. Mircea Vulcănescu was part of the Dimitrie Gusti’s team of sociologists, which has researched the world of the Romanian village, considered to be the most gifted of his disciples. During the sociological research in which he took part, he became fascinated by the reality of the Romanian village, considering that it contains the authentic sources of our Romanian lives.

So, he starts collecting data for a possible construction with a ethnical profile that is based on the wisdom of the peasant and on the language of the folks (Dobre, 2014). On this occasion, the Romanian thinker observes that the Romanian philosophy is developing in some ways which are rooted in the culture of other nations, without reflecting the constants of the Romanian thinking.

However, Vulcănescu admits that *"the Romanian soul is a complex product of a whole range of influences"* (Vulcănescu, apud Dobre) that he called temptations about which he said *"are not dominant characters, because they do not act as a full existences, but only as ambitions, as those tendencies to overcome, to get out from your inner self in order to reunite by adding a reality which comes from outside, that enslaves you*

and in which you nearly recognize a primordial formative identity, a kind of returning back to the springs, to the balance of the initial sights which are troubled by the elements of the spiritual landscape "(Vulcănescu, apud Dobre). One of the temptations which the Romanian soul has encountered is the Latin one, which led to religious union, prompted the work of the chroniclers and set up the Latinist school. Another temptation is the byzantine one, which it would be characterized by the labour of the rulers in order to build up and develop the Romanian states. Then comes the Russian one, which is corresponding to the populism, a French one which is identifiable into the 48th ("pașoptism") spirit, another one is German, which is visible through Eminescu and Junimea, etc. However, besides all the temptations listed above, there is one that does not involve targeting an external model and that is what we are, in our essence, namely: Dacian temptation (Vulcănescu, apud Dobre). Starting from this, Vulcănescu believes that it can be started the building of a true Romanian philosophy, something which corresponds to the inner callings of the nation and to belong exclusively to it. Because, says our author, if "*the scientific statement belongs to all and nobody in the same time (...) the philosophy always belongs to someone*" (Vulcănescu, 1996).

In his view, the Romanians have a very complex perception on life, noticing that it is regarded as a universal union of the human things, of the temper, of the nature, creating a mythical link between these elements, through the light in which the Romanians are explaining their destiny. This perception is possible because of the fact that our ancestors would be Thracians, who are known as a nation with a double hearted chest: one of them that would bind the man with the land and one that made the man brother with the Universe (Vulcănescu, 1991).

Also, Voiculescu notes that the Romanians, the opposition between the male and the female is not strictly based on a

biological significance, limited only at the living beings, but it goes to the existential core of the particular being “*lending it its own male or female characteristics in relation to a certain strength or weakness of the inner being*” (Vulcănescu, 1991) So, for the Romanian, the essential male quality it is identifying itself with the idea of the work, of action, meanwhile the first female characteristic seems to be the passivity or the receptivity. For this reason, the prototype of a man, is the vision of our nation, is God the Father, and „the world” just like „the weather”, in the most largest sense that these terms can have, it represents the female being, which is catching a face under the form of the Virgin Mother, being viewed as the receiver being of God.

He also shows us that the idea of God is a special one in the Romanians way of view The Divinity is not an abstract being, it is an immaterial essence which they consider to be responsible for all the facts and events (Vulcănescu, 1991).

Another feature of the Romanian people would be, according to Voiculescu, one in which the *existence of the thing* is given by the mentality of the nation through *it's happening*. This „*it's happening*” seems to be timeless and spaceless, or at least, the present time and the present space are not currently privileged.. On the other hand, while for the western point of view, the event is an action, for us, it is rather the result of such an action which was recorded by a man or by a thing, something that happened to him, a so-called *adventure* (“pățanie”)(Dobre, 2014).

Because of the lack of space, we shall remember only that this Romanian thinker leaned above the language, the Romanian way of speaking ,looking for archetypal words and phrases that he considers to be specific for the nation. We find out from Angela Botez that „*lexical phrases, words, Romanian affirmations about existence which they analyze, are used as benchmarks in order to detect a philosophical attitude of the Romanian as an ethnical entity, as a human being*”(Botez, op.

cit.). One of the specific expressions of our nation, on which Voiculescu puts his attention is "Be!" ("Fie") or "let it be!" („să fie”) which is not representing as it should be normal, a demand, but rather a willingness. In other words, the imperative has another meaning, showing a lack of order in existence, a mismatch. It is the way to express an intuitive feeling of an organic matching, of harmony between the way of being and the being (Dobre, op. cit.). He also noticed that in our language, the denial can be conjugated with the phrase "yes!", paradoxically reinforcing the claim, while the negation of the negation "nay" is not transformed into a contention.

On the following of the researches that he did, the conclusion of the Romanian philosopher is that: „*Every nation has an own power left from God, a face of him to see the world and to reflect for others. Each of them has an idea about the world and about the man, depending on the size in which is projecting his own existence*” (Vulcănescu, op. cit.).

Conclusion:

Our research showed that in terms of spiritual, we have a number of specific characteristics which confer our way of being some unique existential traits that distinguish a genuine Romanian philosophy.

The Romanian spirituality is a deep one that provides answers to the main questions that are raised by the philosophy, only that these answers are being a part of a contextual reality in which the Romanian nation has been born. Maybe they don't have displayed their rational clarity by the occidental culture, but they succeed in offering an explanation on existence which always resonated with all the Romanian people and which corresponded to his need for knowledge.

If the westerners passed the world through the filter of the mind, we passed it through the filter of a soul which, whether we like it or not to admit, it is better connected to the subtle

meanings that existence has. That we have not managed to create a Romanian philosophical system that give us legitimacy in front of the Western cultures and to put us on a par with them, does not mean that we have spirituality worthy of being known. It means that she is still alive and we cannot yet conceptualize it, until it completes.

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