

ROMANIAN GUENONIANS



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BOOKS



**GUÉNONIAN
DISCIPLES IN
ROMANIA**

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PROLOG

*In the preface to the book *Recitindu-l pe Guénon (Rereading Guénon, 2011)*, I spoke about the existence of our group of enthusiasts, pilgrims in search of spiritual knowledge, seekers of light, inspired by the idea of sharing the sacred. For us, the symposium organised at the Romanian Academy on 19 November 2011 to mark 125 years since birth of our master, was our first public appearance.*

A year has passed since the aforementioned event, with its ups and downs, during which time we continued to meet and gradually build up a common treasure trove of knowledge, each contributing as much as they could, according to their abilities, with observations, findings and even some original contributions. Thus, from the posts on the blog, still accessible at <http://reneguenon339.blogspot.com/>, dedicated exclusively to our spiritual patron, a veritable public archive has been created that can be used fruitfully in any thematic documentation. Slowly but surely, this blog became too big, so we turned it into an online platform called www.reneguenon.ro, with the same purpose, namely to host our archive of data, information and knowledge about René Guénon and his work. On this site, you will find articles, reviews, translations, a discussion forum, as well as information and photographs from our thematic symposiums. Naturally and logically, I would say, bio-bibliographical references on Guénonian disciples in Romania have also been gathered here, especially those referring to Vasile Lovinescu, Michel Vâlsan, Marcel Avramescu and Anton Dumitriu.

In the series of meetings mentioned above, three events could be mentioned here, given the breadth and depth of the debates they generated. The first of these meetings was our group's gathering, which took place at the end of January 2012, under the title "Homo universalis according to Michel Vâlsan"; however, we did not limit ourselves to this topic alone; we also

a month later, in February, we focused on the subject of Marcel/Mihail Avramescu.

A month later, in February, we focused on the subject of Marcel / Mihail Avramescu. During that meeting, the magazine The copy of Memra could be leafed through by those interested, and thus each of them was able to formulate their observations and comments on the level of spiritual knowledge in interwar Romania, René Guénon's influence on the intellectuals of the time, and even on the master's direct participation in that early editorial venture, which was prematurely interrupted for reasons that, for the time being, elude our understanding. We also discussed the case of the "Burning Bush" at Antim Monastery and the mysterious monk Ivan Kulâghin, who brought back to these lands the Hesychast flame as a specifically Orthodox method of knowing God as inner Light and spiritual vision.

Finally, on 28 March 2012, the symposium "Vasile Lovinescu, disciple of Guénon" took place in the "Thoma Ionescu" hall of the library of the "Carol Davila" Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy in Bucharest. The event was attended by guests of honour Ms Roxana Cristian and Mr Florin Mihăescu, who also gave interesting lectures on the uniqueness of the honoured guest in Romanian culture and spirituality. For the select audience that attended our meeting, the other presentations were probably just as captivating, some of which are included in this volume.

And so, little by little, the topics discussed during the year, the new knowledge accumulated, as well as the events we have mentioned, all of these together have somehow naturally imposed the title of the book we are presenting this year as a modest contribution intended to revive interest in René Guénon and, at the same time, in his disciples, who were originally from Romania, and their works. It should also be noted here that the influence of the metaphysician from Blois on the Romanian intelligentsia is not limited to the two great Guénonian disciples, Vasile Lovinescu and Michel Vâlsan, to whom Marcel

Avramescu, usually assimilated into this suite, although he was not initiated into Sufism as such.

Equally important names can be found in this wonderful and fertile area of spirituality and tradition. In his work Guénon în România (Guénon in Romania), published in translation by Editura Vremea (2003), Claudio Mutti names Mircea Eliade and Anton Dumitriu at the forefront. It is now known with certainty that Mircea Eliade, the eminent scholar of later religious history, was in his youth a convinced Guénonian, and not only because he published, under a pseudonym, of course, in Marcel Avramescu's "Memra". A trained eye can easily discern, throughout his work, a subtle transfer of Guénon's vision regarding the religious and initiatory phenomena. Even though Mircea Eliade somehow made his youthful connections with Guénon and his writings invisible, the latter's influence remains alive and sufficiently detectable in the scholar's work.

Anton Dumitriu, author of the highly regarded volumes Istoria (History, 1969) and Teoria (Theory, 1973) of logic in Romanian culture, had a somewhat contradictory position towards Guénon's work. Initially, in his youth, in Orient și occident (East and West, 1943), Anton Dumitriu vigorously contested René Guénon, but later he accepted, in part, and even internalised Guénonian ideas and concepts in his work Culturi eleate și culturi heracleitice (Eleatic and Heraclitean Cultures, 1987). However, the most striking sign that Anton Dumitriu had converted to René Guénon's logic is the approach he adopted in his working methodology, which formed the basis for three of his seminal works:

Philosophia mirabilis (1974), Alétheia (1984) and Homo univer-salis. An Essay on the Nature of Human Reality (1990).

If we look at it strictly from a formal and initiatory point of view, Anton Dumitriu is certainly not a Guénonian disciple in the true sense of the word, and his inclusion in this category could be considered abusive and forced. However, given the obvious influence that Guénon exerted on our protagonist, both through his work and through his two Romanian disciples, who are unanimously recognised as such, the hypothesis of a strong ideological affiliation cannot be ignored. Delving deeper into the studio where Anton Dumitriu crafted his creations

we will identify numerous reasons to assimilate him, in extenso, with a true Guénonian disciple, alongside Lovinescu and Vâlsan. In support of this cause, the correspondence between those mentioned can be invoked, in a place of honour. From their letters, as many as have been published, there emanates a subtle and ineffable fragrance of sharing and serving together traditional spiritual values and ideals. The three speak to each other as if they were brothers from the same father, René Guénon, of course, from whom they secretly inherited a miraculous and mysterious code for deciphering spiritual reality, along with the mission to pass it on to those who show signs of being able to resonate with them.

After all, René Guénon had only two Romanian disciples: Mihail Vâlsan, in the West, and Vasile Lovinescu, in Eastern Europe; they received regular Sufi initiation and worked effectively in this tradition together with their master.

Marcel Avramescu was not a Guénonian disciple in the true sense of the word; he could only be assimilated into the ranks of the others, especially because he has the merit of having made possible the appearance of the magazine *Memra* in interwar Romania.

In extenso, Anton Dumitriu and Mircea Eliade can also be included in this category, both for their obvious proximity to the master's works and for the fact that their work integrates a subtle transfer of Guénonian vision and methodology.

In his book *Guénon în România* (Guénon in Romania), mentioned above, Claudio Mutti reviews Romanian intellectuals who, in one way or another, reveal the master's influence on their work. Some of them explicitly assume their Guénonian affiliation, others merely suggest this lineage, while a third category distances itself with excessive caution, I would say, from our master, even though their concern to receive his influence and, equally, the methodology established by Guénon is clearly visible. The work mentions Florin Mihăescu, the undisputed leader of the Romanian Guénonians, Gelu Voican-Voiculescu, author of the excellent monograph *René Guénon – un mărturisitor al predaniei* (René Guénon – a witness to the tradition), Georgiana Publishing House (1994), and of the volume *Note de lectură – René Guénon*

despre Leibniz și metoda infinitezimală" (Reading Notes – René Guénon on Leibniz and the Infinitesimal Method), Semne Publishing House (2008), Andrei Pleșu, promoter of the publication of Romanian editions of Guénon's works, Dan Stanca, an important contemporary novelist and essayist, and others. Also noteworthy is Rosmarin Publishing House, led by the distinguished Roxana Cristian, for its efforts to publish the work of the most important and best-known Romanian disciple of Guénon, Vasile Lovinescu.

The list of Romanian Guénonians is, however, much longer. We will venture to provide a brief list below, without claiming to have included everyone who has written important works on the subject. Thus, Teodoru Ghiondea, Marcel Tolcea, Mircea A. Tămaș, Anca Manolescu, Daniel Hoblea, Simona-Grazia Dima, Silvia Chițimia, Vintilă Horia, Virgil Cîndea, Mihnea Căpruță, Marius Vasileanu, and Emilian Dobrescu can be included, without reservation, in the constellation of Romanian Guénonians, a sort of "third wave," if we may be permitted a small figure of speech. In fact, our minor contribution, the present book, also fits into this broader context. It is a collection of texts related to traditional issues, observations and interpretations intended to highlight and bring up to date the Guénonian conception as understood by his main disciples, who were originally from Romania.

At the end of this introduction, it is fitting for the authors of the articles to thank all those who contributed to the publication of the book for their professionalism, involvement and solicitude, especially Mrs Luminița Login and the entire editorial team who, in record time, made our intentions a reality. We would also like to thank our sponsors, known and unknown, as well as Augustin Ioan for his inspired graphics included in the book, a symbolic perspective on Heaven, which is, in any case, involved in all that is, was and will be on Earth.

Ahile Z. VERESCU

PART I
VASILE LOVINESCU



VASILE LOVINESCU - BIOGRAPHICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Laurențiu HORODNIC

Vasile Lovinescu was born on 17 December 1905 in Fălți-ceni, the eldest son of Octav Lovinescu, a lawyer, and Anei Cetățeanu. His father, brother of literary critic Eugen Lovinescu, was originally from the village of Rădășeni, and his mother was from Subcetate, descended from writer Ion Budai-Deleanu.

The writer had two brothers: Octav, who practised law (1913-1945), and Horia, a renowned playwright (1917-1983).

His family gave our country and literature several writers, among whom we mention: Anton Holban (cousin), Monica Lovinescu (cousin) and Alexandrina Lovinescu (cousin).

His childhood in Fălțiceni, at that time a patriarchal market town, was an ordinary, normal one, "that is to say, fabulous", as the writer himself would later mention.

1912 – He attended primary school and secondary school in his "native town", at the "Alexandru Donici" secondary school, where his grandfather, Vasile, was a teacher and headmaster.

1920 – His family moved to Bucharest, where his father practised law. Vasile Lovinescu attended high school at the Sfântul Sava. Later, after his family returned to Fălțiceni, he remained in the capital, where he studied at the Faculty of Law, not because he had any inclination for this discipline, but to follow in his father's footsteps.

1928 – After graduating from university, Vasile Lovinescu worked as a legal advisor for various companies, at the city hall and then, with some interruptions, at Creditul Minier, until 1947, when

the establishment of the communist dictatorship forced him to resign. Throughout this time, however, the young man's main concern remained spirituality and everything related to it.

In this field, he published numerous articles and essays in the 1930s in the magazines of the time: *Viața Literară*, *Viața Românească*, *Adevărul Literar și Artistic*, *Credința*, *Familia*, *Azi*, *Vremea*, as well as several translations from German, French and English.

The figure that attracted him in these early days of traditional studies was the mystic Bo Yin Ra, of German origin, who apparently had an initiatory connection with a cosmological organisation in Central Asia, as did the German writer Gustav Meyrink.

From Bô-Yin-Rô's books, Vasile Lovinescu learns about René Guénon's book "*Le Roi du Monde*", which he translates, but is unable to publish. This was a turning point, as from this moment on, the traditional French thinker became his spiritual mentor.

1934 – He began corresponding with René Guénon, who had meanwhile retired to Cairo, a correspondence that would continue uninterrupted until 1940, in parallel with a sustained meditation on his books and the great texts of universal esotericism.

Even though he continued to write in magazines and maintain relationships with Romanian writers such as Dan Botta, Dan Petrașincu, Anton Dumitriu, Mircea Eliade and especially Sandu Tudor, his main focus was on obtaining an initiation.

1935 – He made a pilgrimage to Mount Athos, seeking a Hesychast blessing, which he could have obtained on condition that he remained in a monastery; not being a Greek citizen, this was not possible at the time.

1936 – On the advice of René Guénon, he leaves for Amiens, France, and Basel, Switzerland, where he undergoes an Alawite initiation, after which he returns to his country. This was not a conversion to Islam, as one might mistakenly believe, but rather integration into a universal esoteric organisation (Sufism), still alive and active today.

From then on, Vasile Lovinescu's main concern was spiritual fulfilment. In 1936-1937, he published a study in French on mythical history and geography, entitled "*La Dacie Hyperboreene*" (*Hyperborean Dacia*), in the magazine "*Etudes Traditionnelles*" in 1936-1937, under the pseudonym Geticus, a study in French on mythical history and geography, entitled "*La Dacie Hyperboreene*".

1939 – He made another trip to France to reconnect with Frithjof Schuon, his spiritual master. There he also met Mihail Vâlsan, who had remained in Paris as a diplomat, had also received an initiation from the same source, and would soon found a tariqah in Paris, led by himself.

1940 – During the war, reformed due to poor eyesight, Vasile Lovinescu divided his time between initiation rituals and meditation on sacred texts, between Fălticeni and Bucharest, where he settled permanently, with a brief administrative interlude at the Fălticeni town hall (where he served as mayor during the Legionary regime).

1945 – He marries Steliana-Victoria Păunescu, who will be his faithful "guardian of the threshold" and a constant "whetstone".

During his refuge at the end of the war, his house and library in Fălticeni were devastated, but this did not sever his ties with his native place, although he continued to live in dignified poverty in Bucharest.

1948 – With the help of Mihail Vâlsan, he founded an initiatory group in Bucharest, which he led until 1958 when, due to isolation and a hostile environment, the group dissolved. Throughout this period, Vasile Lovinescu gave up writing, devoting himself to ritual and spiritual fulfilment, together with the group, all remaining hidden from the profane world. He maintained correspondence with Frithjof Schuon, Titus Burckhardt and Michel Vâlsan.

1958 – He met the subtle but little-known poet Lucreția Andriu (1913-1964) in Fălticeni, in the house in Bucharest where he founded a circle of traditional study and meditation, which he would later refer to in some letters as the "Hyperion brotherhood".

This group will include the poet Radu Vasiliu (1923-1990), Florin Mihăescu, Roxana Cristian, Viorica Mosinschi (1913-1980), Mariana Veleanu (1922-1975), Raluca Vasiliu, Margareta Vasiliu (1942-1996), Teodoru Ghiondea, and Dan Stanca. The group met almost weekly, except during the summer months, when V. Lovinescu retired to Fălticeni, keeping in touch through letters.

This island of spiritual freedom would thus continue to exist anonymously and to "operate" despite the hostile and threatening environment, strongly polarised by Lovinescu's intellectual presence. The basis for their studies and meditations would be the work of René Guénon, as well as the sacred texts of the great exoteric and esoteric universal traditions.

After Lucreția Andriu's untimely death, the group will meet with the same regularity, in other places, until 1980, when Vasile Lovinescu retires to Fălticeni.

As early as 1964, Vasile Lovinescu resumed his writing, feeling the need to record traditional truths which, transmitted only orally, risked being diluted or even lost.

Thus, between 1964 and 1972, he completed two studies, "Al patrulea hașialâc" (about the universe of Mateiu Caragiale's novel, "Craii de curtea veche" (The Princes of the Old Court), and "Creangă și Creanga de Aur" (Creangă and the Golden Branch), an esoteric interpretation of Ion Creangă's fairy tales, published later, which, as they were being written, were read in groups, as were almost all his other writings, and then distributed in typewritten copies.

1972 – After completing these studies in the 1970s, V. Lovinescu continued to write essays and shorter studies on traditional themes, commentaries on folklore and spiritual works, and studies on sacred history and geography. He could be seen almost daily at the Academy Library, studying sacred texts and rare works. For a time, the writer kept a journal containing meditations of great spiritual insight, ranging from doctrine and symbolism to initiatory techniques.

1980 – The writer retired permanently to Fălticeni, to his parents' house on Sucevei Street, which had since become the Gallery of Notable People (1972), thanks to the donation and care of his wife.

He passed away on 14 July 1984.

Vasile Lovinescu was a true practitioner of higher states of consciousness. This is the only way to explain the select understanding of the subtle revealed through his work. Simple erudition, however complete it may be, cannot ensure full clarification of the mind. The Romanian people have not had many sons like Vasile Lovinescu, and that is why we, as initiates, have a duty to honour the immortality that he earned through hard work and sacrifice during his earthly life. The master's concern for perfecting initiatory methods and techniques, as well as the publication of reference works on this subject (Alchemical Journal, Initiatory Notes and Meditations, Symbols, Rites) represent a pioneering element in Romania and, at the same time, an exceptional contribution to the practice of the royal art of transforming lead into gold, raw material into the philosopher's stone.

After December 1989, numerous excerpts from Vasile Lovinescu's work and various presentations of the man and his work appeared in periodicals (Caiete Critice, România Literară, Steaua, Cotidianul LAI, Timpul, Manuscriptum, Cronica, Echidistanțe).

The work

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- Creangă și Creanga de Aur* (Ed. Cartea Românească, 1989; second complete edition, Ed. Rosmarin, Bucharest, 1996)
- The Hidden Monarch* (Ed. European Institute, Iași, 1992; 2nd edition, Ed. European Institute, Iași, 1999)
- Incantația sângelui* (The Incantation of Blood) (Ed. Institutul European, Iași, 1993; 2nd edition, Ed. Institutul European, Iași, 1999)
- The Torn Myth* (Ed. European Institute, Iași, 1993; 2nd edition, Ed. European Institute, Iași, 1999)
- The Esoteric Interpretation of Romanian Folk Tales and Ballads* (Ed. Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 1994; 2nd edition, Ed. Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 2000)
- Alchemical Journal* (Ed. European Institute, Iași, 1994; 2nd edition, Ed. European Institute, Iași, 1999)
- The Nameless Star* (Ed. Rosmarin, Bucharest, 1994)
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'S PRAISE TO THE NAME

Roxana CRISTIAN

NThe name suited him perfectly, as in the hermetic saying: *vas tuus est mensura Ignis tui*. The name *Vasile* encompassed *vessel* of life, and his container was always equal to his fire. The flame that ignited him shone as brightly as itself, reaching the edges of the boat and *far* out to *sea*, where it still flows today like *dew of light*, greening the scorched fields of the heart. For *like* calls *like*, *the heart speaks to the heart*.

The vessel was the spiritual emblem of his heart. At first, the name *Lala* resounded in his vessel, for that was how the little neophyte called himself in his early childhood. Repeated daily, the sovereign syllable revealed his contemplative vocation: *La-la*.

Later, long after his passing through this world, the "legitimate" holiness of the name *Lala* was revealed, inscribed in the Christian calendar on 11 March.

Was it the date of this *obscure saint* *Lala* (read *humbly saint*, reader, who is frightened by the divine shadow!), was it therefore the date, in *March*, the unheard trumpet of the unseen war in which a spiritual being has been engaged since birth? However, the "fates" of the 11th show that the warrior of the day is promised polar rectitude (11).

Does it seem that these clumsy strokes thin or thicken the portrait of a spiritual being? They are merely simple iridescences of the spiritual functionality of names at different stages of life.

Late, very late – but better than never, in sacred calligraphy, the name *Lala* was also discovered and understood as *meaning teacher*. A psychopomp of inner *hagialăcurii*, Vasile Lovinescu steered his little boat towards his own perfection. *The vessel* laden with "the seedlings, the imperishable, indestructible seeds awaiting the Resurrection" (1) was always guided by the bright morning star.

Throughout his life, the gentle meanders, sparked by the breezes of the Spirit, received other *names* in *the* spacious *vessel*. Jewels of meaning and function, each new *name*, brought by a blessing, strengthened his status as *a vassal* of the Almighty. The flame of those priceless *burning embers* penetrated the motionless waves of *the* miraculous *vessel*. What had not been melted in the clear water of the crystal in *the* capacious *vessel*, the ballast of rubies, sapphires and emeralds, topazes and pearls, on which *the names* received were engraved, had long since been transported by the faithful knight, *vassal* of his Lord, to adorn the City towards which he had set his gaze, like the Knight who defeated Death.

Of course, apart from sailing with *the* spiritual *vessel*, based on the phonetic assonance of the name *Vasile*, a process known in traditional sciences, its etymology can also be taken into consideration. But then *the name* of the spiritual one takes us to *another vessel*, to *the* all-encompassing *ship* of *the* *Basilica*, the mystical corpus of the universal Man, which unites those below with those above.

Even in other traditions, the three consonants of the name *Vasile* – *vs*l – have a high significance in the union between those below and those above. Here is what is written regarding the invocation of *the* *divine Name*: "The divine Name revealed by God Himself implies a divine Presence that becomes operative as *the Name* takes possession of the mind of the one who invoked it. Man cannot focus directly on the Infinite, but he can focus on the symbol of the Infinite and thus attain the Infinite Himself; when the individual subject has identified with *the Name* in such a way that all mental projection has been absorbed by the form of *the Name*, its divine Essence manifests itself spontaneously, for this sacred form tends towards nothing but itself; it has no relation except to its own Essence, and its limits ultimately dissolve into it. Union with *the* *divine Name* becomes *union* – *al-wasl* – with God Himself (2).

Vasile Lovinescu was deeply concerned with the Name of God. He knew, however, that in order to focus on *the* *One Name* Itself, one must also accept the sacrificial sparks, *the non-names* covered with sacrificial garments, *the names* found in "the separate, antagonistic and even hostile morphisms of the same Great Name, in His vicissitudes and tribulations" (3).

Did his Angel hide in the name sealed with the Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit?

Does the *name* Basil echo from the chest of an Archangel, just as *other names* vibrate to Mika-II, Gavri-II, Rafai-II?

We only know that the pronoun of majesty "IL" has winged *the vessel* of the spiritual.

Towards the end of his earthly life, the enchanting syllable of his childhood reappeared, in ways known only to him. From *the* tautological *name La-La*, the letter of majesty "L" descended like a diamond spear into *the name Ilu*. It was the last name that floated above the overflow gathered in the vessel that was retreating "silent as a swan" (4).

Far from being an increase in knowledge, these revelations are now only faint glimmers of the brilliance of the beginnings, only echoes of the sound La, from the first heartbeats in the spiritual vessel.

The Poet's verses suit the Spiritual:

*"The icon of the star that
died Slowly rises in the sky.
It was when it was not
seen, Today we see it and
it is not there" (5).*

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- (3) *Alchemical Journal* – Vasile Lovinescu
- (4) *Self-Portrait* – Lucian Blaga
- (5) *At the Star* – Mihai Eminescu

THE UNIQUENESS OF VASILE LOVINESCU

Florin MIHĂESCU

Uniqueness is the reflection of Unity, which as a transcendent Principle is part of Non-Manifestation. In creation, Uniqueness is characteristic of an unprecedented spiritual work and, consequently, of its author, who is a great initiate.

If, in contemporary times, Unity could only be attributed to a single traditional thinker such as René Guénon, insofar as he had achieved Supreme Identity, which he did not confess to¹, Uniqueness could characterise two of his followers who, fortunately, are Romanian: Mihai Vâlsan and Vasile Lovinescu. We will try to talk about the Oneness of the latter.

If Lovinescu had not written *Dacia Hyperboreană*, our lands would have remained deprived, for us and for the future, of their ancient and traditional past, because what Eminescu and Hașdeu had begun had been interrupted – or perhaps provoked – by a merciless fate (madness and spiritualism), and what N. Densușianu had gathered ("rassembleur ce qui est éparé") remained quasi-unstructured and little or misinterpreted, published after his death in "*Dacia Preistorică*" (Prehistoric Dacia), a massive but confusing and little understood work. By bringing together data from our archaic past according to traditional principles and interpreting it according to universal symbolism, Lovinescu created a unique work, which he first published in the journal "*Etudes Traditionnelles*" (1936-1937)

¹ When asked about the mysterious Al-Khidr, who appears in Hindu and Sufi tradition, equivalent to Metatron, R. Guénon refused to answer, confessing that it was a personal matter.

and 1940)², led by René Guénon, who urged Vasile Lovinescu to do so in his correspondence. And if M. Vâlsan remained the doctrinal successor of R. Guénon, Lovinescu was a successor on the path of traditional indigenous symbolism but also on that of universal principles of remarkable uniqueness and originality, in his initiatory "Journal".

But while other followers of Guénon from the same generation as Lovinescu, such as F. Schuon, J. Evola, T. Burckhardt, etc., generally revisited themes treated more concisely by Guénon, such as Alchemy, the Grail, the Sacred Arts, etc., Lovinescu used traditional doctrine and symbolism to illuminate the meanings of our fairy tales in *Creangă și Creanga de Aur* (*Creangă* and the Golden Branch) or in other writings such as the fairy tales of P. Ispirescu and V. Popa³, using traditional symbolism in particular to bring to light meanings that had been unsuspected until then.

In addition to fairy tales, Vasile Lovinescu shed new light on our ballads and carols. Thus, *Miorița* acquired not only a pastoral but also a "metaphysical" meaning through its projection into the contemplative splendour of the starry sky, transcending cosmic meanings and approaching Dante's paradise. And *Iovan Iorgovan*, with his Jupiterian (Jupiter Jovis) but also Christian (St. George-Iorgovan) sounds, becomes a prototype of the *kshatryas'* initiations. Just as the legend of Master Manole is a Christian echo of operative Freemasonry. The three ballads of the Christian tradition, but also of some Balkan peoples, become a symbol of the three models of initiation into the lesser and even greater mysteries.

As for carols, Lovinescu's symbolic interpretation gives them not only a Christian meaning, which is well known, but also a pre-Christian one, emphasising the connection with primordial tradition (the white monastery with nine altars; Old Man Christmas – the Old Man of Days; *Leru-i Ler* and the King of the World, whom we find in Shakespeare's *King Lear*)

² *Dacia Hiperboreană* was later published first in French and Italian (translated by Cl. Mutti) and in Romania only after the fall of communism: Ed. Rosmarin 1994.

³ V. Popa – *Loștrița* – commentary by V. Lovinescu.

The sacred history of our lands takes on a new depth, with Lovinescu giving new coherence to the fragmentary and scattered references from ancient Greece, from Troy to the White Island (Leuke). Not to mention the importance of Trajan, who, through Dante's prism, which places him in the eye of Jupiter's eagle, becomes a symbol of divine justice, alongside Ripheus the Trojan, who reaches the Carpathian Mountains, also known as Riphei.

And speaking of the Carpathians, we must emphasise that Lovinescu's vision gives them an astral origin as a reflection of the Dragon constellation, with its head in the Bohemian Plateau, its body surrounding the Transylvanian Plateau and its tail in the Balkan Mountains (Vâlc-balaur). Our geography thus acquires a sacred origin, which includes the Bucegi Plateau, with Omul and Babele, up to Sarmisegetuza. This is how these traditional lands are configured, crossed by the Danube River, which plays an eminent role in the legend of the Argonauts, especially in the Delta area (e.g. Jason-Sinoe; Medea-Midia, etc.) without reaching the exaggerations of the protochronists who see Dacia as the place from which the great migration of the Indo-Europeans began! Dacia was indeed an ancient central region, as noted by the well-known historian Marija Gimbutas⁴ and proven, among other things, by the Cucuteni pottery with its double spirals, or that of Hamangia, with its incomparable Thinker.

As for our contemporary history, it takes on an astonishing significance in Lovinescu's discovery, which proves that a secondary character such as Ciubăr-Vodă in V. Alexandri's drama "Despot-Vodă" is in fact a figure of the King of the World, a symbol of the Grail, who took refuge in the East after the destruction of the Templar Order.

Lovinescu's symbolic exegesis sought new meanings not only in our history and culture, but also began to explore Western culture. This led to several essays on Shakespeare (which inspired the author of this article to seek out meanings not found in the 36 plays of the great Will) and even on Dante⁶, the two inimitable pillars of Western literature.

⁴M. Gimbutas – "Civilisation and Culture", Ed. Meridiane, 1989

⁵ V. Lovinescu – "The Hidden Monarch", European Institute, 1992.

⁶ The Nameless Star. Rosmarin, 1994 (Shakespearean Enigmas)

But perhaps the crowning achievement – *finis coronat opus* – of his work of spiritual hermeneutics was the astonishing metaphysical thoughts that appeared in the three volumes of "Initiatory Notes", thoughts that have no equivalent except in the writings of M. Vâlsan and his successor, Ch.-A. Gilis. We cannot even begin to outline the content of the more than 600 pages of meditations, which await publication and commentary. We can only quote a few of the themes we find in Vasile Lovinescu's difficult thinking, without developing them, listing just a few of them, as follows: the theme of cross-sections through which unsuspected things are brought to the surface from the realm of "mummies"; the theme of metaphysical gestures that Guénon only sketches, Lovinescu opening up its possibilities; the theme of Lucifer, who, far from being only a principle of evil, could be primarily an aspect of transcendent apophatism, etc.

And our recent history has found its almost apocalyptic meaning in Mateiu Caragiale's "Craii de Curtea-Veche" (The Princes of Curtea-Veche), which otherwise would not have been deciphered without Vasile Lovinescu's hermeneutics in "Al patrulea Hagialîc" (The Fourth Hagialîc), preserving for posterity the prototypes Pantazi, Paşadia and Pirgu, fallen reflections of the three Hindu *gunas*.

Returning in detail, in various essays, to the evolution of our sacred history, Lovinescu attempted to periodise this evolution based on the descending cycles suggested by the great astronomical (cosmic) cycle of *the precession of the equinoxes* (64,800 years) and its subdivisions (1/10 6480; 1/5 1296, etc.). Thus, he identified the following periods based on the symbols of our main folk ballads and other traditional productions:

- a) The archaic period, from the migration of the Hyperborean Thracians (Getae, Dacians, etc.) to the Balkan Peninsula until the defeat of the Dacians and Getae by the Romans (106). It is a period synthesised by the pastoral symbols of the ballad *Mioriţa*, sacred symbols of a wedding in heaven (hierogamy).
- b) The period of ancient history, about which little is known, after the withdrawal of the Roman armies (276) until the founding of the first states (voivodeships) (106-1296 = 1402), symbolised by ballads such as *Dragoş Vodă* (Moldova) and *Iovan Iorgovan* (Oltenia), which illustrate a revolt of the kshatriyas against

priestly unity, revolts that led to the sacrifice of emblematic animals (the white ox; the dragon) – or to the sacrifice of a builder – *Master Manole*, linked to Masonic symbolism (Curtea de Argeş, St. Nicholas Domnesc).

- c) The modern period, from the founding of states to the bourgeois revolution of 1848 (a period of 648 years = 1/10 of the precession of the equinoxes).
- d) Finally, the contemporary period from 1848 to 1990 (152 years) during which the great European wars (I and II) and the great Nazi and Communist dictatorships, which the ballads did not record because the tradition was obscured, giving way to literary productions such as the novel "Craii de Curtea-Veche" (The Princes of Curtea-Veche), which I mentioned earlier.

And if in this millennium, from the Western Middle Ages to today, we can speak of material progress, spiritual regression is evident and continuous, threatening an ever-increasing dissolution of humanity, as R. Guénon pointed out, Lovinescu merely applied this decadent approach to our lands, which is not without a prophetic air of a twilight vision.

It remains for this unparalleled wealth of meditations and meanings to find answers in the understanding of readers and a possible development of the immense possibilities it includes, if not a unique experience for those who seek transcendence.

LUCIFER IN THE WRITINGS OF VASILE LOVINESCU

Vili I. COTRESCU

"Before we were Angels, we were Demons; in order to ascend, we must descend, this is the Law"¹

The theme is difficult to approach not only from the perspective of Lovinescu's writings², laden with symbols, metaphorical and with many ramifications, but also because of the association of *the character* in question with all that is evil, with the devil, which makes him, most of the time, an undesirable subject. Therefore, in order to shed some light on the matter, it is necessary to apply the method recommended by René Guénon in the case of the antagonism between Cain and Abel: *"The Master insisted that we should listen to what the sedentary peoples say, that is, Cain's version."*³ This means that by listening too much, almost exclusively, to only one side, the truth will be lost through perpetual denial. From time to time, we should also listen to those considered evil or guilty.

In this context, a first clarification is in order: Lucifer is not Satan.

¹Samael Aun Weor, *Tarot and Kabbalah*, Ed. AGEAC, p. 325.

²Vasile Lovinescu, chapter *Quo modo caecidisti de caelo, Lucifer* from *The Star Without a Name*, Ed. Rosmarin, 1994 and Vasile Lovinescu, *Alchemical Journal*, Ed. European Institute, 1994, the first work being more concise in relation to the subject under discussion, the second being less systematic.

³ Vasile Lovinescu, *Steaua fără nume*, Ed. Rosmarin, 1994, p. 57.

The Hebrew word לַיְלֵל (hei-lel) means *star* and is translated in modern Bibles in various ways⁴, from *the morning star* or *the bright star of the morning*, to *Lucifer*⁵ or *the King of Babylon*. Some translations may also be based on the fact that, at the time the biblical texts appeared, the Jews used *the word star* to refer not only to a celestial body but also to an illustrious prince or king⁶.

The name *Lucifer*⁷ means *Light Bearer* and comes from Latin (*lux, lucis, luce, luci, lucu*: "light" and *fer, fero*: "to carry, to transport, to lift, to hold").

At the same time, the Hebrew term "שָׂטָן" (satan) means *opponent* or *adversary*, and in the Old Testament it had the meaning of accuser⁸ ("*Satan (שָׂטָן) rose up against Israel...*" 1 Chronicles 21:1), with the mention that it was only after the Babylonian exile that Hebrew texts began to refer to an Accuser who opposes God, probably after contact with dualistic Zoroastrianism. Moreover, Old Testament scholars do not unanimously agree on the association or gradual association, over time, of Satan with evil⁹. Moreover, some biblical texts suggest that there is no force of evil opposed to God: "*I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create adversity, I, the Lord, do all these things.*"¹⁰

Furthermore, Satan in the Old Testament and Satan in the New Testament are completely different, as it is not a matter of an evolution of the concept, but rather

⁴<http://www.thespiritmind.com/2010/11/20/in-bible-vs-quran-star-lucifer-satan-king-of-babylon-babylon/>

⁵ In Isaiah 14:12.

⁶ *A Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*, John Kitto ed., 3rd ed., J. B. Lippincott and Co, Philadelphia, 1866, 2:857-8.

⁷ Hesiod's *Theogony* speaks of two divine brothers: *Eosphoros* (Φωσφόρος) – the morning star – *Lucifer* in Latin, and *Hesperos* – the evening star – *Vesper* in Latin, children of *Astraios* – the starry sky, and *Eos* – the dawn. The same ideas are found in Cicero and Pliny the Elder.

(⁸) The other name for this character, Devil, means the same thing. Thus, the Greek *diabolos* originally meant "slanderer", and its Latin equivalent, *diabolus*, meant "accuser".

⁹ For example, 1 Job 6-12.

¹⁰ Isaiah 45:7.

about a completely different approach.¹¹ For example, in John 12:31 ("*Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out*"), Satan, although not explicitly mentioned here, is considered the ruler of the world. This text is consistent with Revelation 12:7-9, where "*the great dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan,*" together with his angels, was defeated and cast down to earth.

The idea of a fallen angel is based either on Ezekiel 28:12-17 or on the association between Isaiah 14:12 ("*How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! How you have been cut down to the ground, you who laid low the nations!*") with Luke 10:18 ("*Jesus said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.'*")¹², without considering two other references in the New Testament, Matthew 24:27 ("*For as the lightning comes from the east and is seen to the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man*") and Luke 17:24 ("*For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.*") which link lightning to the Son of Man and his second coming,⁽¹³⁾ a more accurate association, considering that lightning is the symbol of God in the Old Testament.¹⁴

Even in these circumstances, Revelation 2:24 ("*...who do not have their teaching and have not known the 'depths of Satan'*") and 2:28 ("*And I will give him the morning star*") mark the difference between Satan and Lucifer.

Furthermore, Lucifer—the morning star—is the morning star — Venus, which appears in 2 Peter 1:19 ("*And we have the word of prophecy made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*")¹⁵, which makes the connection with evil even harder to understand.

¹¹ *Valentine's Jewish Encyclopedia*, A. M. Hyamson & A. M. Silberman eds., Shapiro, Valentine & Co, London, 1938, p. 36.

¹² *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, Paul Achtemeier, gen. ed., Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1985, see *Lucifer*.

¹³ <http://board.jokeroo.com/debate/27779-satan-lucifer-two-different-entities.html>

¹⁴ *Dictionary of Symbolism*, Hans Biedermann, Penguin Books, New York, 1992, see *Lightning*.

¹⁵ According to some sources (<http://board.jokeroo.com/debate/27779-satan-lucifer-two-different-entities.html>), in the Vulgate translation of the Bible, the "morning star" in 2 Peter is translated as "Lucifer".

We can conclude that the idea of the fallen angel Lucifer and his identity with Satan is based entirely on apocryphal, non-canonical texts that draw on pre-Christian myths and allegories.

In these circumstances, if we free ourselves from the prejudice that Lucifer = Satan = Evil in its supreme form, in what key can we read Lovinescu's text, which begins with the very quote from Isaiah? We find the answer almost immediately, in the paragraph where we are told that Isaiah prophesies in the name of Adonai-Savaot – the Lord of Hosts⁽¹⁷⁾

To be even clearer, Vasile Lovinescu specifies a little further on: "*Similarly, the feminisation of some names of gods is common. Lucifer becomes Venus, Lunus becomes Luna, Dianus becomes Diana*".¹⁸

The connection between Lucifer, Venus and Adonai Sabaoth refers us to the sefirotic tree. According to Papus, the seventh divine name is: *Tetragrammaton Sabaoth* or *Adonai Sabaoth*, the corresponding sephira being Netzah – triumph, victory, which influences "*through the order of the Princes (the one the Jews call Elohim, meaning Gods) over the sphere of Venus.*"¹⁹

It should be noted that the "worlds" of the Sephirotic tree are *Atzilut* – the divine world of archetypes (the celestial triangle or supreme triangle)²⁰, *Briah* – the world of creation, of archangels (the moral triangle or ethical triangle)²¹, *Yetzirah* – the world of formation, of angels/the astral plane (the astral triangle)²² and *Assiah* – the world of making, the world of expression.²³

¹⁶ See also <http://board.jokeroo.com/debate/27779-satan-lucifer-two-different-entities.html>

¹⁷ Vasile Lovinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

¹⁸ Vasile Lovinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

¹⁹ Papus, *Kabbala. The Secret Tradition of the West*, Ed. Herald, 2007, p. 59.

²⁰ Although divinity is a unity, any manifestation of it can be seen in a dual form: masculine-feminine, up-down, hot-cold, etc. Here everything forms an origin.

²¹ This is where creation takes place. *The combination of power and mercy sustains the evolution of beauty.*

²² The processes of creation are refined, and the result begins to be visible.

²³ Processes from previous worlds are projected in the form of earthly realities. After fulfilling their purpose, these realities are absorbed or dissolved, returning to their essence.

The sefira Netzah is part of the astral (sometimes called magical) triangle: Yesod – the foundation, Hod – splendour, Netzah – victory, all three making up the world of Yetzira – the angelic, astral world.

Yesod (divine name Shadai El Hai – the Almighty) is the sefira governed by the Moon, the sefira of illusions, hidden impulses, complexes that influence our behaviour, it is the source of desires, instincts. At the same time, it is the balance between Hod (thinking) and Netzah (feeling). On the lowest level of the astral world, Yesod – the etheric body is the Akashic record, and on a psychological level it is the subconscious²⁴. Yesod is the fifth element, above the four in Malkut²⁵. Yesod is the receptacle of all higher emanations and the only transmitter of these to the material world.

Hod (divine name Elohim Savaot – Lord of Hosts) is the sefira governed by Mercury, the sefira of the glory of the enlightened mind, of splendour, of majesty. Hod is the concrete mind, logical thinking, the sefira in which the forms are created from the emotions of Netzah, it is ceremonial magic (Hod is the text of a ritual – the form, and Netzah is its performance – the force). Hod – the astral body generates the subtle perception of reality, the vision of the truth of life.

Netzah (divine name Yehova Savaot – Lord of Hosts) is the sefira governed by Venus, the sefira of victory (over evil), firmness, value, tolerance. Achieving perfection in form and force generates balance. The energy of Netzah gives life to the images in Hod. Netzah – the mental body represents liberation from egoism, the energy of love, the vision of true inner beauty.

The seventh sefira is that of occult intelligence²⁸, being the shining splendour of all intellectual virtues that are perceived by the eyes of the intellect and the contemplation of faith.

²⁴Raul Petrișor, *Kabbalah. Theory and Practice*, Ed. Coresi, 2010, pp. 140-141.

²⁵Dion Fortune, *The Mystical Qabalah*, Ernest Benn Ltd., 1979, p. 237.

²⁶ The main energy is reddish-purple, combining immense power and potential ruthlessness with spiritual grace (Raul Petrișor, *op. cit.*, p. 177).

²⁷ The ego, as the sum of the selves that define the Mind at a given moment, makes the latter a slave to the senses (Samael Aun Weor, *op. cit.*, pp. 35, 131, 132).

²⁸ It is occult because it is hidden, in comparison with the shining intelligence of Hod (Will Parfitt, *The Complete Guide to the Kabbalah*, Element books, 1991, p. 73).

Hod and Netzah are the form and force of the astral world, respectively, just as Yesod is the basis of the etheric substance, the astral light.

Hod and Netzah cannot work without each other. Their connection is symbiotic in order to maintain *the middle path*. Hod's intellect needs the balance of Netzah's emotions so as not to create only sterile, rational ideas, just as Netzah's emotions need the discipline of the intellect to channel themselves towards a specific goal²⁹. The masculine mind gives form to the feminine soul. The feminine (Netzah), which receives light from above (from Tipheret – the reflection of sunlight), energises the masculine (Hod), which is oriented towards the physical world. Thus, we can better understand the continuation of the passage quoted above from Lovinescu: "*The upper face that receives the light from above is feminine; the one facing downwards, towards the world, is active and masculine*"

Perhaps this is why their divine names have the same meaning and correspond to the same chakra: Manipura (that of the solar plexus – where sensations are created by the interaction of feelings and thoughts), and in some authors they are even reversed in position on the sefirotic tree.

Netzah is the gateway to the next triangle in the sefirotic tree, connecting with Tipheret – Beauty, the point of balance of the entire tree, reflecting the divine light. In this way, Netzah is the gateway to the higher worlds. Venus-Lucifer thus becomes the guardian of the threshold to the higher worlds, those of the knowledge of principles. This is also marked in Lovinescu's text: which says, referring to Lucifer, "*The Voivode of Tearing is the gatekeeper of the Upper Land, where beauty touches with an ineffable step incredible but indisputable things;*" and further on, a clearer reference: "*For we have entered the kingdom of Beauty, which is that of the Ineffable...*"³²

Here there is also a possible reference to Buddha's sermon at Benares, in which he states that dualities, bipolarities such as form-substance, immateriality-materiality, spirit-matter, etc., "*tear apart*

²⁹ Will Parfitt, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

³⁰ Vasile Lovinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

³¹ Vasile Lovinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

³² Vasile Lovinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

living and conceiving suffering" ³³through what becomes external experience and internal experience. Since remedying the rift means reconciling the two aspects and restoring unity, i.e. transcendence, the text is consistent with the idea of the guardian of the threshold mentioned above.

Elsewhere, Lovinescu refers to Samkhya when he states that Satan is, in a way, the regent of Tamas, through inertia, insensitivity and slowness, blocking Prakriti in the illusion of balance, by unbalancing the Gunas in favour of Tamas, and Lucifer the agent who breaks the initial balance of the three Gunas from the undifferentiation of Prakriti (Lucifer dynamites Prakriti), as part of God's intention to create the World, the synthesis and ensemble of possibilities of manifestation from the Principle. Through this, Lucifer is *the "Rector of the Perpetual Sacred"* and Satan his greatest enemy, through his attempt to freeze *"the three Gunas in their flight"*. Although Satan is seen as a result of the explosion for which Lucifer is responsible, he still has a mission, because he who masters illusion perfectly must know the Truth, and if he decides not to follow it, it means that he has this power, so he has a mission. On the other hand, Lucifer, indulging in the beauty and power he has received, cuts his ties with the Principle, but this means that he too has this power, and therefore a mission, thus becoming not a principle of separation but of denial.³⁵ In fact, we consider that Lucifer and Satan become representatives of Evil because Satan becomes the exponent of Tamas and Lucifer of Rajas, thereby distancing themselves from Satva, the area of balance and fulfilment, which does not mean the absence of opposites that are the engine of creation and development, but their maintenance in balance and unity.

³³ Bogdan Mihai Mandache, *Fascinația nevăzutului* (The Fascination of the Unseen), Ed. Cronica, 2012, p. 176.

³⁴ Indian Samkhya philosophy considers the universe to be composed of two realities: Purusha (consciousness) and Prakriti (the world of physical manifestation). In addition, there are three Gunas, three fundamental principles/tendencies operating in Prakriti: Rajas (creation), related to energy, ambition, action, passion; Satva (maintenance), related to kindness, light, harmony; and Tamas (destruction), related to inertia, darkness, insensitivity.

³⁵ Vasile Lovinescu, *Alchemical Journal*, Ed. European Institute, 1994, pp. 22, 23, 30, 32, 36, 37, 65, 175, 176, 203.

The association between Lucifer and Luceafăr (Venus) opens up other approaches. Thus, the path of the planet Venus around the zodiacal circle forms almost a pentagram³⁶, with the identity and repetition of the cycle occurring every 40 years, after 5 quasi-identical cycles³⁷. That is why the movement of Luceafărul, the third most luminous celestial body after the sun and moon, has been used for thousands of years to determine the important moments of the year and, more recently (until the advent of atomic clocks), to regulate time-measuring instruments, while Venus has been an object of worship for many peoples, and therefore cannot be associated with evil or malevolence.

The pentagram, called the Fiery Star in Gnostic schools, is the sign of Magical Omnipotence, the symbol of the incarnate Word, the Morning Star of the Magi. The pentagram expresses the domination of the spirit over the elements of Nature. With this magical sign, we can command the Elemental creatures that populate the regions of Fire, Air, Water, and Earth. The "Five Impressions of the Great Light" and the "Five Helpers"³⁸ are contained in the Fiery Star. The entire Treasure of Light is contained in the Pentagram, which symbolises the true Man. The star representing man with his head and four limbs was symbolically illustrated by Agrippa³⁹ or by Leonardo da Vinci through the Vitruvian Man⁴⁰ in which two superimposed men appear: one framed in a square – the man of earth – the profane, and one framed in a star, even if it does not appear explicitly, as a symbol of the Initiate.

With the upper ray pointing upwards, the pentagram is the Master. With the upper ray pointing downwards and the two lower points pointing upwards, it is the Angel.

³⁶ C. Knight and R. Lomas, *The Uriel Device*, Ed. Aquila, 2002, pp. 240-241.

³⁷ It is no coincidence that the apple is the symbol of the goddess Venus. Cut crosswise, the position of the seeds forms a five-pointed star (see Jonathan Black, *The Secret History of the World*, Ed. Nemira 2008, p. 61).

³⁸ The "Five Helpers" are the Five Genii: Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Michael and Samael.

³⁹ See *La Magie céleste*, Berg International, 1981, p.151.

⁴⁰ *The Vitruvian Man* or *Homo Universalis* was created by Leonardo da Vinci, based on the proportions chosen by Vitruvius, a famous Roman architect whom Leonardo admired. The sketch of the Vitruvian Man acted as a muse for the mathematician Fibonacci and for the golden ratio.

fallen. Any fallen Bodhisattva, any Initiate who allows himself to fall, actually converts into an inverted Pentalpha.

On a more subtle level, Ibn 'Arabi says, "*For those who have no master, Satan becomes their master*"⁴¹, noting that in the absence of a master—the axis around which the disciple evolves in an upward spiral—man will inevitably remain in the realm of matter and temporality, whose master is Satan⁴².

This idea, which holds that the inverted image of a symbol also leads to the inversion of its spiritual value, is not foreign to some interpretations of Kabbalah, according to which the infernal worlds begin under Malkut, the last sefirah,⁴³ the inverted sefirotic tree. "*The Kliphos are the inverted Sephiroth, the Sephiroth in their negative aspect, the inverted Virtues.*" "*...there are the Demons, the sorrowful Souls, those who suffer, ...The fallen Angels, the Tenebrous Ones of the Lunar Path, the Black Lodge, and all the Adepts of the Left Hand, the acolytes of Lucifer and Ahriman...*"⁴⁴

It is clear that Lucifer here becomes the antithesis of the creative Demiurge, his living shadow projected into the depths of the Microcosm—man in,

*"the abyss that appeared after the first accident of Creation, the 'place' of exile where Lucifer parodies Him, and the 'state' of impurity and disorder of all the proud who compete with Creation, which Lucifer manages to polarise in every mortal creature"*⁴⁵. At the same time, he remains the Guardian of the Threshold, allowing only the anointed, who possess the secret of Hermes, to pass. The Fall can be undone through sacrifice, through spiritual alchemical transformations aimed at restoring the unity between spirit and matter.⁴⁶

⁴¹Jean Chévalier, *Sufismul. Doctrină, ordine, maestri*, Ed. Herald, 2002, p. 102.

⁴² See the previous quote from John 12:31.

⁴³ The word Infern comes from the Latin *Infernus*, meaning lower region.

⁴⁴ Samael Aun Weor, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

⁴⁵ J.B.M., *At the Gates of the Temple*, Ed. Libripress, p. 339.

⁴⁶ The connection with alchemical processes is evident in the phase called Albedo (Whitening), corresponding to Air-Ud-Spring-Venus, the purification phase, in which the Raw Material is cleansed so that it is stripped of all its properties and can accept the Tincture. Similarly, spiritual evolution cannot take place in the absence of physical and moral purification.

In this regard, a certain legend of the Grail is interesting. Steiner tells us that when Lucifer fell from heaven to Earth, a precious stone fell from his crown. This precious stone was used to fashion the vessel used by Jesus at the Last Supper with his disciples, in which the blood of Christ that flowed after the crucifixion was collected. This precious stone that fell from Lucifer's crown became the Holy Grail, the symbol of the full power of the human ego. The ego must therefore mature to the stage of wisdom in order to recover the faculty of bearing the light that no longer shines from outside, but which exists where, for the outer eyes and outer human reason, darkness and night reign.⁴⁷

Combining the green of emerald (the colour of Venus and hope, symbol of the feminine principle) with the red of blood (the colour of Mars and love, symbol of the masculine principle), the Grail becomes the symbol of the union of the two principles, of the being that has transcended bipolarity.

Guenon recounts a similar Celtic legend, according to which the Grail, which replaces Christ's heart as the receptacle of his blood, was carved by angels from an emerald taken from Lucifer's forehead at the moment of his fall. The immediate association of this emerald is with the Hindu frontal pearl, an external symbol of the third eye, which generates an additional connection with the heart, the centre of the integral being in the Hindu tradition. The cup was then entrusted to Adam, who, upon his expulsion from Eden, was unable to take it with him. In this way, the clarification is complete: man, expelled from Paradise, as a symbol of the centre of the World, becomes a prisoner of the temporal world⁴⁹ through the closing of the third eye. With the permission given to Seth to

⁴⁷Rudolf Steiner, *The East in the Light of the West. The Children of Lucifer and the Brothers of Christ*, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, 2002, p. 10.

⁴⁸ Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov, *Thoughts for Every Day*, Ed. Prosveta, 2012, pp. 106, 179.

⁴⁹ As well as outside the primordial state of human perfection, the point of contact with higher states (cf. René Guénon, *Oriental Metaphysics and Cosmology*, Ed. Herald, 2005, p. 179).

recover the vessel, the legend expresses the establishment on Earth of a spiritual centre that would allow the reverse journey to be made.

In this context, it is also important to mention that Jung considers the Grail to be the symbol of the inner perfection that people have always sought, a quest that requires inner living conditions that are difficult to achieve.

The idea of redemption, of the path travelled after the fall, also transpires in Lovinescu's text when he says that "*for the time being, I still see the dragon in its place in the sky, between the two Bears. Why do religions not distinguish between the heavenly dragon and its residue, temporarily fallen to earth?*"⁵² *The sacred text is categorical: the patible dragon is locked up for a thousand years. It will necessarily enter into final reintegration.*"⁵³ "*Lucifer plus Intellect is no longer Satan.*" By understanding Lucifer, we melt away his negative elements, redeeming "*not only man, but the whole creature.*"⁵⁴

This idea of the path to perfection appears in at least two other places.

First, when Lovinescu speaks about the world beyond the threshold: "*Since we have entered the realm of Beauty, which is that of the Ineffable, it can only speak through parables: symbols explained by symbols.*"⁵⁵ It is well known that the Enlightened One no longer speaks in the classical sense, but in parables with a double meaning, one "horizontal," addressed to the profane, and the other "vertical," addressed to the initiated.⁵⁶

⁵⁰René Guénon, *Symbols of Sacred Science*, Ed. Humanitas, 2008.

⁵¹ Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *Dictionary of Symbols*, Ed. Artemis, 1993, vol. 2, p. 106.

⁵² With reference to Revelation 12:7-9, previously quoted.

⁵³ Vasile Lovinescu, *The Nameless Star*, Ed. Rosmarin, 1994, p. 55.

⁵⁴Vasile Lovinescu, *Alchemical Journal*, Ed. European Institute, 1994, p. 33.

⁵⁵ Vasile Lovinescu, *The Nameless Star*, Ed. Rosmarin, 1994, p. 57.

⁵⁶ In the biblical texts discussed above, there are revealing passages referring to the meaning of being stuck in the profane and the closing of the gates of spiritual evolution, 6 Isaiah 9-10: "*Then he said, 'Go and tell this people: 'You will hear and not understand; you will see but not perceive!' Make the heart of this people dull, their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest*

The second reference is where Lucifer is compared to Ishtar:

"A rising *avant-garde trumpeter, Luceafărul, in decline, takes the path of Silence and the First Night. In it, Lucifer becomes Ishtar, searching for her lover in the depths.*"⁵⁷ Why Ishtar, in a context where the descent into Hell is the subject of many myths? Is it only because Ishtar can be identified with Venus, or because this myth is perhaps the oldest? We believe it is rather because, in her descent into Hell, as she passes through each of the seven gates, Ishtar is progressively stripped of ^{her} valuables and clothes, reaching a state of absolute nakedness before her sister, the Queen of the Underworld, who locks her in the Underworld for a certain period and then releases her. Thus, the text illustrates the stages of the complete initiatory journey: the shedding of material/temporal values, the descent itself, death and resurrection.

This helps us better understand another statement by Vasile Lovinescu: "*Luceafărul is the principle of destruction. ... Visible in our world, it is a witness from other worlds, a harbinger of Nothingness, without being Nothingness itself. ... Luceafărul is the minus without which the plus would not be possible.*"⁵⁹

It is appropriate to return to one of the previous mentions that links Lucifer to Ahriman, an idea widely developed by Steiner in his works. Thus, Steiner's devil is divided into two

"Let them not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn to Me, nor be healed." Or 4 Mark 11-12:

"To you," He said, "it has been given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but to those outside, everything is presented in parables, so that 'even though they look, they may not see or understand, lest they turn to God and be forgiven their sins'."

⁵⁷Vasile Lovinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁵⁸ Of "metals," as some would say.

⁵⁹ Vasile Lovinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁶⁰ Rudolf Steiner, *The East in the Light of the West. The Children of Lucifer and the Brothers of Christ*, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, 2002, Rudolf Steiner, *The Spiritual Guidance of Man and Humanity. Spiritual-Scientific Data on the Evolution of Humanity*, Ed. Triade, 2005, etc.

Lucifer and Ahriman, neither of whom are evil in themselves, each having a spiritual influence necessary for humans and their evolution⁶¹.

Ahriman is active in the outer realm, in matter, constantly trying to lure the restless spirit of man towards a belief based on the reality of matter (thus taking on the role of Satan), because unlike Lucifer, he does not feel nostalgia for the lost paradise and does not try to find a substitute for it.

Faust, the man of the 16th century, was led by the devil because he wanted to know, not just be a simple believer. Goethe grants him liberation because he himself did not remain in the dark faith, but always "*strived and aspired*". Thus, Lucifer becomes the symbol of wisdom gained through research, and the children of Lucifer become all those who strive for knowledge and wisdom. "*The Chaldean astrologer, the Egyptian priest, the Indian Brahmin: they were all children of Lucifer. And already the first man, who allowed himself to be taught by the serpent about what is 'good and evil', became the child of Lucifer. But all these children of Lucifer were also able to become believers.*"⁶² However, those who remain only at the level of science will be led to indifference regarding their divine calling. For them, Lucifer truly remains

"the ruler of this world," although he does not want to talk about a faith that is foreign to knowledge, because he knows that "*the sun can shine in the heart of one person or another; but at the same time he also knows that the paths of knowledge are those that lead to the heights where the play of the sun's rays allows the divine light to appear. Lucifer must not be some devil who leads Faust, in his endeavour, towards the abyss; he must be an awakener of those who believe in the wisdom of the universe and want to transform it into the gold of divine wisdom.*"⁽⁶³⁾

⁶¹ It should be noted that Ahriman (Angra Mainyu) comes from Zoroastrianism, an ancient Persian religion that is completely dualistic, where he represents the main enemy of Ahura Mazda (the Spirit of the Sun).

⁶² Rudolf Steiner, *Lucifer*, Anthroposophical Library, http://www.spiritualrs.net/Conferinte/GA034/GA034_Lucifer.html

⁶³ Rudolf Steiner, *op. cit.*

Blaga believed that there are two forms of knowledge: *paradisiacal knowledge* and *Luciferian knowledge*, thus distinguishing between primary, normal knowledge, which seeks to "determine" the object, and knowledge that seeks to "unravel mysteries," penetrate their cryptic aspect and reveal them⁶⁴.

Thus, *paradisiacal knowledge* concerns latent mysteries and consists in researching real data and formulating ideas that are in accordance with the concrete, without tension, achieving linear, superficial progress. It is based on observation and unproblematic explanation.

In contrast, *Luciferic knowledge* concerns mysteries to which it produces a qualitative mutation through ideas that are apparently in conflict with direct observation. These are the hypotheses that the intellect elaborates in order to reveal the deep structure of the world, leading to in-depth knowledge.

Luciferic knowledge can exist in three forms: *plus-knowledge*, which consists in attenuating mystery,⁶⁵ *zero-knowledge*, which leads to the perpetuation of mystery,⁶⁶ *minus-knowledge*, which consists of paradoxical knowledge that enhances the mystery through a solution that apparently expresses something logically unintelligible.⁶⁷ Blaga asserts that, in minus-knowledge, we are dealing with *the ecstatic intellect*, as opposed to *the enstatic intellect* that operates in plus-knowledge and zero-knowledge⁶⁸. Blaga considers that there is an analogy between the structure

⁶⁴ The distinction between the two forms of knowledge is not identical to the distinction between empirical knowledge and theoretical knowledge, intuitive knowledge and rational knowledge, naive knowledge and elaborate knowledge.

⁶⁵ For example, Copernicus demonstrated that the Earth moves around the Sun, although, apparently, things happen the other way around.

⁶⁶ For example, the thesis regarding the emergence of organic life from inorganic matter, a hypothesis that perpetuated the mystery of life without providing a satisfactory explanation.

⁶⁷ For example, the dual nature of light, which is both corpuscular and wave-like, or Cantor's transfinite numbers – "a quantity from which other quantities can be subtracted without diminishing it".

⁶⁸ More detailed explanations in: Lucian Blaga, *Trilogia cunoașterii – Cunoaște-rea luciferică (2nd edition)*, Ed. Humanitas, 2003.

Christian dogma and the paradoxical discoveries of modern scientific knowledge, so that the transcendent, remaining contradictory in itself, cannot be rationalised but can be expressed in transfigured antinomies, which do not eliminate the contradiction but perpetuate it.

We would add here the opinion that this analogy made by Lucian Blaga can be extended to other religions or esoteric movements stemming from Tradition, without the analogy becoming any less real.

Nevill Drury also considers that in the theosophical tradition, Lucifer was viewed with some indulgence, being considered the personification of the independent and self-aware mind⁶⁹, which desires to evolve towards the Light⁷⁰.

Light causes darkness to appear, even if only as the shadow of an object in the light. Thus, we cannot speak of good in the absence of evil. Moreover, in Kabbalah, good and evil are presented as two manifestations of a power superior to them.

The theme of duality, in the form of light-darkness, good-evil, etc., is addressed by Lovinescu, more subtly, through the Vedic concept of *Māyā* (**माया**) – illusion, according to which we do not directly know objective reality but a projection of it, created by us, feeding the illusion of the duality of the universe, and transcendence remains the way to tear this veil.

*"Māyā is a magical fabric, whose weft envelops and whose warp reveals, intermediate, almost imperceptible between the finite and the infinite..."*⁷²

On a human level, what divides the being (inner turmoil) is the inner shadow that maintains the fog of illusion that exercises its power through

⁶⁹There are interpretations according to which Jesus' temptation in the desert for 40 days (4 Luke 1-13) is not a confrontation in the realm of virtues, of moral action, but in the realm of knowledge. The devil does not invite Jesus to pleasures and delights, knowing that passions are foreign to him, but to the mastery of power, confusing him in a way with Lucifer. The demon wants to lure Jesus into the lower realm of powers and phenomena, but Jesus immediately turns him towards the knowledge of principles where the demon cannot follow him.

⁷⁰ Nevill Drury, *The Dictionary of the Esoteric*, Watkins Publishing, 2004, see *Lucifer*.

⁷¹ That is why in some Gnostic texts, Lucifer is called the shadow of Jesus.

⁷² Vasile Lovinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

the presentation of darkness in a form disguised as light, which leads to the acceptance of the fog of illusion as a pleasant place. This shadow is the individual creation of each person, but also of the collective subconscious,⁷³ as a result of the separation of the initial Unity into the duality of contrasts that is also found in humans. This separation creates insecurity and fuels the struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, sin and salvation, etc., and maintains the illusion of a divided self or the illusion of the need for a permanent choice between good and evil.

In reality, the only lasting solution to the dark side in each of us is not to repress the shadow, which would accentuate its power, but to realise the Self that transcends good and evil, contact with undivided reality, because the level of the solution is never the same as the level of the problem. Thus, the whole transcends the shadow by absorbing it ⁷⁴, evil becoming part of the same whole, a whole without divisions.

A clearer explanation of this way of life that initiates reach is given by Patañjali who, explaining sutra 7 of part IV of the Yoga-Sutra ("*The karma of yogis is neither white nor black; that of others is of three kinds*"), says: "*White karma means that action which involves virtue, in other words, good karma. Black karma means evil actions, actions that involve vice. The yogi acts in such a way that his deeds cannot be classified as good or evil; they are called neither good nor evil. This is because the yogi's mind is purified through spiritual practices, so that there are no selfish motives behind his actions. The yogi does not act through the lower mind, but through the higher mind (nirmana citta)*"⁷⁵.

From this point of view, Adam and Eve were forbidden to taste the Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil only because they were not yet ready to face the world of polarisation⁷⁶. If this Tree had not been

⁷³Deepak Chopra, Debbie Ford, Marianne Williamson, *The Shadow Effect: Revealing the Hidden Power of Your Real Self*, Ed. Divine Truth, 2011, pp. 18-48.

⁷⁴ Deepak Chopra, Debbie Ford, Marianne Williamson, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-90.

⁷⁵ Patañjali, *Yoga-Sutra*, Ed. Herald, 2006, p. 184.

⁷⁶ Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov, *The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, Ed. Prosveta, 2011, p. 13.

been useful, would it still have existed in Paradise? In this context, the serpent, which was also a creature of Paradise, represents only the call to knowledge. However, not all knowledge is permitted to those who are unprepared to learn it. The duality of light and darkness, through the pair of good and evil, is pre-

present in every unrealised being, forming the same reality, but in different regions. "*Basically, it is not a matter of incompatibilities, but of different complementary functions.*"⁷⁷ Elsewhere, Lovinescu also states that evil is not independent, but is part of God's throne when He occupies it. Only when God rises from his throne does Evil become the Devil. This means that only in the absence of the divine and outside the Principle does the duality of good and evil appear. The connection becomes even clearer in the statement that Satan gave Adam the illusion of the existence of two equal, antagonistic Gods, an action facilitated by the fact that this appearance is true at the level of the Cosmos, outside the Principle. "*You must transcend the Cosmos for the divine Unity to become evident.*"⁷⁸

Aïvanhov⁷⁹ gives a more vivid and accessible image, comparing good and evil to two beasts of burden harnessed at opposite ends of the same large wheel that drew water from a well. Looking at the scene from the horizontal plane, the two animals appear to be moving in opposite directions, whereas when viewed from above it can be seen that they are moving in the same direction, participating in the same work.

In this context, the biblical parable of the wheat and the tares should be understood not as a postponement of the separation of the good from the bad, but rather as the impossibility of completely separating the good from the bad in each: by pulling out the tares, we could also pull out the wheat to which it is so closely attached. Moreover, we cannot speak of good and evil in absolute terms in every situation, since sometimes what may be good for one person may be harmful to another.⁸²

⁷⁷Vasile Lovinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁷⁸ Vasile Lovinescu, *Jurnal Alchimic*, Ed. Institutul European, 1994, pp. 21, 26.

⁷⁹ Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁸⁰ The profane plane, we might add.

⁸¹ From the position of the initiate, we might say.

⁸² For example, for an athlete in full exertion, a quantity of sugar could be useful in terms of the energy it provides, whereas the same quantity of sugar could be fatal for a diabetic.

This brings us back to Lovinescu's text: "...the twilight of morning and the twilight of evening are not a minor light, a promise of day or night; they are the main ones. What could be the night journey of Luceafărul? Usually, the infernal journey takes place along a vertical axis, in a descending direction, i.e. solstice. But we know that the North-South solstice axis can be replaced by a horizontal axis, i.e. East-West. This is the path of the Avatars." ⁸³

Luceafărul becomes an Avatar who can contribute to the transmutation of evil into good, through a knowledge that must not remain only on the material plane, in the hope that one day we will all be able to fulfil what is written in the Tabula smaragdina "Ascend with the utmost prudence from earth to heaven, and then descend again to earth and gather together the powers of inferior things. Thus, you will gain the glory of the whole world, and darkness will depart from you." ⁸⁴

⁸³Vasile Lovinescu, *Steaua fără nume (The Nameless Star)*, Ed. Rosmarin, 1994, pp. 57, 58.

⁸⁴ Hermes Mercurius Trismegistos, *Tabula smaragdina. The Divine Poimandres*, Ed. Herald, 2006, p. 21.

THE ALCHEMICAL JOURNAL AND THE PERENNIAL TRADITION

Leo ARTEANU

*"In all true wisdom there must be an element
of mystery; it would be unfair if anyone could
understand it."*

Pico della Mirandola

Vasile Lovinescu was the first, and perhaps the greatest, esoteric writer in our country. Although relatively little well known, Vasile Lovinescu left us a vast body of work, most of it posthumous. It attempts to reveal to us the "perennial tradition" as a primordial branch of universal spirituality. Particular to Vasile Lovinescu is his effort to decipher the profound meanings of Romanian folklore, never before revealed, and to reintegrate them into traditional thinking, from which they had been detached in immemorial times. Another noteworthy aspect is that of spiritual master, Vasile Lovinescu forming a group of traditional study and meditation called "The Brotherhood of Hyperion". Unlike other writers with spiritual concerns, it can be deduced from his work and activity that, in addition to the literary aspects of his work, he was also a practitioner of perennial truths.

Spiritual knowledge (and not mere information) in a society devoid of any reference points, order and hierarchy is a pressing necessity for the survival of the species. The traditional path is a viable alternative, alongside other modern methods of spiritual revitalisation.

. As Romanians, we are proud that in the European cultural and spiritual space, alongside France and Italy, Romania has provided a benchmark of perennial tradition, namely Vasile Lovinescu.

Lovinescu's alchemy, evident in its spiritual aspects, is integrated into tradition alongside other forms of Western esotericism (royal art, Kabbalah, astrology, Christian and Orthodox esotericism in particular) or Eastern esotericism (Hindu, Buddhist and Sufi). Let us not forget that in 1936, at the suggestion of René Guénon, Vasile Lovinescu was initiated into the Tariqa Alawita, a branch of Sufi esotericism.

The alchemical journal is Vasile Lovinescu's pretext for writing and thus fixing in time and space his reflections on the paths to Enlightenment from the perspective of the perennial Tradition, or, to quote the author "a (spiritual) pilgrimage is not possible without a predetermined destination." *The journal* contains the author's notes for three months and three days, a number that is perhaps not accidental, with symbolic resonances.

Although he does not offer a method of spiritual evolution, Vasile Lovinescu outlines several principles, including asceticism, prayer, concentration, and meditation. Asceticism, as a starting point in all spiritual paths, aims to achieve the state of witness or, in Lovinescu's words, "we must, with all our strength, actualise the witness within us to the highest degree; I say actualise, because the potential, the virtual, always exists." Prayer also plays a central role in the *Journal*, being addressed several times and from different angles. The theoretical aspects conclude with practical recommendations for prayer: its rare, correct formulation, unifying intention, precision. Vasile Lovinescu also provides technical details on concentration. Thus, at the beginning of any concentration exercise, we must proceed as follows: "first, feel the intellect above our head; this is the only initiative required of us. From there, let it descend, floating and of its own accord, along the silver thread into our heart, our total centre." He then continues: "when, therefore, the absence of concentrated thought unites with a point, outside of space and time, necessarily, all miracles are possible; a spatialised memory can be the starting point for immense cosmogonies." As for meditation using mantra repetition, the practitioner "by pronouncing them indefinitely reaches a moment outside

of time, when they integrate into the Primordial Sound, manifest and coextensive with Eternity."

Alchemical texts recommend that "separation is only for the sake of conjunction. To separate the Sun from its shadow means to proceed in such a way that the shadow does not disappear, because it has its role and its memory. It is necessary so that between the shadow and the sun, once the separation is achieved, the Philosopher's Stone may be actualised, which is the necessary thing between perfect and imperfect bodies." Alchemical-spiritual aspects are found in many of Lovinescu's reflections on the philosophers' Sulphur, Mercury and Saturn, the Lion and the Ouroboros, the dry path and the wet path, the alchemical Androgyne, the law of reverse analogy, Vitriol as a universal solvent that melts all illusions and lies.

In Lovinescu's conception, spiritual evolution is closely linked to intellectual intuition, the only thing that can transmute the inferior into the superior, silver into gold, the rough stone into the philosopher's stone.

Through the transmutation of the psyche into the spiritual and the sacralisation of everyday life, Vasile Lovinescu believes that the state of "true man", proactive, the transformation of the Ego into the Self, the appearance of the initiate who has seen the North Star.

As a true spiritual father, Vasile Lovinescu tries to decipher for the novice the difficulties and ambiguities of spiritual teaching, recommending "ardour, perseverance and intellectual acuity".

The relationship between reason and faith, which has been an increasingly acute problem in Christianity from its inception to the present day, is addressed by Vasile Lovinescu in a personal manner with hermetic nuances. He believes that "the intellect completely restructures, bringing together what is scattered into a new synthesis, which is not of this world, because it transcends it." We thus observe the sublime synthesis between reason and experience that the author recommends.

Another interesting aspect observed in *the Journal* is the discreet allusion to journeys into the transcendent. At the beginning, the author metaphorically describes the "higher waters" as a place where "all beings and peripheral things (perhaps in the sense of ignored) in our world become entities superior to us in the transcendent." He then describes the method involving the analogy of flight with "soaring, descending and floating." Subsequently

he recommends the path to follow, emphasising the dangers that lie in wait: "Inappropriate behaviour towards them (spiritual entities) cuts us off at the knees." And then "There is also a danger of death: the fishing line is nothing other than the silver thread mentioned in Kabbalah, constantly moving up and down, like the thread of a clock, but when it breaks, it causes instant death."

The issue of life and death is also widely debated. Based on Eugen Ionescu's play "The King Dies", Vasile Lovinescu criticises death from a materialistic, limited Ionescian point of view. Thus, for a traditionalist, Nothingness does not exist and "all these incidents are of no importance to those who have become accustomed to dying constantly during this life." A current view of life from both a spiritual and biological perspective is to describe it as an "uninterrupted succession of deaths that constitute the moments of our lives." In contemporary biology, this idea is known as apoptosis or programmed cell death and represents one of the mechanisms of homeostasis or functional balance in the body. On the other hand, in any spiritual evolutionary process, it is necessary to first die (to give up old prejudices) in order to be reborn at a new, higher level of understanding of reality.

Masonic symbolism is also present in *the Journal*. Starting from the premises of Masonic initiation, namely the "stripping of metals," that is, the adventitious and parasitic accidents of our being, it arrives at the role of "secondary demiurge" fulfilled by the Masonic master, or, in Lovinescu's words "The Master collaborates with the Great Architect of the Universe and inscribes signs on the empty board. But it is not empty, because its surface is a fabric of points and any man inscribed on it is inscribed on this fabric; the Master does nothing but pass from Power to Act, the new Form, the original text". Also in Masonic symbolism is the recommendation that the Mason should actualise his geometry as quickly as possible, that is, his relationship with the Great Architect of the Universe.

In the same vein is the reference to another initiatory organisation, namely the Rosicrucians. The author states that their temple was the Holy Spirit, that is, the place where "the two centres of the ellipse had disappeared, merging into a single point. There was no longer any polarisation in quantity and

quality. Having no pilgrimage to make, either external or internal, no movement towards quality, their temple was everywhere, because wherever one of them was, there was also the centre of the world. In other words, they actualised everything that is potential in other people." This fact is particularly important in our day, as the social aspect is often neglected by initiatory organisations, with disastrous effects on the society in which we must live.

The author also focuses on medicine in its sacred aspect, namely in identifying healing with purification. Purification is necessary so that spiritual energy – Buddhist *vyria* – can intervene, "triggering an action that is not part of nature."

The problem of good and evil also appears in several chapters of the Journal. The author starts from the premise that "evil in the world is not an objective reality, but an illusion, a false imputation. The debate should not be limited to discriminating between the positive and negative elements in the world, but to the illusory nature of the entire Manifestation." Other parts of the Journal point to the necessity of evil in the world, but also to the lack of a common measure of evil in relation to good. Thus, Lovinescu outlines superb definitions, such as "evil, the negative, is good, the positive exiled" or "evil is good in fragments."

Countless metaphysical and cosmological considerations are present in the Journal: the centre and the periphery, the principle and the manifestation, the one and the multiplicity, God and the Enemy, the qualitative and the quantitative, etc. What is characteristic of these binomials is the lack of a common measure, as well as the effort that must be made to "dissolve" the second term of the binomial into the first.

Initiatory journeys are also discussed several times. In addition to the esoteric explanations of the fairy tale *Harap Alb* or the story *Ivan Turbincă* detailed in other works, Vasile Lovinescu also analyses the initiatory aspects of the travel novel

"Through the Mountains of Neamţ" by Calistrat Hogaş, published at the beginning of the 20th century. The premise is that "Through the Mountains of Neamţ" is "an initiation ritual with itinerant symbolism". The journey described in the novel is a spiritual transition between two worlds separated by a bridge. On this bridge, the traveller (the initiate) stands "suspended in the air and unmoving

above a stream rushing beneath his feet." This means that, just as "immobility is qualitative and flow is quantitative, to be suspended means to become the centre and force the stream to flow around you, giving it a circular shape, achieving a double and simultaneous immobilisation: of thoughts and passions". There is also the theme of the customs officer guarding the bridge, namely the theme of the trials or tests that the traveller on the initiatory path must pass in order to reach the Transcendent. In the end, the candidate for initiation must die in one cycle in order to be reborn in a new, superior cycle.

Towards the end of the Journal, Vasile Lovinescu makes some autobiographical confessions, in which he shows that the "contemplative life" helps him overcome "the feeling of exile from this world and the other world." Emphasising the superiority of the contemplative life over the active life, of silence over speech, man becomes "master of the chariot, not the horses".

In conclusion, *the Alchemical Diary* is a diary of spiritual reflections that helps the seeker to meditate on perennial themes of tradition, to choose a technique of spiritual evolution that suits him and, above all, to try to spread the Light he has integrated to his fellow men or, expressed in Masonic language, "to work for the good and progress of Humanity."

GETICUS HIPERBOREUS

Vasile MARIAN

"Traditional societies had their own rationale in myth; ... Man died when he fell asleep, recreated the world at sunrise; every gesture he made in his household, orchard and soil imitated, in daily life, the gestures of the Great Carpenter of the Universe, the Gardener of the stars, around the polar shore."

Vasile Lovinescu,
Creanga and the Golden
Branch

↑ In Geographia XI, 6, 2, Strabo says that "The first to describe the different parts of the world said that the Hyperboreans lived above the Black Sea and the Danube." The ancient texts documenting the existence of the Hyperboreans remain indebted to myth: descending in a priestly migration from north to south, in *illo tempore*, from the polar regions of Hyperborea, the descending vertical of Astra Savatina places them in a location halfway between the Pole and the Equator. Sacred geography, through a process based on the principle of correspondence, moves and consecrates for millennia the Spiritual Centre of Hyperborea, and therefore of the World, in Dacia! Those who lead the migration are the priest-kings, who carried both the bow and arrows and the staff of spiritual power. Among the Thracian peoples and tribes, numbering over 170, the Dacians, Geto-Dacians, Getae and Scythians seem to be most frequently mentioned in the writings of the ancients when referring to the Great Hyperborean Migration, whose terminus was Ancient Greece. For Clement of Alexandria, "the prophet of the Dacians is Zalmoxis, the Hyperborean," Stromata, IV, 213, and for Apollonius of Rhodes, "the Hyperboreans are Pelasgians living north of Thrace," Argonautica, II, 5, 675.

The verticality of this migration, N-S, represents for Geticus, through metaphysical transposition, hierarchy and becoming, in the sense of the succession of the multiple states of the initiate, following the horizontal expansion of each of these states of being. It is not difficult to recognise in Geticus Hiperboreus the qualities of the Universal Man, whose defining symbol, according to René Guénon, is the cross and who, in the Hebrew tradition, is Adam Kadmon from Kabbalah, symbolised by the sefirotic tree, or El-Insanul-kamil from Islamic esotericism.

The identification of the Hyperboreans with the Pelasgians, "The Hyperboreans were the sons of Pelasgos" Pindar, Scoliast, OI, III, 28, from whose lineage they descended, is interpreted by V. Lovinescu as a hermetic symbol ~ the primordial distinction, the primordial race "Pelasgos, the one born of Black Earth (gaia melaină)."

When Dacia becomes the Supreme Centre of the World (Hyperborea), the Pole also becomes "Geticus Polus": "Soldier Marcellin, you now leave to take upon your shoulders the Hyperborean Sky and the stars of the Getic Pole." Martial, Epigr., IX, 45, and Virgil, "Lonely, he roamed the Hyperborean ice and the ice-covered Don, and the never snow-free plains around the Riphei Mountains (Carpathians), until the Thracian women, enraged by his contempt, tore him apart..." Georgica, IV, V, 517: Orpheus.

Geticus finds him in popular tradition as the Navel of the Earth (Omphalos), the Osia of the World, names given to Mount Omul in the Carpathians.

What is above is also below, and what is below is also above: the Constellation of the Dragon finds its earthly image in the winding Carpathian Mountains, and the centre of the Circle of Precession in the Transylvanian Plateau, a sacred plateau, where Sarmizegetusa Basileion, the supreme sanctuary of the Hyperborean Tradition, exists! "If you have a physical map of Romania in front of you, observe how the Transylvanian plateau looks: it would seem that our country is a kind of large circle around Transylvania. Well, that is where the Romanian people were born." Neagu Djuvara, *A Brief History of the Romanians Told to Young People*, Humanitas, 2002.

The sacred geography of Dacia is part of the sacred cycle of Hyperborea, preserved in the memory of the primordial Tradition, and it is not surprising to find that it can be superimposed on the physical map mentioned above.

"This geography is dominated by a central reality: the Transylvanian plateau, surrounded by the Carpathian and Apuseni Mountains, the wildest and most impenetrable in Europe..." (see Vasile Lovinescu)

Vasile Lovinescu, about whom Claudio Mutti says (erroneously, in our opinion) that he is the muqaddim of Hyperborean Dacia (Eliade, Valsan, *Geticus e gli altri. La fortuna di Guenon tra I romeni*; Edizioni all'insegna del Vetro, Parma, 1999) supports these ancient texts with contemporary arguments related to toponymy, symbols, legends, and Romanian folk traditions "...let us look again at the map, with this Saturnian Black Sea (Pontus), hiding in its bosom the White Island, located opposite Selina, with the sunny White Fortress to the north and the lunar Selina a little further south, currently called in Romania

"the keys of the Black Sea" (the golden and silver keys of priestly and royal power, of the Greater and Lesser Mysteries, the keys of Janus and Ion-Sant-Ion); let us look at the Letea Lagoon, the Trident of the Danube, with Tula on the handle, in "indistinctness"..." *Geticus, Dacia Hyperboreana*, Etudes Traditionnelles, Paris, 1936-1937.

But the author's use of these folkloric sources will take place in a "Guénonian key", Guénon considering popular tradition to be a consciously encrypted means of subconscious transmission and perpetuation of the Primordial Tradition. "When a traditional form is about to die out, its last representatives may well entrust, deliberately, to this collective memory... what would otherwise be lost forever; and at the same time, the natural misunderstanding of the masses is a sufficient guarantee that what was esoteric in nature will not be stripped of it, but will remain only as a kind of testimony to the past for those who, in other times, will be able to understand it." (see René Guénon).

For this reason, the message conveyed esoterically becomes accessible only to initiates, and truths hitherto hidden are revealed!

Geticus, in his attempt to decipher the role of the Hyperborean tradition in the Dacian and later Romanian tradition, draws on a wide variety of sources, as mentioned above, with carols standing out for their laconic style and clarity of information; carols, "this word is none other than *Calendae*", and these incantations uttered by children during the winter holidays preserve a

pre-Christian custom "this was done by the Romanians at the calends of January, during the Saturnalia and the celebrations of Janus".

Geticus, none other than Vasile Lovinescu, is not just a literary pseudonym, it is the assumption of participation in the "subconscious" transmission of a spark from the Hyperborean Tradition, with which he merges to the point of identification! He was 31 years old when he began publishing *Dacia Hiperboreeană* in the magazine *Etudes Traditionelles* (1936-1937), Paris, two years after the beginning of a sustained correspondence with René Guénon. Their epistolary relationship flows as from disciple to Master, the latter recognising his real literary qualities and knowledge in the esoteric field. He encouraged him to deepen his study of *Dacia Hiperboreeană* and, last but not least, paved the way for him to obtain an initiation in France, in Amiens, and in Switzerland, in Basel, where he obtained an Alawite initiation through Titus Burckhardt, with Frithjof Schuon as his spiritual master. Belonging to a strong traditional current of transmission of the perennial philosophy, Vasile Lovinescu finds in René Guénon's work and initiatory destiny

the "path" of becoming, tariqah, which leads from shariya, the great social and religious path, to haqiqah, pure knowledge, esoteric truth.

THE SYMBOLISM OF *THE WIDOW*

H. RADU

EVasile Lovinescu was born in Fălticeni on 17 December 1905 and passed away on 14 August 1984 in Bucharest. He was the son of lawyer Octav Lovinescu (Teodorescu) and Ana Cetățeanu, a descendant of Ion Budai-Deleanu, brother of playwright Horia Lovinescu and nephew of the great literary critic Eugen Lovinescu.

He did not remain faithful to his legal training (he was a former lawyer for the municipality of Bucharest and legal advisor to the Reșița Steel Works) due to his encounter with the writings of René Guénon, the renowned philosopher, brilliant connoisseur of the great initiatory traditions, of the "seals of mystery", and subsequently, his correspondence with him definitively marked the trajectory of his life. Like his master, Vasile Lovinescu would approach Islam, but would not convert to it, as Guénon did. A pilgrimage to Mount Athos undertaken "under the rose" in 1935, as well as his initiation into *the Tariqa Allawita* – the path of Allah – as well as his integration into a universal esoteric organisation of the Muslim mystical current, *Sufism*, in Basel in 1936, gave spiritual content and a more precise meaning to his natural inclination towards esotericism.

He made his debut in *Viața Românească*, *Vremea*, *Familia*, *Adevărul literar și artistic*, *Credința*, etc. with essays on folkloric and initiatory themes: on Tibetan mysticism, on Ignatius of Loyola (founder of *the Society of Jesus* /Jesuits/ and first general of *the Jesuit Order*) and his spiritual exercises, on the symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud, René Guénon, etc. Most of these essays were later republished under the pseudonym *Geticus* in a more extensive text on *Hyperborean Dacia*, highlighting the symbolic and metaphysical character of our archaic traditions, in the magazine *Etudes Traditionnelles* de la Paris, which appeared between 1936 and 1937 under the guidance of René Guénon.

The Dictionary of Romanian Writers, published by the Romanian Cultural Foundation in 1998 under the coordination of Mircea Zăciu, Marian Papahagi and Aurel Sasu, considers Vasile Lovinescu to be "the most prominent representative of Romanian esotericism".

Lovinescu uses the sacred science of symbols (symbology) in his writings, and his influences are diverse: from Ananda K. Coomaraswamy to Zen Buddhism and the palimpsest of Sacred Texts *to the mysteries of Freemasonry and alchemy*.

What is relevant is that Lovinescu goes directly to the sources. From René Guénon, he takes only the doctrine. However, "nothing mimetic and, above all, no hint of personal vanity clouds this hermeneutic project, which is unique in our modern culture"⁽¹⁾. His editorial debut took place in 1981 with *Al patrulea hagiâlăc*², a volume of literary exegesis, the only one published during his lifetime. In this book, Lovinescu attempts to highlight the substantial esotericism, "the alchemical scheme of Matei's novel" (*Craii de Curtea Veche* by Mateiu Caragiale - n.n.), which is a deliberately hermetic work, an Athanor in which we find all the fundamental initiatory symbols, from *the cosmic scale* to heraldic colours. Thus, Pantazi, Paşadia and Pîrgu (identified with Pantazi Ghica, see ref. 12, p. 203) represent the three *gunas*, universal cosmic tendencies, which in fact reproduce the Essence and Substance, that is, in Vedic terminology, *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. Through Pantazi, *white* acts, *Sattva* (lightness, ease - n.n.), Paşadia expresses *red*, *Rajas* (emotion, action - n.n.), and Pîrgu is possessed by *black*, *Tamas* (darkness, heaviness - n.n.), the primordial mud⁽¹⁾, that is, the three "states" of all things (*guna*).

*"I bow to the wise Sun / For the soul is a fountain in the chest /
And the white wheel is my master / Which lies in the soul's
fountain.*

In the Sun, the wheel grows; / In the shade, only the flesh grows..."

¹Mircea Zăciu, Marian Papahagi, Aurel Sasu: *Dictionary of Romanian Writers*, Ed. Romanian Cultural Foundation, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 768-771.

²Vasile Lovinescu: *Al patrulea hagiâlăc (The Fourth Hagiâlăc)*, Ed. Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 1981

Ion Barbu's lyrics, with the symbol of the Sun from *Ruga Crypto and the Lapp Enigel*, fit the possible tribute that should be paid to Vasile Lovinescu through this Barbian cosmology, in which the aforementioned ballad is considered an alternative to Eminescu's *Luceafărul*. The Sun is the source of light, warmth and life. Its rays represent the celestial or spiritual influences received by the Earth. The wheel as a solar symbol descends from the heights of the Summer Solstice, and as a cosmic sign of renewal, it appears in Vedic texts. It is also the Rosicrucians' *Wheel of the World*.

Since the time of the Iliad, *psyche* (soul) has meant *breath*, and for Pythagoras it corresponds to *the life force*. Vasile Lovinescu is undoubtedly a vital force in Romanian spirituality, representing the soul of esotericism in the Carpathian region!

In Platonic philosophy, we find the threads of Egyptian mysteries, a confirmation supported by Hippolytus, the father of the Church, who subtly suggests that "this is the great mystery of the Samothracians, a mystery that cannot be uttered and that only the initiates know. They, however, speak at length about Adam as their ^{original} man."

The Symposium (or *On Love*) is the book of Plato's *Dialogues* that essentially describes the thirst for eternity in the guise of love, of *ordo amoris*, with all its seemingly free appearances. The Neoplatonist Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, will convey the expression *love and do what you want*, because if you truly love, you no longer do what you want, but what you must. Plato shows that love is a striving for ^{permanent} good, in other words, "procreation in spiritual beauty." *The Symposium* represents an "initiation" in which "love appears as a harbinger."

of wisdom". If wisdom is *the eternal Word (Logos), the Son of the eternal Creator of the World*, then love is in a *maternal* relationship to this *Logos*, according to R. Steiner. Before even a single spark of the light of wisdom can shine in the human soul, the theosophist continues, there must be an obscure impulse, a drive towards this divine element. Unconsciously, man

³Rudolf Steiner: *Christianity as Mystical Fact and the Mysteries of Antiquity*, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 1993, pp. 73-74.

⁴ Plato: *Dialogues*, Editura pentru Literatură Universală, Bucharest, 1968

must strive towards what, once elevated in consciousness, constitutes his highest happiness. The notion of love, says Steiner, is linked to what, in Heraclitus, appears as the daimon in man.

In the *Dialogue*, Socrates is 'initiated' by Diotima, the priestess who awakened in his soul the *daimonic* force destined to lead him to the Divine. But no "wise woman" (who awakens *the daimon* in Socrates!) could awaken *the daimon* in the soul if the force for this awakening did not already exist there. Therefore, this "wise woman" must be sought in Socrates' soul. Socrates thus presents as the "wise woman" the soul force that existed before he received wisdom. "It is the *maternal* principle," Rudolf Steiner assures us, "that gives birth to the son of God, wisdom, *the Logos*. The unconsciously active force of the soul, which allows *the Divine* to penetrate consciousness, is considered to be a feminine element.

The soul, still lacking wisdom, is *the mother* of what leads to *the Divine*... The soul is considered *the mother* of the divine element. *Unconsciously*, it leads man with the necessity of a natural force towards what is divine. From here, light is shed on the mysterious vision of Greek mythology: "*The world of the gods was born in the soul.*"

The myth of Dionysus, son of Zeus and a princess from Thebes who was killed by lightning, from whom Zeus prematurely snatched the child, saving him. But Hera, mother of the gods, incites the Titans against Dionysus, who tear him apart. Pallas Athena saves his heart and takes it to Zeus, who conceives his son for the second time. The son of God and a mortal mother, that is, of the human soul (transient) unconsciously striving towards *the Divine*. From the divine force torn from man, wisdom is born, which is *the Logos*.

Zeus is a celestial god endowed with unbridled fertilising power. His attributes are the thunderbolt and the eagle. His legitimate wife, Hera, often cheated on, inflexible, extremely jealous, is the feared arbiter of marital ties. Zeus has many children, but only one with Hera, Ares. Herodotus claims that the Thracians worshipped four deities: Ares, Dionysus, Artemis and Hermes. For the southern Thracians, the celestial deity is Hera. Both in the north and in the south, there were two

practices: tattooing and burial, or cremation of widows alongside their deceased husbands, and death was celebrated as a happy event⁵.

Renowned specialists in symbolism, Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant⁶, mention that the goddess Hera embodies the symbolism of the Widow.

The word ^{widow}7 is of Latin origin, *vidua*, and means *empty*, in the sense of *emptied*, *widowed*, that is, separated from her other half, in inconsolable mourning. It is one of the most widespread symbols of the Perennial Tradition, *Sanatana Dharma*.

Finding one's lost half restores the Androgyne, Vasile Lovinescu assures us, and it is easy to understand how the symbolism of *the Widow* has become the most compelling image of initiatory perfection, "the transition from the incurable wound of duality in itself to unitary synthesis."

In Vedic mythology, *Prakriti* represents matter, primordial nature. According to the Indian philosophical system *Samkhya*, the entire universe is explained by the rational evolution of two fundamental principles: *Prakriti* (nature) and *Purusha* (spirit or divine substance). *Prakriti* is "widowed" by the three *gunas* (states) torn from her bosom, which in turn become principles of otherness, Lovinescu mentions.

In the Bible, the Queen of Sheba, the ancient state in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, visits King Solomon to convince herself of "the Name of the Lord". Legend has it that Solomon had a son with the queen, the ancestor of the ruling House of Ethiopia. The Queen of Sheba is the symbol of the soul striving for Union with the Supreme, and Solomon is the legendary founder of *Freemasonry*. The members of this order are *the sons of the widow*, as spiritual descendants of the builder of Solomon's Temple, Hiram Abif, the son of a widow from the tribe of Naphtali. According to Lovinescu, *Freemasonry* itself is "the widow of all extinct initiatory orders, whose legacy it has inherited; and it is known that these orders are extremely numerous".

⁵ Eliade Culianu: *Dictionary of Religions*, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2007.

⁶ Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant: *Dictionary of Symbols*, Ed. Artemis, vol. 3, Bucharest, 1995, p. 430.

⁷ Vasile Lovinescu: *The Fourth Hagialâc*, Ed. Rosmarin, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 108-117.

In Egyptian mythology, Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, killed by his brother Set, is called *the son of the widow*. Osiris, the most popular god and king symbolising death and rebirth, betrayed and killed, was brought back to life by his wife (and sister) Isis, who went in search of her husband's scattered limbs. Isis is the widow of Osiris, that is, of *light*. In the same way, the Freemason is constantly searching for *light*, which identifies him with Horus, *the son of light, the son of the widow*.

In Greek mythology, Gaia (or Gaea, Geia, Glia) represents the female personification of the Earth, one of the primordial deities who, appearing after *Chaos*, gave birth to Uranus (the sky) and Pontus (the sea), then gave birth to Kronos, the Titans and the Titanides, and later the ^{Cyclopes}.

In Dacian-Romanian mythology, Mother Gaia (Mater Terra or Gaea)^{9,10} appears in texts sung at funerals, *the Goddess of Death* appearing in the form of a bird of prey, either diurnal or nocturnal, called *gaia*. This mysterious bird, a ferocious daytime predator, has beautiful coloured plumage and extremely developed eyesight, being the most beautiful bird of prey, which inspired Brâncuși to choose it as a model for his *Măiastrele*.

The ancient myth is thus reflected in legends and sometimes in history, as follows:

- Iana Sânziana, the Sun's sister, loved by him, from whom she flees (for fear of incest), while she is kidnapped by the dragon, she is *a widow*;
- The emperor's daughter in Ion Creangă's *The Story of the Pig* is *the widow* of her husband, who was consumed in the Incense Monastery through her fault, and the child she carries is *an orphan*. Symbolically, *the widow* and *the orphan* complement each other;
- The title of Petre Ispirescu's fairy tale, *The Emperor's Daughter and the Widow's Son*, is also significant;

⁸Victor Kernbach: *Dictionary of General Mythology*, Ed. Albatros, Bucharest, 1995.

⁹Ion Ghinoiu: *The Treasure of the Villages. Popular Calendar*, Ed. Academiei, Bucharest, 2005, pp. 177–178

¹⁰ Romulus Vulcănescu: *Romanian Mythology*, Ed. Academiei R.S.R., 1987, pp. 129, 148, 443

- *The hunter's son* who arrives at Nedeia Cetate, one of the fabulous names of Curtea-veche, is shrouded in the same characteristic as *the Widow*;
- *Pipăruș Petru* from the fairy tale of the same name in the volume *Din lumea basmelor (From the World of Fairy Tales)* by Iuliu Traian ^{Mera}¹¹, published in 1906 and for which he won the Romanian Academy Award, is born from a peppercorn swallowed by his mother after a girl and two sons were kidnapped by the dragon. Pipăruș Petru frees them from captivity;
- Moses is the son of *the Widow*; Jesus Christ, too;
- In the legend, Ioan Corvin is the son of *the Widow*;
- After the assassination of his father Bogdan II, ruler of Moldavia, Stephen the Great is the son of *the Widow*;
- Ismail, the father of the Arabs, is the son of Hagar, who was cast out, and therefore Abraham's *widow*.

The disappearance of the initiatory orders has left *Freemasonry widowed*. A tradition before dying, Vasile Lovinescu assures us, "wraps itself in a shell" in the eyes of the profane, just as Caesar, before falling pierced by 33 dagger blows, wrapped himself in the folds of his purple toga. This fact must be remembered because the "Holy Empire" is the "last legacy" that *Freemasonry* received. It can be said that any initiatory order, "finishing its course, resorbs itself into the germ in order to pass through what for it was a period of darkness symbolised by the black waves of *widowhood*".

To explain this symbol of *Freemasonry*, Vasile Lovinescu points to several sources. Thus, for the Jacobites of Stuartism, *the Widow* was Henrietta of England, wife of King Charles I Stuart, executed in 1649, and the "son" was the pretender and future King Charles II, towards whom all the hopes of the supporters of the House of Stuart were directed.

In the various Scottish systems, the Order of the Temple was considered *the widow* of the last Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, burned at the stake by Philip the Fair in 1314.

¹¹ Radu Homescu: *Iuliu Traian Mera (1861-1909)*, in *Ziridava*, no. IX, Arad County Museum, 1978.

In the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, it was clarified that the expression *Widow* was common to all mysteries in antiquity. Thus, as mentioned above, Horus is *the son of the Widow*. In Greek mythology, Demeter, the goddess of agriculture and cereals, whose daughter Persephone had been kidnapped by Pluto, was a wandering *Widow*, as the sister and former wife of Zeus.

J. Evola, quoted by Lovinescu⁷, shows us that "in the Indo-Aryan tradition, every god – every transcendent power – is united with a wife, with a Shakti; without his Shakti, the god is inanimate and inert like a larva; Shakti means power. In the West, Sophia, *Wisdom*, is represented as a lady, a royal lady. In Egyptian representations, divine ladies give the king the lotus, a symbol of rebirth, and the keys to life. Iranian fravashi and Nordic Valkyries are representations of the transcendent part of warriors, they are the forces of destiny and of their victory... And in Celtic tradition, there are supernatural women who kidnap heroes to mysterious islands to make them immortal through their love. Etymologically, Eve means *life, vivifying*; a universal symbolism has represented in women the transcendental, vivifying, transfigured force through which the human condition can be transcended... Especially as a widow, the woman expresses a period of taciturnity and symbolises tradition, the power widowed because she lost her husband ("the complementary" - note by V. Lovinescu).

The *Widow* also appears in Mateiu Caragiale's *Craii de Curtea-veche*, transforming the story into an authentic myth, with a symbolic value equal to those mentioned above. *The Widow* is the main character in the novel. Pena Corcodușa is the keystone, the silent witness, the superlative mask of the drama, as Lovinescu points out. "She gives the novel its entire dimension , occult , polemical , essayistic , and ... *The Widow* "the proud knight gvard" induces in the subtext clear references to a symbol that wanders throughout universal literature, but is perhaps little known in its occult dimensions. Her appearance "with one foot bare," reminiscent of the attire of the candidate in the Masonic ritual, is intended to attract the attention of the hermeneutist.

¹² Radu Cernătescu: *Luciferian Literature – An Occult History of Romanian Literature*, Ed. Cartea Românească, Bucharest, 2010.

Here are Vasile Lovinescu's remarks: "*The widow* of the proud knight of the guard, that is, of the 'proud knight of Malta' and, through him, of the order in a state of decay, of destruction in the primordial Court, mourns her beloved; more precisely, more deeply, she confesses his absence for 33 years, her widowhood through her madness, which is in reality a search in a mental *labyrinth*, a wandering around an *old court*, which she watches over like a vestal virgin."

As Vasile Lovinescu points out, "according to the texts quoted from Guénon and Evola, *Lady Pena*, that is, *the Winged Lady, the Feathered Serpent**, symbolises the initiatory organisation itself, with a chivalrous tone, and signifies its vicissitudes: increasingly decrepit, increasingly lost until the destruction of the soul."

In the myth *of the Crai*, *Pena's* counterpart is Serghie de Leuchtenberg-Beauharnais, *the proud knight* of Malta.

A history represents a cosmos, with an identical genesis, as Vasile Lovinescu, the great Romanian man of culture, convinces us. "Serghie is also *the Son of the Widow* because he lost his father at the age of three, in 1852, *Făt Frumos* until the end."

"Nowhere has the abyss between the two poles of manifestation and their complicity been more perfectly expressed in literary form than in Mateiu Caragiale's story," Vasile Lovinescu convinces us.

'Shared by both equally, a passionate love ignites between the flower of the field and Făt Frumos, in whose being the brilliance of two imperial crowns was reflected'. Serghie and Pena, the hyperzenith and infranadir *of the Craii de Curtea-Veche*'.

* *The feathered serpent* symbolises anthropogony and human civilisation; it is also known as *Quetzalcoatl* – a symbolic bird of regeneration; it is the Aztec god worshipped as a messianic, benevolent, saviour god, often as a deity of light in pre-Columbian civilisations.

Prince *Serge Maximilianovich of Leuchtenberg-Beauharnais* was a prince of Romanov and Grand Commander of the Supreme Masonic Council of Italy. He died in Rusciuc in 1877 and was related to Carol I through his grandmother, Stéphanie de Beauharnais, the adopted daughter of Napoleon I and second cousin of Hortense de Beauharnais, daughter of Empress Joséphine (cf. Radu Cernătescu, p. 201).

RIMAGINATION EXERCISE

Ahile Z. VERESCU

MI imagine Vasile Lovinescu, in his prime, as an illustrious magician completely liberated from worldly constraints, with a lively, penetrating gaze and the bliss of wisdom permanently etched on his handsome Bukovinian face. Like any magician, our master carries a firm wand in his right hand and invites us with a smile, raising his eyebrow slightly, to enter an old and abandoned castle. From the outside, this once-magnificent building, now nothing more than a ruin, does not attract us at all and inspires nothing in us.

A little reserved and without much conviction, we nevertheless enter this ruined palace of our spiritual tradition, and that only because the magician insists, insists... Everything begins to shine differently than we could have imagined, after we cross the threshold at the entrance. And this palace, long abandoned, and all the things that remain in it seem, at that moment, to be made of crystal, and all, in unison, begin to come to life and tell their story, just as the master passes over them with his magic wand. Our old and dusty castle, which we passed by every day, almost without noticing it, is instantly transformed into an unimaginable beauty, while we finally understand something of the fatal error we were indulging in before we met the magister.

And after this minor exercise of imagination, my thoughts turn to another great spiritual master, Saint Augustine, who, as Vasile Lovinescu now reveals to us, also saw deeply, one night, locked in his cell, for his contemporaries and for posterity alike, that holy Light in his heart, to which he addressed himself with undisguised humility, saying: *"Late have I loved You, Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved You. For behold, You were*

within me, and I was outside, searching for You there... You were with me, and I was not with You."

Vasile Lovinescu was, is, and will always be with us all, and with him, all the splendour of the Romanian spiritual tradition and the primordial tradition alike. We need only read and reread, with our minds and hearts, the work of this unique and priceless interpreter of spirituality, ours and everyone's.

THE SPIRITUAL MASTER AND THE PATH¹

Teodoru GHIONDEA

D The spiritual and cultural legacy of Vasile Lovinescu and his work far exceeds the comprehension of our contemporaries . . . by a characteristic that only only authenticity and spiritual authority can manifest: the altitude of the spirit in which it rises and merges with the divine Truth, even in life, revealing unique ideal constellations, determining an emulation that suppresses conceptual boundaries and increases the depth and height of our true heart. Such a personality overwhelms us with its inner immensity, our striving and effort to follow it, marking us definitively and cultivating in us an aspiration and a willingness to confess the Truth that we can only with difficulty master and orient properly in order to draw closer to God. For this, we urgently need understanding, insight into the intimacy of his spirit, and then a total, unconditional acceptance of his teaching, which we can no longer distinguish from that of the primary Revelation. Just as only God can distinguish air from air and water from water, with the passing of the years, it becomes impossible for us to make superficial theoretical distinctions between the countless facets of Truth that spring from the Master's teaching and what constitutes the content and essence of our fundamental knowledge; in any case, Truth belongs entirely to God, and the spiritual Master is merely a mediator between Him and our world, a living sign of the divine Presence

¹ Speech delivered at the "Vasile Lovinescu" commemorative meeting in Fălticeni – 14 July 2012.

In a *culture without worship*, such as the modern one, which is essentially barren but full of "nonsense and excesses" – as one of Vasile Lovinescu's "secret" authors wrote – it is almost impossible not to feel close to Heaven when reading his work; the effort you have to make to get closer to the essence of Lovinescu's text, the fullness of participation and the essentiality of its acceptance demand our total commitment. Internalising and accepting the doctrine, the teaching, is equivalent to the confession of faith on which our existence is based, encompassing the three planes that Plato spoke of: cognitive, affective and volitional, which we can easily associate with the three modes or paths of spiritual fulfilment: through knowledge, through love and through ritual action. Therefore, our entire being belongs to the Master whom we "visit" at regular intervals, with the firm conviction that we belong to him; it is a "return to the origin", the foundation of greater meaning and spiritual certainty that we receive as a most precious gift every time we find ourselves in the heart of "eternal Moldova", which, like our Teacher, has blessed us with divine grace, according to each person's worthiness, of course.

How could we talk about our folk tradition without the totally exceptional interpretations that the Master has given us; what could we say about the divine spirit that runs through every story, riddle, song, if the Master had not travelled to the "land without borders and oblivion" of tradition?! Or what could be said about the history of our people without the most surprising and authentic restitutions contained in Lovinescu's writings? The wise men of ancient Greece called Truth *aletheia*, meaning "unforgettable" – our whole life becomes "unforgettable" after we meet Vasile Lovinescu. He taught us to "unforget" our faith, our tradition, the deep and lofty meaning of our lives.

But what we believe to be the highest apex, the peak lost in the heavens of thought, are his daily notes, written with the utmost rigour for almost three years (1965, 1966 and 1967) – these are the years when Vasile Lovinescu definitely decided on the most important "spiritual resort" he had reached and established, at least during that decisive period. The height and breadth of his spiritual experience cannot be specified for the simplest

possible reason: we do not have the level of inner realisation necessary for this type of assessment. But it would be totally unforgivable to ignore this part of his work, which, from our point of view, is of paramount importance and justifies the respect his posthumous personality enjoys, both at home and abroad, in circles capable of appreciating and admiring this extraordinary and unique "living spiritual biography".

This part of his work can be called *initiatory* in the true sense of the word; on the one hand, because it constitutes the indisputable testimony of our great predecessor's belonging to the authentic intellectual elite of everything that spirituality means in our traditional space as well as, in equal measure, to the truly universal. On the other hand, the profound purpose of his writings is to lead us towards a total, decisive spiritual and intellectual horizon, preparing us for the encounter with the Master of Nature, through living in Truth – that Truth which, once known, frees us forever from the darkness of death.

The way he is known abroad for his spiritual altitude and for the purpose and role he has played and continues to play is quite special; Lovinescu's text has two characteristics that are seemingly paradoxical, but to a discerning inner eye, everything is in a rigorous economy of spirit: it is, first and foremost, a text that is almost untranslatable into a European language, because the abundant nuances and the most refined subtleties are secreted by a Romanian language of impeccable style, traditional and universal at the same time, equally dazzling and rigorous; then, seemingly in contradiction to this, the universality of the message, of the content, is of a purity unprecedented in Romanian tradition, embracing the fundamental elementary structures of all traditions. We could say, directly, that a sure path with the guarantee of spiritual authority towards any authentic tradition, at least for us, starts from and necessarily passes through the written teachings of the Master. Hindu doctrine, of absolute metaphysical purity, the esoteric, initiatory doctrine of Islam, the finest nuances of Buddhist doctrine – of Mahayana or Zen origin – the deepest and highest aspects of Jewish Kabbalah, esoteric Christian doctrinal elements, etc. are all areas that Vasile Lovinescu addresses with

maximum relevance, revealing to us, as much as possible, its unique spiritual authority. This universal spirit, this total openness, beneficial, without prejudice or partisanship, without attitudes deliberately circumscribed by mentalities that claim to be authentic but only succeed in limiting their own horizon of understanding, is certainly the most precious legacy that the Master has left us and which we are duty-bound to bear witness to and pass on to others. Of course, what God has united, man is not allowed to separate, but also what God, in His boundless mercy and love, has created different, distinct, man is not allowed, in equal measure, to confuse, ignore or transform into a reason for division, for conflict; intolerance is hidden by a "tolerant attitude", and what is "tolerance" but a form of domination, a triple human inability: to know and respect what God has created as diversity; to love what God has created; to find oneself in the other, with intelligence and generosity – all of these. In fact, this is, among other things, the profound reason why V. Lovinescu kept such a "Front Diary"; the three volumes containing notes, testimonies of this unique struggle, are the surest proof that the Master's teaching is vital, essential for anyone aspiring to "spiritualisation", to "spiritual growth".

"Alchemical Diary" (Ed. European Institute, 1994), "Initiatory Notes" (Ed. Rosmarin, 1996) and "Meditations, Symbols and Rites" (Ed. Rosmarin, 1997) are *initiatory writings* not only for those who aspire to authentic spiritual realisation, but also for anyone who wishes to know what spiritual technique and initiatory ritual practice mean. Vasile Lovinescu's initiatory journal starts from a truth that man knows but does not truly understand, that is, he is not aware of it every moment: *being and knowing are the same thing*, so the vital act of human existence is fundamentally identified with the act of knowing. There are few spiritual texts that contain such a pure metaphysical perspective as Lovinescu's texts.

Personal experience has shown us countless times that Lovinescu's text is crucial for a clear, authentic intellectual perspective; from young people seeking a spiritual path to encounter God, to those who have already experienced trials of all kinds,

guided by a lofty aspiration beyond any doubt, all those who have listened to and believe in the words of the Lord Jesus: "You will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free!" are in dire need of the words of this incomparable Teacher. The words of the Gospel, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am also," have always taken on a certain degree of obvious, concrete reality through the orderly and applied readings of Vasile Lovinescu's writings. He is the Teacher whom the other Teacher, the divine one, has appointed for us in God's infinite mercy, out of the infinite, eternal love that the Master of Nature has for his creature.

We believe that there is no surer proof of the universal character of Lovinescu's work than his penetration into the essence of Romanian tradition – unique in its scope, content and aspiration – through the fundamental elements of other traditions; links established, identified and highlighted with the finest and most subtle intelligence, with an acute and special sense of enduring intellectual value. Almost every sentence is a "gateway" that opens the mind to the multiple facets of the unique and eternal Truth. For many of us, the world and life have gained meaning through direct contact or simply through the work of Vasile Lovinescu. The meaning of the annual commemoration of his passing goes far beyond that of a simple ceremony with cultural significance – it is, at least for some of us, equivalent to a confession of our faith, a cult through which we venerate the spiritual Master. In one of the Abrahamic traditions, the earthly passing of a spiritual master is commemorated annually and marked by visiting his grave – this day is called, in translation "birth" – this is also the meaning of the commemoration of Vasile Lovinescu, because not only for him was his departure from this world a passage to the other world, but for some of us, his presence in the world was a second birth.

PART II
MIHAIL / MICHEL VÂLSAN



MIHAIL / MICHEL VÂLSAN - BIOGRAPHICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Laurențiu HORODNIC

Mihail Vâlsan was born on 1 February 1907 in Brăila. "He is undoubtedly one of the most important figures of the 20th century, who wrote its history. "discreet", fundamental and exemplary from a traditional point of view, alongside his great mentor René Guénon and his illustrious friend Vasile Lovinescu" ¹.

Mihail M. Vâlsan definitively established Romania's contribution to the field of Islamic esoteric spiritual exegesis in Europe – and beyond – through his excellent and indisputable authority. Recognised as a leading voice by both European Sufi circles and Islamic circles everywhere, he stood out above all as the initiator of modern Akbarian studies. For him, Muhy-d-din ibn 'Arabi represents the highest authority in Sufi spirituality and, of course, in Islamic tradition," a description that belongs to Professor Teodoru Ghiondea.

Mihail Vâlsan edited the magazine *Etudes Traditionnelles* from 1961 until his death in 1974.

Although he published relatively little, this master can rightly be considered the chosen and qualified successor to Guénon's work. The authority conferred on Mihail Vâlsan by René Guénon during their intermittent correspondence between

¹ Teodoru Ghiondea, "The Universal Man - Islam and the Function of René Guénon", Mihail Vâlsan, translated by Teodoru Ghiondea, Herald Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010.

1940 and 1945, is in fact an investiture and clearly shows us the direction that this recovery action must take.

As a spiritual master, Mihail Vâlsan is known in Islam as Shaykh Mustafa Abd al-Aziz. The foundations of his spiritual direction lie in the work of the supreme master of Islamic esotericism, Shaykh al Akbar Muhy-d-din Ibn Arabi, whose intimate and direct knowledge he possessed.

After attending Nae Ionescu's courses on logic and metaphysics in his youth, becoming interested in the "Maglavit phenomenon" (1935) and informing Guénon about it, he arrived in Paris in 1936, where he came into contact with Sufi spirituality. then, in 1938, he took up the position of financial advisor to the Romanian Consulate.

Gradually, he abandoned all interest in public life and Romania. His ties with Switzerland were already close, having been initiated into the Alawite branch by Frithjof Schuon, from whom he eventually separated, becoming "independent" at the end of 1950.

Mihail Vâlsan was a great spiritual master, a true "teacher" of exceptional quality, distinguished by a spiritual practice of purity and rigour that transcends the power of understanding of any external exegesis. The group he formed and led for several decades has long established itself in the field of Sufi exegesis through impeccable translations of the works of the main masters of Sufi spirituality. We must also mention the continuation of doctrinal exegesis, at the same level of excellence, primarily through Charles-Andre Gilis.

The disciples continued the intellectual work of their master in the same vein and with the same results.

Vâlsan himself distinguished himself in this way, first as a collaborator, then as editor of the journal *Etudes Traditionnelles* (between 1960 and 1974): over fifty articles on topics closely related to the work and function of René Guénon, annotated translations – true and unique exegeses – of important Sufi writings (by exceptional authors: Ibn 'Arabi, al-Qashani, al-Qunawi and others), texts on various topics; also an introductory study of great importance

to René Guénon's posthumous volume: *The Fundamental Symbols of Sacred Science*.

The dimensions of Mihail Vâlsan's personality are, in reality, barely perceptible to those who are not familiar, to some extent, with the exceptional spiritual function he had in the economy of this cyclical moment in human history. Mihail Vâlsan is the most important example for the timely and adequate understanding of the relationship between doctrinal, authentic, powerful, sovereign truth and its action in the world" ².

The Work

The Function of René Guénon and the Fate of the West, 1951, p. 213 (July, August, September, October, November; nos. 293-294-295)

Islam and the Function of René Guénon, 1953, p. 14 (Jan.-Feb.; no. 305).

Christian Initiation (Response to Mr. Marco Pallis), 1965, p. 148 (May-June and July-Aug.; no. 389-390)

The Question of Christian Initiation: Clarification, 1968, p. 142 (March-April, May-June and July-August; nos. 406-407-408)

Etudes si Documents d' Hesychasme, 1968, p. 153 (March-April, May-June and July-August; nos. 406-407-408)

L'Oeuvre de Guénon en Orient, 1969, p. 32 (Jan.-Feb.; no. 411)

Les Livres (René Guénon, Le Symbolisme de la Croix, pocket edition: collection 10/18). 1971, p. 35 (Jan.-Feb.; no. 423)

Texts on Supreme Knowledge. (The Book of Instructions; The Question Posited by Ibn Sawdakin; Metaphysical Meaning of the Phrase "Allahu Akbar"), 1952, p. 125 (Apr.-May; no. 299); p. 182 (June; no. 300)

The Book of Extinction in Contemplation, 1961, p. 26 (Jan.-Feb.; no. 363); p. 89 (March-Apr.; no. 364); p. 144 (May-June; no. 365)

² Teodoru Ghiondea, *Omul universal - Islamul și funcțiunea lui René Guénon*, Mihail Vâlsan, translated by Teodoru Ghiondea, Herald Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010.

Une instruction sur les Rites fondamentaux de l'Islam, 1962, p. 23 (Jan.-Feb.; no. 369)

The Book of Instruction through the Indicative Formulas of Inspired People, p. 54 (March-April; no. 400); p. 113 (May-June; no. 401); p. 245 (Nov.-Dec.; no. 404); p. 73 (March-Apr., May-June and July-Aug.; nos. 406-407-408)

Le Coffre d'Heraclius et la tradition du "Tabut" adamique, p. 266 (Nov.-Dec.; no. 374); p. 37 (Jan.-Feb.; no. 375)

Le Triangle de l'Androgyne si le monosyllabe "Om"

The Universal Man - Islam and the Function of René Guénon, Mihail Vâlsan, translated by Teodoru Ghiondea, Herald Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010

VÂLSAN ON RENÉ GUÉNON AS A MASTER

Augustin IOAN

Michel Valsan, aka Mihail Vâlsan, aka Sheikh Mustafa Abd Al-Aziz (hereinafter referred to as MV) is presented in a ^{anthology}¹, translated by Mr Teodoru Ghiondea. It would have been nice to know more than the five and a half lines on the title page, from which we learn only that a) we are dealing with a collection of studies from *Etudes Traditionelles* (which the author, we learn from the Foreword, edited between 1961 and the year of his death, 1974); and b) that the posthumous volume *L'Islam et la fonction de René Guénon* (Paris, Les Editions de l'Oeuvre, 1984) was also consulted. Hence, probably, the identical subtitle of the Romanian edition. The fact that the posthumous volume consulted bore this name is very significant, because it is the very title of the 1953 study, eponymous, which became, in Romanian, chapter I and, it appears, is what directs the profound understanding of the magisterial relationship with RG: from a deeper perspective, this master-apprentice relationship is the ultimate meaning of Valsanian studies.

From the perspective of this volume, it is precisely the vein that I have been able to follow more closely. I am nothing more than a somewhat knowledgeable amateur in researching the work of RG, in whose present continuous I often find myself. From this perspective, I sought to read the book by his disciple MV, and not (only) for its intrinsic value. I am therefore interested in those

1 Michel Vâlsan *Omul Universal: Islamul și funcțiunea lui René Guénon (The Universal Man: Islam and the Function of René Guénon)*, Bucharest, Ed.Herald, Philosophia Perennis Collection (editors Florin Mihăescu and Teodoru Ghiondea), 2010.

aspects of Valsanian text that illuminate, even if only through reflection and refraction, aspects of Guénonian text. However, the texts of MV's disciple value the master's work *a rebours*, from its end and, more importantly, from its Islamic angle, which the two share. When MV writes, RG's work is complete. The body of work exists, it is final, nothing remains as potential in it, everything has been actualised. What remains for the disciple is to place it in the orbit of traditional studies where, he believes, it belongs, in its own heaven.

In this sense, we learn about RG's position in the chain of Islamic transmission of initiations, to whom he was, in turn, a disciple (Sheikh Elish El-Kabir), which are the polar coordinates of RG's work not only in relation to Islam in general, but also to the esoteric forms of other faiths. In other words, by reading this volume, we establish a much more sophisticated relationship with RG's own work. As long as we are inside it, we can – or cannot – grasp its boundaries. MV offers us a double perspective on his work:

1. *A landscape of its exteriority in its becoming* (kinships, or simple horizontal contaminations, but also genealogies in the Foucauldian sense, i.e. descents, real or assumed, meanings for and effects in the works that followed, effects which, we learn from the preface written by a disciple of MV himself, still exist and unfold); I offer here, for example, the example of a re-Islamisation of Guénon's work by his disciple, through its interpretation from the perspective of the ideological tutelage exercised, according to MV, by Sheikh Elish: it is a process analogous to that by which now, at the request of Pope Benedict XVI, we read the results of the reforming Second Vatican Council through the prism of the much more temperate First Vatican Council. From this re-Islamisation, RG's work emerges as both much more universal than we previously considered it to be, when we read him only as the Western (Westernising) re-initiator of the original Tradition, but also much more vertically centred in esoteric Islam than we believed or than we could ever truly understand in the absence of an initiation into Sufism.
2. *Case studies, specific*, relative/reactive to nodes in the tectonics of RG's work, which become important to disciples for reasons that are not obvious from reading only the master's writings.

I offer here the example of the andro-gin triangle, to which I will return, however, because I find it illuminating. In other words, by reading MV, we gain a deeper understanding of RG (and I use the phrase here in the sense given by Jean Luc Marillon, of a phenomenon saturated in relation to the sacred). In other words, by reading MV, we gain *a deeper understanding* of RG (and here I use the phrase in the sense given by Jean Luc Marillon, of a phenomenon saturated in relation to the sacred). Through the disciple's contribution, there is a surplus, an excess of meaning that certain articulations of the master's work acquire. This surplus is due to the interference with the biography of the master (RG) – disciple (MV) relationship, for example in the case of the androgynous triangle, to which the master draws attention in his private correspondence, or the successive recontextualisations subsequent to the writing of the original work (here, for example, the Islamic perspective on the cross, which came through the chain of RG's master (Sheikh Elish) → RG → RG's disciple (i.e. MV himself)².

The first chapter of the book is, as I said, one of the most important from the point of view articulated above, being more related to the subtitle than to the title of the collection. MV attempts to construct a line of argumentation regarding his master's work based on two essential criteria: 1. The orthodox character (of the identity of an esoteric spiritual tradition with) and 2. The universal character, because, as MV quotes (p. 9) from the spiritual masters of Islam, *the Doctrine of Unity is unique*, beyond the variations and particularities in adapting to the local realities of one or another of the traditions that verify criterion 1, because *there is no irreducible multiplicity in this regard. On the contrary, there is necessarily a principle of intelligibility of the whole, corresponding to the Wisdom that disposes of this multiplicity and diversity. But this principle can only be metaphysical* (p. 10). Thus, in this scheme, *René Guénon's doctrinal work refers to the truths with the highest degree of universality as well as to the symbolic rules and cyclical laws that determine their traditional adaptation* (p. 10).

2 "He (Elish El Kebir) is the author of the famous statement quoted (sic!) by René Guénon in chapter III (sic!) of his book *The Symbolism of the Cross* (1931):
 'If Christians have the sign of the cross, Muslims have its doctrine instead'.
 (M.V., p. 57)

However, RG practised this dual attachment (to doctrinal orthodoxy and universality) at a time when the West itself had forgotten them, hence the seemingly strange character of the work in the cultural landscape in which it was written. For the strangeness is not in the work itself, but in the amnesia of the environment. Hence the formal independence in relation to the various traditions about which RG writes, which stems from the fact that *RG wrote in a language of a civilisation that was completely different from those in which these doctrines are conveyed* (p. 11), a language in which a *work of conceptual and terminological synthesis* takes place (p. 11). In short, RG has streamlined traditional doctrine to make it intelligible to Westerners (not to everyone: *in fact*, writes MV, *he addresses intellectuals specifically*, p. 12), in such a synthetic and radical way that a person belonging to any of the traditional doctrines synthesised by RG would have difficulty understanding it in the target language (French), thus requiring a re-translation into the source language (Arabic, for example, in the case of Islam).

I did not choose the last example at random, since, according to MV, Islam is the closest reference point to Guénon's synthesis, *given that Islamic law offers, in a certain sense, more possibilities for a universal vision than all other traditions and, in any case, more than other religious forms* (p. 25). Translated into arrival language (here, Romanian), this means that, potentially, Islam is the most universal traditional language and is contained in nuce in the Koranic text. As an example, MV quotes from this Quranic text the passage according to which those who believe (Jews, Christians and Mazdeans are invoked) have nothing to fear and will not be punished (2:62 and 5:69).

MV seems to overlook the subtle nuance that makes Islam the end of the road, the culmination of revelation, in relation to which there is no doubt about its superiority. MV, for its part, seems to have no doubt in this regard when it writes that the Islamic legal basis is providentially disposed towards a very broad vision of traditional unity and universality, both in succession and in simultaneity (p. 26). But it is not the same thing to share revelation and not be punished for one's own revelation. Indeed, in the Qur'an there is a formula for contextualising the revelations of the peoples mentioned above. Of course, Islam is not talking about universality when it states that, for the time being, everyone should judge according to the law they have received, and that the error contained in this parochialism of revelation (some

have the Torah, others have the Gospel, while the members of *the umma* have the Qur'an, cf. 5:43 to 5:47) will be deciphered for each when they return to the Lord (5:48).

But what are the sins of this parochialism, according to MV's interpretation of the Islamic position? Christianity does not have a vision of succession (temporal) and simultaneity, because of the historicity that the unique presence of Christ induces in becoming, a uniqueness that thus excludes the Jews from salvation (*the actuality of salvation is suspended*, writes MV on pp. 26-7); the Jews themselves exclude all others, at least after the episode of Babel. However, in writing about the fundamental unity of traditional forms, RG merely actualises in Western language the vision of his master, Sheikh Elish El-Akbar, regarding the universality of Islam (*whose teaching could not, however, be as explicit as that of RG due to the reservations imposed by any particular traditional environment*, p. 29).

As a case study of this opinion, according to which Islam is the universal doctrine par excellence, both diachronically and synchronically, hence RG's (and later his disciples') attachment to it, MV offers us a case study on the symbolism of the cross, in which we also find a so-called cruciform definition of the universal man. In *The Prophet (identical to the Universal Man*, p. 31), a synthesis of all states of being is achieved according to the two meanings of "altitude" (exaltation) and "amplitude," which correspond to the two axes, vertical and horizontal. In this symbolic correspondence, RG sees the point of contact between Christianity and Islam, according to the teaching of his master, already mentioned above, according to which Christians have the sign and Muslims have the doctrine of the cross.

In fact, in this commentary by Sheikh Elish, MV believes that there is also an invitation to revive Western Freemasonry, which RG would have explained in a number of texts dedicated to symbolism and initiation in the Masonic variant (see pp. 32-3). In a similar sense, we also use the cross in a spatial sense when we talk about the horizontal as expansion and the vertical as the qualitative axis, the intensity of (existential) space, in the view of a phenomenologist such as Christian Norberg Schulz.

However, in this case study, almost everything mentioned above is verified: MV sees in his master's work an (exoteric) reawakening of the West through universalist doctrine, of

Islamic species, derived from the hidden, esoteric work of his master, Sheikh Elish El-Akbar (p. 33). This is what the post-Guénonian landscape looks like, according to MV: *The traditional idea, as we know it today in the West as a result of RG's work, thus has, from a historical point of view, a definite Islamic and Akbarian origin* (p. 42). However, MV further asserts that the Islamic connection is based on the essential and transcendent nature of the doctrine, in other words, *on the highest degree of traditional universality* (p. 42), the doctrine mediating between East and West. Moreover, through Islam, *any traditional earthly order* can be translated from one form to another (p. 42).

In other words, Guénon's work is, in MV's view, an intellectual synthesis of altitude, which translates, through the highest form of orthodoxy and universality, which is Islam, the traditional esoteric wisdom of the East to the exhausted West of his time.

I was, to add a personal note, disconnected from the above, attracted by MV's studies on "The Christic Science of Islam", "The Ideographic Symbol of the Universal Man" and "The Triangle of the Androgyne". They involve a combination of sacred geometry and symbolism. The cross, but also the point of intersection of its two sides, as well as its spatial meaning (St. Peter also being crucified, but upside down, to symbolically close the Christian crucifixion), and the equilateral triangle with its apex down contained within the equilateral triangle with its apex up) - with which I often have to work in sacred architecture projects.

To this graphic aspect of symbolism, RG and his disciple MV add a huge hermeneutic, derived from the letter notation of the corners of the two triangles. The androgynous sign on which RG invites his disciples to meditate and about which MV writes so diligently in the letter diagram on page 126 (A/VH/MAD) is, in the symbolism of sacred space, the mountain with the cave, the absence contained tangentially in/at presence, the feminine contained (embraced?) in the masculine, which emerges threefold from this graphic exercise. For, by adding, or rather extracting the cave from the mountain, we surround it with three mountains contained in the integrating mountain. On the contrary, by amplifying the downward-pointing triangle to equality with the upward-pointing one and superimposing them, we have the Star of David. However, about the mountain with

cave as a symbol with infinite multiplications of meaning, including spatial, in the field of architecture, Radu Drăgan has written much better than I could here in our book *Ființa și Spațiul* (Being and Space) (Bucharest, ALL Publishing House, 1992).

MIHAIL VÂLSAN – SPIRITUAL MASTER, CONTINUATOR OF RENÉ GUÉNON

H. RADU

EAn exposition with such a title, approached freely and without the pretence of exhausting the subject, thus falling within the definition of definition of *the essay* given in 1580 by Michel Montaigne, encountered difficulties in its elaboration, due to the few documentary sources available to us on the work of Michel Vâlsan, including that of *the great spiritual master, "teacher"* and continuator of the doctrinal exegesis founded by René Guénon.

The initiator of modern Western ^{Akbarian*} studies, Vâlsan remains the most authoritative European figure of the 20th century dedicated to Sufi spirituality and, of course, the Islamic tradition, thus contributing as a Romanian to the expansion of the field of "Islamic esoteric spiritual exegesis"¹, continued today by Charles-André Gilis, the preface writer of the volume *Michel Vâlsan: Omul Universal (Michel Vâlsan: The Universal Man)*, published in the *Philosophia Perennis* collection by Herald Publishing House.

Known in Islam as *Shaykh Mustafa Abd al-Aziz* (the enlightened Sheikh, servant of Allah – n.n.), Mihail Vâlsan is, on a spiritual level, a scholar and profound connoisseur of the Primordial Tradition, Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

**Shaych al-Akbar* (the Supreme Sheikh) is the one who revives the initiatory and indirect path of the Islamic tradition as a whole in the 7th century AD; Shaykh = spiritual leader, the highest prelate.

¹ Teodoru Ghiondea: *Mihail Vâlsan – bio-bibliographical note* in: Michel Vâlsan: *The Universal Man. Islam and the Function of René Guénon*, Herald Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, p. 219.

mism. At the same time, he stood out as a great scholar of the Royal Art, of Freemasonry, which he approaches in many respects in the spirit of Guénon, especially regarding the symbolism and high degrees of R.:S:..A:..A:..

Spiritual fulfilment, according to Vâlsan, is possible thanks to a multitude of initiatory paths, and *the optimal path (tariqah)* to be chosen is, in his opinion, the one that offers rigour, unambiguity and simplicity, that is, the path that will lead to Light and Truth, to revelation, to the knowledge of the divine, of the Architect of the Universe.

Through in-depth studies and important contacts with spiritual masters, subordinating his erudition to the cause of Light, Vâlsan becomes a comparativist of spirituality, an analyst who, forging traditions and their historical evolutions, discovers the influences, connections, inspirations and astonishing circulation from ancient times to the present day of symbols, language, mysteries, numerological meanings, astrological notions, etc., initiations, rites and ceremonies.

A few essential landmarks that define the unrivalled personality of Michel Vâlsan, the great spiritual master, without exception inspired by and "subordinate" to René Guénon, will, we hope, shed light on the erudition of this "guru" of Sufism, the pillar of Western Islamic metaphysics and esotericism of the 20th century.

On intellect and knowledge

Thanks to the valuable translation from French into Romanian by the illustrious contemporary master Florin Mihăescu, a prominent Guénonian exegete, and by another disciple, Teodoru Ghiondea, Michel Vâlsan's article entitled *Preliminary Considerations on Intellect and Knowledge*, published in the journal *Étude Traditionnelles*, no. 372-373/1962, reveals important considerations and pertinent analyses addressed by the author, as follows:

- The term *intellect*, under certain conditions, renders what is called *buddhi*, which is, in fact, nothing more than a creation of *Prakriti* –

² Teodoru Ghiondea: *Considerations on intellect and knowledge – Mihai Vâlsan*, in *Adevărul literar și artistic*, no. 81, 25 March 2006, Bucharest.

the first of the substantial principles of the cosmos that Guénon described as *pure* or *superior intellect, transcendent, universal*. *Buddhi* most often appears as a simple modality of the inner sense. In this way, *buddhi* is both "the immediate receptacle of the reflection of the main Light and, through this, the dwelling place of the inner Self" and "the author of existential determinations and of the apparent identifications of the Self with these determinations." The Western term *intellect*, like its equivalent *spirit*, has been used through an analogical transposition of notions that we might call normal, on the level of the First Being. There is a *divine intellect* that is identified with *the Word*, with *the Logos*.

The role of these notions helps us understand Guénon's metaphysical teaching, inspired by the East, which was forced to use and adapt the doctrinal means of Aristotelian intellectualism, which ignored the Semitic notion of Creation, and therefore of *the created intellect*. Metaphysical truths cannot be conceived, Guénon asserts, without intellectual intuition, which is also the means of knowledge;

- The word *consciousness*, like *reason*, can be universalised.

"through a purely analogical transposition, and transposition is only possible if it is limited to *Being*. Even with this restriction, consciousness thus transposed is in no way understood...". It is nothing more than "the special mode of a contingent and relative consciousness".

"And if it can be said that it is a 'reason for being' for a certain state, this is only to the extent that it is a participation, by refraction, in the nature of this universal and transcendent intellect which is, itself, ultimately... the supreme 'reason for being' of any thing," Michel Vâlsan assures us.

About Hesychasm

- Some of Vâlsan's concerns were studies and documentary sources on *Hesychasm*. Thanks to the translation into Romanian of his comments (see *Études Traditionnelles*, nos. 389-390/1965) in *Caiete Silvane*, we have concluded the following:

³Michel Vâlsan: *Studies and documents on Hesychasm* (translation: Daniel Hoblea) in: *Caiete Silvane*, 12 August 2010, Sălaj.

✓ Theologian Andrei Scrima (1930-2001), who settled in the West in 1956, former representative of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to the Vatican, author of *Timpul rugului aprins* (The Time of the Burning Bush) and *Despre isihasm* (On Hesychasm), "spiritual master in the Eastern tradition", through his writings provides the scholar Mihail Vâlsan with an opportunity for in-depth analysis and commentary on the Greek-Eastern Orthodox phenomenon of Hesychasm.

Vâlsan's concern was the existence of Christian esotericism, its affinity, if not equivalence, with Far Eastern spiritual techniques, and the clarification of a difference between Hesychasm and Western mysticism.

✓ Vâlsan notes, first of all, that in the case of Hesychasm, there is an indisputable traditional transmission;

✓ He observes that spiritual life was conceived in the Eastern Church as a living transmission, a *paradosis* (tradition – n.n.) that "vehiculates the Spirit incarnate in history." The breath of the same Holy Spirit ignites the fire of the Prayer of the Heart and keeps it alive in the Church, in interiority, ..., but, precisely for this reason, it does not allow any esoteric depreciation (sic!) ... of spiritual life realised in other forms." "We specify," says Vâlsan, "that if a mystery is not a secret, this is especially true in the case of the Christian mystery, which continues the very condition of God incarnate..."

We find ourselves, essentially, in a different universe from that of esoteric doctrine, which protects its universal truth through secret initiation... The distinction, itself external, between esoteric and exoteric, is meaningless here, because it is no longer a question of a hidden continuity of a sacred past that denies sacred time, but of a continuity of Presence, in every creative and inspiring moment, one might say of a contemporaneity of the Spirit. From an initiatory point of view, Vâlsan points out that in the case of Hesychasm, the notion of *tradition* and the meaning of the term *paradosis* must be retained. The spirit of integral tradition must not be dissociated, says Andrei Scrima, an idea agreed upon by Vâlsan, to which he adds "the organic cohesion of the Hesychast tradition with the tradition of the Church". If "*Hesychast, Kabbalistic* or *muta awwif** initiation into Islam's *Din*** in its specific way, which involves spiritual influence, discipline and a corresponding working method, attains the higher degrees of being,

* *muta awwif* = in Arabic: follower of the pure faith.

** *Din* = in Hebrew means *judgment* (see Kabbalah).

there is for it sanctification, transcendence, intuitive openness and access to mysteries that cannot be understood by others, nor divulged recklessly, in which case the differentiation from psychics and hylics will occur by force of circumstance even if they, whether out of charity or simple prudence, are not expressly designated as such. as such.

The problem of Hesychasm, says Vâlsan, is related to the notion of *arcanum* (mystery, secret, hidden place – n.n.) or "*arcanum* can mean many things, just like the expression 'initiatory secret' studied by Guénon: the 'essential secret', which is ineffable, the secondary secrets established by sacred institutions or spiritual discipline, ...the secrets of traditional sciences and arts, the secrets of rites and symbols, the secrets of means of recognition, etc.

Vâlsan, in his analysis, claims that Hesychasm is an esoteric issue and, as such, there is a *Hesychastic initiation*, Hesychasm representing a tradition contained within Tradition. He then adds that in Andrei Scrima's books, "the conditions for access to *the path (tariqah)* are not defined either, and the mention of prior preparation and precautions is not followed by instructive explanations."

Despite all the criticisms made from Guénonian positions, Vâlsan notes in the practice of Hesychasm: "the spiritual value of the breathing technique, the question of the Eastern origin of this technique, etc., points of particular interest in characterising Hesychasm as an initiatory path". Michel Vâlsan also expresses his satisfaction at having found "in Mr. Scrima's writings some data particularly useful for doctrinal investigations."

Hesychasm (in Greek: hesychasm = silence, stillness) appears in Christianity due to the dispute between St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) and the Western monk Vaarlam. "It is, first and foremost, an initiatory path to perfection, the eye of the heart being the spiritual instrument through which divine knowledge is achieved, and *the Prayer of the Heart* being the means of awakening the eye. The unceasing prayer *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!* is accompanied by a breathing technique also known in the ^{Hindu} tradition."

⁴Mircea Tomuș: *The Wrath of the Gods (breviary of ideas)*, Google ("Project René Guénon"), 2009.

The esoteric meaning of the sign of the cross: Christian and Islamic references

We note from René Guénon's account in his book *The Symbolism of the Cross* that the master who initiated him, the Egyptian Sheikh *Elish al-Kabir al-Alim* (the Supreme Faithful Sheikh, the greatest Teacher – n.n.), stated in 1931 that *if Christians possess the sign of the cross, Muslims possess its doctrine*. The realisation of *the Universal Man*, in harmony with the totality of the states of being, in the development in two senses – *breadth* through inner prayer and *exaltation* through gestures, spoken words, etc. – all these give the esoteric meaning of the sign of the cross, "symbol of this double development of being, *horizontally*, in breadth, and *vertically* in the hierarchy of multiple states. Guénon, however, does not refer in his published studies to Islamic sources related to *the Universal Man* and the notions of *breadth* and *exaltation*. What Vâlsan notes is related to the Seven Steps of Universal Existence: (1) *the inexpressible*; (2) *the first designation* (i.e., God's consciousness of His attributes and of all beings created in a general way, i.e., Muhammadian reality); (3) *the second designation* (God's awareness of His guidance, His attributes, and created beings in a distinctive and analytical manner); (4) *spirits* or *the world of pure spirits*, i.e. abstract creatures; (5) *the world of prime forms*, i.e. subtle but composite, invisible creatures; (6) *the world of bodies* that we can divide without changing their nature; (7) *the universal level* that encompasses levels (2) to (6) and which is *MAN*. With the exception of the first plane (the first level), which is that of *non-manifestation*, Vâlsan asserts that the other six encompass the entire manifestation or *expansion*, and if man on the seventh level "rises to the sublime, when the other (five) 'planes' arise in him in perfect development, he is *the Universal Man*."

Analysing the terms *amploare* (*amplitude*) and *exaltare* (*exaltation*) as an Arabist, Vâlsan notes that the former means *extension*, while the latter means *ascent*, *climb*, terms that do not designate the shape and size of the cross, but rather the tendencies and meanings of movement that can be considered symbolic axes of these dimensions. Insofar as they designate phases of initiatic realisation

, they correspond to the two parts of *the Prophet's Night Journey*, a symbol of the initiatory journey: the first, Muhammad's *Night Journey* (Ascension to Heaven) from Mecca to Jerusalem, corresponding to the horizontal dimension of the cross, and the second, celestial, *the Middle of Ascension*, the *Ladder*, corresponding to the vertical dimension, reaching *the Lord of Almighty Glory*. Master Vâlsan achieves a similar symbolism from a geometric point of view through the words *length* and *width*. In such a symbolic construction, the two dimensions apply, the first to the higher world or purely spiritual nature, and the second to the lower and formal world.

In Vâlsan's view, this conception of the axial dimensions of universal existence is a characteristic of the science of Muslim initiates, whose prophetic figure is *Aissa (Jesus)* – in Romanian: *the Saviour*. This initiatory science is called *the science of Aissa* or *the Science of Letters*, the transcendent letters giving rise to *the divine Words* and *the Names of things*. This science is also that of *the breath of life* through which Jesus raised the dead.

The theological meaning of the cross has its origin in the events that took place on Golgotha. From *the New Testament* we learn about *the deeds of Saint Peter*, which are consistent with those found in Islam. When the Apostle Peter was crucified in Rome, he asked his executioners to crucify him upside down, in other words, the opposite of what happened to Jesus Christ, in order to suggest, with wisdom and mindfulness, "the mystery of all nature and which was the beginning of everything." With his head down, man dies, so "here is the image of the man who is born first." Jesus was crucified with his head up, representing innocence, and the Apostle Peter, with his head down, representing the guilt of humanity. The relationship between the positions of the two crucifixions, Michel Vâlsan shows us, is that of the two triangles of *the Seal of Solomon (Star of David)*. According to Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas, the triangle with its tip pointing upwards represents Divinity, and the one with its tip pointing downwards represents human nature. Their union through superimposition signifies the two natures in Islamic esotericism: *Lahut* and *Nasut* (in Arabic: right, correct – a human characteristic given to Jesus by St. Mary).

Aspects of Masonic symbolism

● A great spiritual master, Mihail Vâlsan had a deep interest in deciphering Masonic symbolism and tradition, following in the footsteps of his master René Guénon. In *Omni Universal* (The Universal Man, Chapter I), Vâlsan shows that *Shaikh Elish al-Kabir al-Alim* (translation: The Greatest Sheikh; al-Kabir = The Greatest; al-Ali = Teacher), who initiated Guénon into Islam, was well acquainted with Freemasonry and its initiatory symbolism. In his correspondence with Vâlsan, Guénon wrote that Sheikh Elish "explained the connection between the letters [which form in their spelling] the name of God" (of Allah – n.n.), through their form, and the Masonic symbols of *the ruler, compass, square and triangle*. Thus, in *Kufic* Arabic script, rounded shapes are replaced by right angles, so that the letter *Lam* (from Allah – n.n.) appears as an inverted **L**, in other words a square, and the letter **H** (also from Allah) appears as an upward-pointing triangle. The ruler is described by the letter **A**, and the compass is represented by a circle, while the square and triangle are represented by an inverted **L** and a triangular **H**. In Vâlsan's opinion, Sheikh Elish's statements could have had "a connection with one of the possible ways of reviving (revitalising – n.n.) Freemasonry.

Guénon, the great disciple of Sheikh Elish, devoted a large number of articles to Masonic symbolism and initiatory doctrine, thus contributing, through an intellectual and universal work, at the heart of which he placed Islam. Those who understood Guénon's work, Vâlsan concludes, "the spiritual forces of the East offered providential help to the West in view of a traditional recovery that concerns humanity as a whole."

● In traditions of Semitic origin, the term *Amin* (*Amen*) is used to designate affirmation, confirmation and (firm!) attachment to a religious, esoteric, etc. assertion. to reinforce a hope or desire and especially to confirm a blessing, an oath or a prayer that has just been uttered.

The word only gained lasting importance in synagogue liturgy (in Judaism - n.n.) during the time of the Second Temple.

Muslims borrowed it from the service intoned by the Levites and from the later prayers and blessings of the Jewish cult.

"Because it serves to confirm a previous word," says Vâlsan, "*Amin* also expresses a desire to swear or make a commitment and means '*so be it!*', '*let it be so!*', '*may it be so!*'. The latter expression, as is well known, is an adverbial expression used in Freemasonry. Vâlsan reports that René Guénon treated the issue of the correspondence of the term *Amin* with a legendary Masonic symbolism. He pointed out that in most manuscripts of the *Old Charges*, the name of the architect of Solomon's Temple was not *Hiram*, but "either *Amon* or any other form that seemed to be nothing more than a transformation of it." Guénon also noted that *Amon* in Hebrew "has the meaning of craftsman and architect, and we may wonder whether a common noun was taken as a proper noun or whether, on the contrary, this designation given to architects was first [in ancient times] the name of the one who built the Temple. In any case, ... its root, from which the word *Amen* is also derived, expresses in Hebrew, as in Arabic, the ideas of firmness, constancy, fidelity, and truth, which fit very well with the character attributed by Masonic legend to the *Third Grand Master*." In fact, according to *the Prophet's* biography, Vâlsan argues, there is a very clear connection between the designation of *al-Amin* (translation: master – n.n.) and the role of Master Architect in relation to the primordial Temple in Mecca.

- In 1953, the Grand Spiritual Master Mihail Vâlsan addressed the symbolism of the 33° of R.:S.:A.:A.: He was particularly concerned with the issue of initiation, including the ceremony, in degrees higher than the 33rd degree, as the highest knightly degree of Freemasonry, and in whose symbolism *the mystical ladder* appears, the mission of the Kadosh knight being to restore man's powers and dignity, to make possible the likeness between *Creation-Man* and *Creator*, in His image and likeness.

Vâlsan was interested in explaining the ritual and ceremonial forms of initiation into degrees higher than the 30th degree, because, he says, "the external form appears to be in contradiction with the 'inner' character in the descending phase of realisation. This initiatory phase

initiatory phase, Vâlsan points out, presupposes the effective attainment of *the Supreme Identity* and, on the other hand, in the case of a *wali* (disciple – n.n.), requires a specific act of theophany (revelation, incarnation, manifestation of divinity before the profane – n.n.), which places the event of this initiation at the level of the divine itself.

For explanations and insights into Islamic esotericism, Vâlsan refers to *the Revelations of Mecca* by *Shayk al-Akbar* during his pilgrimage (from 598/1198 to 600/1201), when he gained access to *the Supreme Centre of the Primordial and Universal Tradition*, which he also calls *the Sublime Assembly*. Here and then, the master *al-Akbar* receives the investiture of *Heir to the Muhammadian Station*, in other words, it is about the function of this master in his relationship with *the Centre of Universal Tradition* and not only with the particular centre of historical Islam. In this way, we can see the nature of the "investiture ceremony" in relation to what Vâlsan considered to be *initiation* into descending realisation. The description of these transcendent events, Vâlsan notes, allows us to observe the existence of symbolic elements to which we can attach part of the Masonic symbolism of the degrees higher than that of Knight Kadosh.

Conclusions

The exceptional quality of his prodigious writings and esoteric thinking as a great spiritual master and *teacher* – a master who became known as a practitioner of rigour and purity beyond the possible – attracted the group he shepherded to such an extent that they described him, as Teodoru Ghiondea⁵ – as the foremost Sufi exegete of the West. His disciples continued *his path*, and Mihail Vâlsan's posterity is also prodigious through the continuity of his unrivalled work by his eldest son from his second marriage, *Muhammad Vâlsan*, who lives in Saint Nicolas les Cîteaux, where the remains of the Grand Master were brought and where his family publishes *Science Sacrée*.

⁵ *Idem* 2.

'S GOLDEN CHAIN

Mircea ARNĂUTU

"In modern civilisation, the sacred is merely tolerated, because it cannot be abolished in one fell swoop. Awaiting the complete realisation of this 'ideal', the sacred occupies an increasingly reduced place, being increasingly isolated from the rest by an insurmountable barrier."

René Guénon -
Initiation and
Spiritual Realisation

Every true Master must exercise his function in accordance with a specific tradition. When he does not, we are dealing with one of the most easily recognisable signs of a false Master, who may not be acting in bad faith, but who is deluded by ignorance regarding the real conditions of initiation.

But the long line of Masters who have marked human history can be compared to a chain that comes from humanity's distant past, pierces the present and will certainly continue into the future, the links of this infinite chain being formed by people who have contributed, contribute and will contribute to its construction, the most significant link perhaps being that formed by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Alexander the Great.

We will now analyse three links in this chain, three true Masters devoted to the Islamic tradition, pieces of this infinite chain which, fitting together perfectly, cover the entire last

century of European Sufi history. The links in this initiatory chain are: René Guénon, Mihai Vâlsan, Muhammad Vâlsan.

René Guénon

René Guénon was born on 15 November 1886, in Blois, on the left bank of the Loire. In 1904, he came to Paris and enrolled at the Rollin College as a mathematics student. By 1908, Guénon was already involved in attending all the occult "schools" of the time. Initiated into Freemasonry, into the Martinist Order¹, and a student of Papus' Hermetic School, he became a well-known figure in the esoteric movement of the time. In that same year, 1908, the Renewed Order of the Temple was founded, and René Guénon became its head. Through this Order, Guénon attempted, following a less orthodox path, to influence Western mentality; unfortunately, the attempt proved unsuccessful and two years later René Guénon dissolved the Order of the Temple.

In 1909, René Guénon became a member of the Gnostic Church, under the name Palingenius. The period 1908-1912 is very enigmatic. During this period, the Superiores Incogniti² invested René

¹Martinism had two inspirers who created two schools with completely different techniques. The first was Jean Baptiste Willermoz, a direct disciple of Martinez, who created the Order of the Beneficent Knights of the Holy City of Jerusalem by modifying the Masonic Order of Strict Templar Observance. The technique followed was mainly ritualistic and operative Masonic. The second was Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, also one of Martinez's direct disciples, who also abandoned operative techniques in order to distance himself from any Masonic-type rituals and to practise the so-called "path of the heart", with a mystical-philosophical aspect, surprisingly close to Orthodox Hesychasm.

²According to the esoteric tradition cultivated by René Guénon, the destinies of humanity are monitored by an elite group of great initiates, known as the Superiores Incogniti, who act as mediators between the visible world and the "Great Souls" (Mahatmas) of the cosmic Masters, and who, during cyclical periods of decline in the spiritual life of humanity, would withdraw from the visible world into a world hidden from the profane. This initiatory centre, invisible during the Kali Yuga period, is, as René Guénon emphasises

Guénon, the function of restoring the primordial Tradition in the West, more precisely, the role of transmitter and interpreter of absolute truths, with a view to changing the Western mentality. However absurd this reference to the Superiores Incogniti may seem to the modern reader, when properly understood, it explains Guénon's function. Guénon will fulfil this function of transmitter until his disappearance from the physical world. Between 1909 and 1912, Guénon's metaphysical achievement (at least in theory) was a *fait accompli*, as evidenced by the articles he wrote at the time, which foreshadowed his later books. Because his initiation was a "universal" one, Guénon

"particularised" it, becoming initiated into Hinduism, Daoism and Freemasonry. And in 1911-1912, René Guénon attached himself to the Islamic tradition, taking the name "servant of the One", Abdel Wahed Yahia.

Although his work, as a spiritual core but also as a discursive exposition, was already established, it was only after ten years that René Guénon began to publish his books. The First World War prevented him from manifesting himself more quickly, and it was not until 1921 that his first book, on the Hindu tradition, appeared. In the following decade, he published all his fundamental writings and also became the "heart" and "intellect" of the magazine *Etudes Traditionnelles*.

On the other hand, he became increasingly convinced that his work in the West would not succeed in converting its mentality to Tradition and the Sacred; therefore, on 5 March 1930, after the death of his wife, he left France for good, settling for the rest of his life in Cairo, Egypt. From that moment on, he adopted all Muslim rites and customs, without abandoning his universal function. In 1934, he married Fatima, the eldest daughter of Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim. They had four children, two girls and two boys, the last born after Guénon's death. Although a "hermit" in Egypt, Guénon continued to exert a peremptory influence on the West. The monthly articles that appeared in "*Etudes Traditionnelles*", his astonishingly extensive correspondence and the books he wrote during the Second World War repeatedly

repeatedly, the true spiritual centre of the world, known to initiates as *Agartha* ("invisible", "imperceptible" in Sanskrit) - René Guénon - King of the World.

wove his work. At his desk in his study in Cairo, Guénon patiently read all the books sent to him for review, all the letters he received from various correspondents, no matter how inept these books and letters might have been. And with the patience of a Master, he replied to everyone.

Although he stated emphatically that he did not accept disciples, René Guénon influenced many through his work. His most valuable collaborator, the one who changed his entire life and work because of Guénon, was Ananda Coomaraswamy. His writings are, after Guénon's, the most powerful and sincere in the traditional field, those that can be taken as a reference without hesitation.

But Guénon placed his greatest hope (from an initiatory point of view) in Frithjof Schuon. Unfortunately, in the end, it was only a great disappointment, because, probably insufficiently well evaluated, the disciple renounced his master.

A German philosopher and metaphysician, Frithjof Schuon was a representative figure of the "Traditional School". This school of thought was formed around the main ideas of René Guénon. Schuon is the author of numerous books on religion and spirituality. Although he was not officially affiliated with the academic world, his writings were published in scientific and philosophical journals. One of Schuon's main characteristics is his criticism of the relativism of the modern academic world. In his works, he expressed his belief in an Absolute Principle, from which all the great Revelations that constitute the link between this Absolute Principle and humanity originate. The transcendent unity of all religions is to be found in a Wisdom

³ Ananda Coomaraswamy Kentish (22 August 1877, Colombo, Ceylon – 9 September 1947, Needham, Massachusetts) was a philosopher and metaphysician. In particular, he is described as "an innovative theorist who was largely responsible for introducing ancient Indian art to the West". Together with René Guénon, Coomaraswamy is considered one of the three founders of Perennialism, also known as the Traditionalist School. Several articles by Coomaraswamy on Hinduism and Perennial Philosophy were published posthumously in the quarterly journal *Comparative Religion*, alongside articles by Schuon and Guénon. He built a bridge between East and West, which was designed to be a two-way street.

Primordial Wisdom, the various spiritual traditions being nothing more than particularisations of this essentially unique doctrine of non-human origin.

Frithjof Schuon was born in Basel (Switzerland) on 18 June 1907 to parents of German and Alsatian origin. In his youth, he settled in Paris, where he worked as a textile designer. A Gnostic and mystic by nature, he studied all religions in depth, including Christianity and Islam. A follower of René Guénon, he travelled to Cairo in 1938 and 1939 to further his knowledge. After the Second World War, Schuon lived in Lausanne and undertook several trips to North America to meet with the Plains Indians, to Morocco and to several European countries. His works include over twenty books translated into many languages. He developed and expressed at length the theme of

"The Transcendent Unity of Religions." His lesser-known paintings and poems reveal the richness of the author's personality.

In 1980, Frithjof Schuon retired to Bloomington (USA), where he died on 5 May 1998.

Settling in the United States, Frithjof Schuon founded and became the head of a religious cult centred in Bloomington, Indiana. Among his disciples were Huston Smith, Joseph Epes Brown, Hossein Nasr and Rama Coomaraswamy. He appears to have had four wives: Catherine Schuon, Barbara Perry, Sharlyn Romaine, and Maude Murray.

⁴ Huston Cummings Smith (born 31 May 1919 in Suzhou, China) was a scholar specialising in religious studies. His book *The World's Religions* (originally titled *Religions of Man*) has sold over two million copies and remains a fundamental work in the comparative study of religions.

⁵ Joseph Epes Brown (9 September 1920 – 19 September 2000) was an American scholar who devoted his life to studying Native Americans and their traditions. His most important work was entitled *The Sacred Pipe*, based on his discussions with the Lakota holy man Black Elk about the religious rituals of their people.

⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr (born 7 April 1933 in Tehran), an Iranian scholar, professor of Islamic studies at George Washington University and prominent Islamic philosopher, is the author of numerous books and scientific articles. He is considered a renowned Persian philosopher and scholar in the field of comparative religion, a student and follower of Frithjof Schuon, and a writer in the fields of Islamic esotericism, Sufism, philosophy of science, and metaphysics.

On 11 October 1991, Frithjof Schuon was charged with molestation. He was also accused of abusing children, subjecting them to delusional actions based on spiritual origins and sexual fantasies, within a system of mind control and cult pressure, actions in which the parents of the abused children were also involved. The criminal action was considered primarily a crime of exploitation and abuse of power, which used sex as a pretext. The primordial gatherings were not directly related to sex, but Schuon's philosophy and the cult he created were based on sexuality to embody his beliefs.

The Grand Jury found that there was insufficient evidence to convict Schuon in 1991.

His departure from Guénon's teachings was mainly due to the fact that the first part of Schuon's life was quite painful. He had to continue his work in precarious financial conditions, at least until the mid-1950s, when he gained a degree of financial independence thanks to his disciples, not from book sales.

Having converted to Islam, he established an "initiatory path" for Europe. This path was followed by the Romanians Mihai Vâlsan and Vasile Lovinescu, who, unlike Schuon, remained devoted to their Great Master, René Guénon, until their deaths.

On Guénon's advice, Vasile Lovinescu left for France. On the way, he met Titus Burckhardt in Basel and in March 1936 he was initiated into Sufism in Amiens. His spiritual master became Frithjof Schuon.

Among other well-known "disciples," we will mention Titus Burckhardt ⁷ and Martin Lings ⁸. Mihai Vâlsan became, after the death of

⁷ Titus Burckhardt - a renowned exponent of the traditionalist school (*philosophia perennis*) initiated by René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon, a profound connoisseur of Islamic art and civilisation, a German-speaking Swiss, was born in 1908 in Florence into a family with strong artistic traditions (he was the grandson of the famous art historian Jacob Burckhardt, and his father was a sculptor).

⁸ Martin Lings - (also known as Abu Bakr Siraj Ad-Din) (24 January 1909-12 May 2005) was a Muslim writer and scholar of

Guénon, editor-in-chief of the magazine "Etudes Traditionnelles" and began publishing his posthumous work.

After intense physical suffering, René Guénon left the physical world on 7 January 1951. His body was laid to rest in his wife's family mausoleum.

Mihail / Michel Vâlsan

Mihail / Michel Vâlsan was born in Brăila on 1 February 1907 and died on 25/26 November 1974 in Antony, France.

It is noteworthy that Aleksandr Dughin⁹ noted that Romania gave the world, especially in the 20th century, a whole host of world-class geniuses: Nae Ionescu, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Eugen Ionescu, Ștefan Lupașcu, Jean Pârvulescu, Vasile Lovinescu, Mihail Vâlsan and many others.

Although a small country in Eastern Europe, Romania has made a significant intellectual contribution to civilisation, comparable to that of the large European nations, almost surpassing them. This characteristic of Romanian intellectualism reflects the spirit of European thought, inextricably linked to the spirit of tradition, with its origins, roots and tendencies in Antiquity, as well as in the eternal European Orthodox East, which has remained unchanged.

An enigmatic figure spiritually related to Vasile Lovinescu, the name Mihai Vâlsan means almost nothing to Romanians today, being known only to a small circle of people.

English, student and follower of Frithjof Schuon. He is best known as the author of a very popular biography, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, first published in 1983.

⁹ Aleksandr Gelievici Dughin (born 7 January 1962), Russian philosopher (Doctor of Philosophy, founder of neo-Eurasianism), political scientist (Doctor of Political Science), publicist, professor at the Faculty of Sociology of Moscow State University, director of the Centre for Conservative Studies at Moscow State University, leader of the International Eurasia Movement (MED), speaker of nine foreign languages, Old Calendar Orthodox Christian.

Regrettably, he is one of the great spiritual masters that this earth has produced, a personality who played a leading role in the movement that coalesced around René Guénon, whose disciple he became in the 1930s, and later received initiation into Sufism from Frithjof Schuon, an author also connected to Vasile Lovinescu.

Perhaps this is because initiates, especially those belonging to the highest orders, conceal themselves among people in such a way that they are indistinguishable from an external point of view.

After attending Nae Ionescu's logic and metaphysics classes in his youth¹⁰, interested in the "Maglavit phenomenon" (1935) and informing René Guénon about it, Mihai Vâlsan arrived in Paris in 1936, where he came into contact with Sufi spirituality, starting from what we might call a general interest in esotericism during that period. He returned to the French capital in 1938, taking up the position of financial advisor to the Romanian Consulate. Very soon, he would abandon all concerns related to political and economic life, as well as Romania. His ties with Switzerland were already strong, having been initiated into the Alawite branch by Frithjof Schuon, from whom he separated definitively, becoming independent at the end of 1950.

Nicolae C. Ionescu (better known as Nae Ionescu) (born 16 June 1890 - died 15 March 1940) was a Romanian philosopher, logician, educator and journalist. His philosophical orientation was called *trăirism*. He knew how to gather around him and elevate a plethora of members of the interwar golden generation of Romanian literature and thought, such as Mircea Eliade, Mircea Vulcănescu, Mihail Sebastian, Emil Cioran, Vasile Moisescu, George Murnu, etc.

¹¹ The Alawite group, which incorporates doctrines from other religions, particularly Christianity, emerged from a schism within the Ismaili group. The Alawites appear to be descendants of a population that lived in these regions (present-day Syria and Lebanon) since the time of Alexander the Great. After several centuries of Ismaili influence, the Alawites became closer to Islam. However, contact with Byzantium and the Crusaders added elements and practices from Christianity to the Alawite religious doctrine: Christmas, Easter and Epiphany.

In the West, it is very difficult to find an authentic initiatory organisation and even more difficult to find a truly qualified instructor, a Master. Mihai Vâlsan is a happy exception due to the influence he had on René Guénon, one of the great personalities of the 20th century. regardless of one's position on the doctrine he promoted, he left no thinker attracted to spiritual tradition indifferent.

Only today is René Guénon being reconsidered and studied, including in academia (at least through the prism of the history of ideas). There were two Romanian Guénonists of European stature, contemporaries of the master: Vasile Lovinescu and Mihail (Michel) Vâlsan – both highly regarded today, regardless of the meridian on which the circles passionate about Tradition are located.

A follower and continuator of his, Vâlsan considered Hinduism, Taoism and Islam to be "the three main forms of the traditional world present, representing the Middle East, the Far East and the Near East as reflections of the three aspects of the Great Architect of the Universe".

As for his connection with Freemasonry, it is worth mentioning the article in which Ovidiu Pecican¹²stated: "No, I do not believe that the young philosophers around Mr. Liiceanu are Freemasons, Rosicrucians or Guénonists of Islamic affiliation (as, in Romania, we had Vasile Lovinescu or Mihai Vâlsan)." ¹³

He was clearly one of the most important figures of the 20th century who wrote its discreet or perhaps secret history, fundamental and exemplary from a traditional point of view, alongside his great Master René Guénon and his friend Vasile Lovinescu.

¹² Ovidiu Pecican graduated from the Faculty of History and Philosophy at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj (1985). He obtained his PhD in history in 1998. He is currently a professor at the Faculty of European Studies and a researcher at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj.

Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj. In 2008, he was appointed national ambassador for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

¹³ *Adevărul literar și artistic*, No. 811 / Saturday, 25 March 2006.

As for the discretion with which he has carried out his entire activity, it supports his belonging, because the initiates who occupy the highest positions in the spiritual hierarchy do not take part in the events that take place in this world, because, first of all, such an action would be incompatible with their position. If they keep themselves apart from any "worldly" distinction, it is because they know its lack of value. But it can be said that if they consent to come out of obscurity, the exterior no longer corresponds to the interior.

The Chain of Masters intertwines the link of René Guénon with a new link, Mihai Vâlsan, doubled on the same plane by Vasile Lovinescu. It is a sovereign triad for everything that authentic spirituality means, part of the golden age of the 1930s.

It is interesting to note that Mihai Vâlsan spent the most prolific period of his life in Western Europe, while his contemporary Vasile Lovinescu was in Eastern Europe, with the spirituality of René Guénon covering the entire continent through the two of them.

He believed that the only remedy for the so-called modern world in which he lived could come only from above, that is, from a restoration of pure intellectualism, and that as long as attempts were made to remedy the situation at the lowest levels, everything that was done would be useless.

For his contemporaries, caught up in modern life, the world had lost all "transparency," because they no longer saw anything that was a sign or expression of higher truths, and even if they were told about this inner meaning of things, not only did they not understand, but they immediately began to wonder what their fellow human beings might think if they happened to admit such a point of view.

Aware that when a people has been diverted from performing traditional rites, it is still possible for them to feel what they are missing and to try to return to what they have lost, but, in order to be prevented from doing so, they will be given "pseudo-rituals," and this simulation of rituals is sometimes taken so far that it is not at all difficult to recognise the formal and barely disguised intention to establish a "counter-tradition." He embraced the Islamic tradition, considering, like his master René Guénon, that Eastern doctrines are the only ones capable of awakening in the West the forces capable of opposing its continuous moral decline, generated in part by the fact that

most Westerners consider religion to be something separate, lacking any real connection with the rest of their lives.

As an argument, he points out that it is noteworthy that Westerners, when talking about spiritual matters or what they consider to be such, always feel obliged to adopt a solemn and boring tone, so as to better emphasise that these matters have nothing in common with the usual subjects of their conversations. This "ceremonious" affectation has no connection with the dignity and seriousness with which everything traditional must be observed, and which does not exclude the most perfect naturalness and the greatest simplicity in attitudes, as can be seen in the East.

But even in Arab countries, things were not much better, because in ancient times, the distinction between people was based on knowledge, then birth and kinship were taken into account, and later wealth was considered the mark of superiority. In the end, his contemporaries were judged only by their outward appearances.

However, it is noteworthy that Easterners have always ignored what Westerners call "tolerance," that is, indifference to the truth. What Westerners praise under the name of "tolerance" is nothing more than a sign of the degeneration to which the renunciation of tradition has led them.

The only chance in the contemporary world in decay was and is initiation, which essentially consists in the transmission of a certain spiritual influence, and this transmission can only be effected through a rite, which is the means by which one joins an organisation whose function is to preserve and communicate the influence in question.

As expected, some objected, saying that during initiation, the neophyte does not feel any spiritual influence at the moment of receiving it, but Mihai Vâlsan considered this objection irrelevant, because the influence is really present and gives those who have received it certain abilities that they could not have without it. The effects of this influence are felt later, which constitutes the transition to actual initiation. In most cases, unfortunately, initiation remains virtual, but not in his case.

Books whose content is initiatory cannot serve to transmit spiritual influence, and reading them, even by particularly qualified individuals, cannot confer any initiation. No one is initiated through books.

Oral transmission is considered in all traditions to be a necessary condition for true traditional teaching, to such an extent that the written part of this teaching cannot replace the oral part, because the latter type of transmission also involves the communication of a "vital" element that books cannot convey.

Faithful to this principle, Mihail Vâlsan requested and effectively received initiation into the mysteries of the Islamic religion, because, like his Master René Guénon, he considered that when an initiatory organisation finds itself in a state of more or less pronounced degeneration, as was the case in the West, although spiritual influence is present in it, its action is weakened and then psychic influences can act in a more visible and sometimes almost independent way. The extreme case is that of organisations in which the initiatory form has ceased to exist as such and the spiritual influence has completely withdrawn, leaving only psychic influences to subsist in the form of harmful and even particularly dangerous "residues". In this context, he considered Hinduism, Taoism and Islam to be the three main forms of the traditional world present, representing the Middle East, the Far East and the Near East as reflections of the three aspects of the Great Architect of the Universe.

The challenge to his decisions to embrace Islamic traditions by some of his contemporaries is meaningless because, if the goal of any initiation is one and the same, the paths that allow it to be achieved are multiple, in order to adapt to the diversity of individual conditions, such as Islamism in the case of Mihai Vâlsan. If the destination is the same, the starting points differ. Multiplicity does not affect the unity of purpose, nor the fundamental unity of doctrine.

In the Hindu tradition, there are three paths to spiritual realisation: 1) karma – related to the rajasic nature; 2) bhakti – related to the rajasic nature; and 3) jnânâ – related to the sattvic nature. Each corresponds to a guna. Beings of the third guna, tamas, have no chance of spiritual elevation.

The jnamic path refers to the great mysteries. The bhaktic and karmic paths refer to the lesser mysteries.

In the West, given that the aptitudes for knowledge have been consistently much rarer and less developed than the tendency for action, jnana initiation disappeared long ago. In the Middle Ages, bhakti initiation (for knights) and karmic initiation (for artisans) still subsisted. Later, the bhaktic forms also disappeared. The fact that the practice of a craft is not required as a necessary condition for Western artisan initiation can also be seen as a degeneration. In the East, these three forms of initiation still exist.

Mihail Vâlsan "has definitively established the Romanian contribution to the field of Islamic esoteric spiritual exegesis, in Europe and beyond, through his excellence and indisputable authority. Recognised as a leading voice in both European Sufi circles and Islamic circles everywhere, he stood out above all as the initiator of modern Akbarian studies," says Teodoru Ghiondea ¹⁴in a bibliographical note included in the volume *Michel Vâlsan – Omul Universal; Islam and the Function of René Guénon*, Herald Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010.

Considered by many of his contemporaries to be a Muslim scholar and master of the Shadhuliyya tariqah, also known as Shaykh Mustafa 'Abd al-'Aziz, he was a prolific translator and interpreter of the Sufi theorist Ibn 'Arabi. Thus, at almost a

¹⁴ Professor Teodoru Ghiondea studied at the Faculty of History and Philosophy and is currently a professor of religion. In parallel with his university studies, he assimilated the work of René Guénon and sporadically attended the traditional studies circle formed around Vasile Lovinescu. He settled for a short period in France, where he continued his research and established a series of beneficial contacts for clarifying aspects related to esoteric doctrines and initiations.

Starting in 2003, he established lasting relationships with authentic Sufi circles in Italy and France, where he was invited several times.

In 2004, he began collaborating with Herald Publishing House, translating reference texts, and recently he has been coordinating the *Philosophia perennis* collection, which aims to outline a coherent, authentic method of approaching everything that constitutes the "spiritual phenomenon," tradition, and religion.

A millennium apart, the chain of Masters is woven into a fabric that defies ordinary logic.

An unexpected link in the chain of Masters that are the subject of this Plate, we consider that Ibn 'Arabi should be treated as more than a footnote, his history being presented separately in the Appendix.

Returning to the link Mihai Vâlsan, we can say that he was a great Master, a teacher of exceptional quality, distinguished by a spiritual practice of purity and rigour that surpasses the power of understanding; the group he led for several decades has long established itself in the field of Sufi exegesis through impeccable translations of the works of the main Masters of Sufi spirituality – among whom we mention, in no particular order: Maurice Gloton, Michel Chodkiewicz, Charles-A. Gilis, Denis Gril and many others. They continued the Master's intellectual work in the same vein and with the same results: the exceptional quality of the translations, matched by that of the extensive and pertinent commentaries, notes and presentations.

Mihai Vâlsan believed that in the conditions of the era in which he lived, but this is also true today, the normal case from a traditional point of view almost always appears to everyone as an exceptional case.

The transmission of spiritual influence during initiation has absolutely nothing "magical" about it, because everything that is magical concerns exclusively the manipulation of inferior, psychic influences and has nothing spiritual about it.

From a metaphysical point of view, the Self is immutable. From an initiated point of view, it is necessary to take into account the current state of affairs, which prevents us from accessing the essence.

In Principle, it is evident that nothing can be changed. Therefore, the Self does not need to be liberated, because it is not conditioned, nor subject to any limitation, but the ego suffers from the illusion that makes it appear separate from the Self. Likewise, the connection with the Principle does not need to be re-established, because it exists and cannot cease to exist, but the effective awareness of this connection must be realised for the being

manifested. And, in the conditions of present humanity, there is no other possible means for this than that provided by initiation.

For the people of primordial times, initiation would have been useless and even inconceivable, because spiritual development, in all its degrees, was accomplished in them in a completely natural and spontaneous way, given their proximity to the Principle. But as a result of the degeneration that has taken place since then, in accordance with the inevitable processes of any cosmic manifestation, the conditions of the cyclical period in which we find ourselves are completely different, and for this reason the restoration of the possibilities of the primordial state is the first of the goals that initiation sets itself.

Psychologists believe that people are always and everywhere the same. In reality, the ancient human type was not the same as the medieval human type, and both are fundamentally different from the modern and postmodern human types.

"Initium" means "entrance" and "beginning": initiation is the entrance into a path that remains to be travelled, or the beginning of a new existence during which possibilities of a different level than those limited to the life of the ordinary human being will be developed.

Mihai Vâlsan distinguished himself through his collaboration with the magazine "Etudes Traditionnelles" since 1948, then taking over its management from 1960 until his death. He published over fifty articles on topics closely related to the work and function of René Guénon, annotated translations – true and unique exegeses – of important Sufi writings (by exceptional authors: Ibn'Arabî, al-Qashani, al-Qunawi and others), texts on various topics (on descending realisation, the sacred monosyllable AUM, etc.).

He kept in constant contact with Vasile Lovinescu, sending him all issues of the magazine with some regularity.

Also worth mentioning is an introductory study of particular importance, in R. Guénon's posthumous volume "The Fundamental Symbols of Sacred Science", which is a collection of 75 articles published by René Guénon in various magazines between 1926 and 1950.

Since its first appearance in France, published by Gallimard in 1962, the collection has carried the following mention: "compiled and presented by Michel Vâlsan". Therefore, its publication is largely due to our compatriot.

Always faithful to his Master René Guénon, Mihai Vâlsan returns to him throughout his evolution.

Many people who desire initiation doubt the necessity of first connecting to a traditional form of exoteric order, whose prescriptions must be followed. In other words, before any initiation, one must begin by scrupulously practising an authentic religion, and Mihai Vâlsan chose Islam.

He believes that in the current conditions of earthly humanity, the vast majority of people are in no way capable of transcending the limits of the individual condition.

A widespread illusion is that after death, people will attain the intellectual or spiritual qualities they did not possess during their lifetime.

In order to perform actions in accordance with ritual character, one must be aware of the solidarity that exists between the cosmic order itself and the human order. This knowledge exists in all traditions, but has become completely foreign to the modern mentality. For those who are not blinded by certain prejudices, it is easy to see the distance between the consciousness of conformity with the universal order and the simple "moral consciousness," which requires no intellectual understanding and is guided only by purely sentimental aspirations and tendencies, and how profound a degeneration the transition from one to the other implies in the mentality.

There is an enormous difference between someone who performs certain actions for moral reasons and someone who performs them with a view to effective spiritual development, for which they can serve as preparation. The mode of action is the same, but the intentions are different and do not correspond to the same level of understanding.

Only when morality has lost all its traditional character can we speak of deviation. Devoid of any real meaning, with nothing left to legitimise its existence, profane morality is nothing more than a worthless "residue", a mere superstition.

It is fashionable in the present age to exalt work, whatever it may be and however it may be done, as if it had an eminent value in itself and independent of any other consideration.

The countless pompous declarations praising work stem from the exaggerated need for action of so-called modern man. Sometimes there is also an intention to disparage contemplation, which is equated with laziness.

What our contemporaries seem to completely ignore is that work is only truly valid if it is in accordance with the very nature of the being who performs it, if it results from it in a spontaneous and necessary way, so that it is for this nature only a means of realising itself as much as possible.

Vâlsan died in Paris on the night of 25 to 26 November 1974, at the age of 63. A collection of his articles was posthumously republished in a volume entitled *L'Islam et la Fonction de René Guénon* (Editura l'Oeuvre, Paris).

Muhammad Vâlsan

No less prodigious is the posterity of Mihai Vâlsan. His work is continued by his entire family (as Teodoru Ghiondea pointed out), led by his eldest son from his second marriage: Muhammad Vâlsan. It should be noted that in the Islamic tradition, teachings are passed down from father to son (Mihai Vâlsan – Muhammad Vâlsan) or from father-in-law to son-in-law (Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim – René Guénon). Several years ago, it moved to Saint Nicolas les Côteaux, where the tomb of the great teacher has also been located for several years. This large family, with an exemplary spiritual life, is responsible for one of the most interesting publications – if not the most important in terms of scope and editorial conditions: "Science Sacrée". Muhammad Vâlsan, alongside collaborators such as Patrice Brecq, Max Giraud, Gerard Logerot and others, continues the exceptional work of the great Master, constituting for us a guarantee of the permanence of the "right path" that we strive to follow.

Wishing to present the work of Michel Vâlsan and others, Muhammad Vâlsan founded "Science Sacrée" in 2001 to allow a better understanding of his father's ideas, a publication that

now provides access to his writings, originally published in the journal *Etudes Traditionnelles*, unpublished or only circulated or presented in relatively restricted circles.

Science Sacrée is a journal of traditional studies, dedicated to all the enduring traditions of unanimity. It is based on the theses of René Guénon, expanded upon by Michel Vâlsan, the recognised founder of Western studies on Muhy-d-dîn Ibn 'Arabî, the greatest master of Islamic esotericism.

The materials published in "*Science Sacrée*" comprise pure metaphysical principles expressed in various special forms, which are in fact contained in the primordial tradition, in order to spread universal knowledge and wisdom.

The Institute for Advanced Islamic Studies in Embrun mentions that the publication "*Science Sacrée*" is considered a journal of traditional studies, published by Vâlsan Mohamed, son of Sheikh Vâlsan, in a purely Guénonian spirit, thus marking the tiny part of the chain of Spiritual Masters that we have dealt with in this material.

In conclusion, we can say about the three Masters that, like the Universal Man, they underwent a process of "return", as a result of which their centre is in the universal and individuality is only a possibility contained in the centre. As a result of this "return", the legitimate relationships of all things are restored, as they have always been in their original state.

The Universal Man is in inverse proportion to the individual man: if he walks on sand, he leaves no trace; if he walks on rock, his feet leave an imprint. If he stands in the sun, he casts no shadow; if he stands in darkness, a light emanates from him.

Appendix

Ibn Arabi (Abu-Bakr Muhyi ad-Din Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Arabic: in or al-'Arabi 7 on the date of *دمحم نب يلع نب دمحم هلا دبع وبأ) نيدلا يحم (بيرع نب) يناطلا يمتاحلا بيرعلا نب* birth August 1165 in Murcia, Andalusia, into an Arab family. His father, a great scholar, was vizier to Muhammad bin Mardaniş, ruler of the city of Murcia. In 1173, after the defeat of Muhammad bin Mardaniş and the occupation of Murcia by the army of the Almohads

(al-muwahhiduna, 1130-1269, with its capital in Marrakech), his family moved to Seville, where the eight-year-old Ibn 'Arabi began his studies. He studied the Qur'an, Qur'anic exegesis, prophetic tradition, Arabic grammar, Islamic jurisprudence and rhetoric. After completing his studies, he worked as a secretary to the rulers of Seville. In 1179, after his first mystical visions, his father took him to the famous Ibn Rushd (Averroes), then qadi of Cordoba. After that, he began to assiduously frequent the spiritual masters of Andalusia of those times: Shaykh Abu-Ja'far al-'Urayni, Abu Ya'qub al-Qaysi, Salih al-'Adawi, Abu-l-Hajjaj Yusuf and many others, as well as two mystics, Fatima bint al-Muthanna, whose personality remains shrouded in mystery, and Shams Umm al-Fuqara'.

In 1193, he began his travels in North Africa. The first city he stopped in for a short time was Tunis, where he met Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Mahdawi, to whom he would later dedicate his work *Ruh al-quds* (The Spirit of Holiness) as a sign of deep respect. Also in Tunis, he had another vision in which he met al-Khidr. After a brief return to Seville in 1195, where he studied the prophetic tradition (sunna) with his uncle, he left that same year for Fez, where he had two visions. In the first, he ascends to heaven at night – following the well-known prophetic model – where he reaches the Station of Light and, under its influence, writes *Kitab al-isra'* (The Book of the Night Journey), in rhythmic prose, in which he recounts the encounters he had during this journey with the prophets in the seven heavens, each according to his own spiritual achievement. In 1198, he attended the funeral of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) in Cordoba, who had died in exile in Marrakesh. Impressed by the death of the great thinker, he wrote the treatise *Mawaqifi' an-nujum* (The Resting Places of the Stars) in 1199, while in Almeria. Also in 1199, under the impact of his second vision in Fez (1196), he wrote another book entitled *Kitab 'anqa' mughrib* (The Book of the Fabulous Griffin of the West).

Ibn 'Arabi left Andalusia for good in 1200. In 1202, he participated in the pilgrimage to Mecca, after spending two years in Cairo and Jerusalem. In Mecca, he began composing his famous collection of poems, *Tarjuman al-aṣṣwaq* (The Interpreter of Desires), inspired by Nizam 'Ayn aṣ-Ṣams (Nizam's name was rendered in medieval Latin as *Armonia*), a young Persian woman of great beauty, rich culture and high spirituality. The interpretation

mystical interpretation that Ibn 'Arabi gives to physical love is the conversion of his love for Nizam. In fact, for Ibn 'Arabi, everything is love:

In Mecca, by 1204, he had completed four works: *Miṣkat al-anwar* (The Jewel of Lights; unrelated to the treatise of the same name by Imam al-Ghazali), *Hilyat al-abdal* (The Adornment of the Successors), *Taj ar-rasa'il* (The Crown of Epistles) and *Ruh al-quds* (The Spirit of Holiness). In 1204, he stopped in Mosul, where he had a new vision in which he received the investiture (*khirqā*) from al-Khidr. He also wrote his treatise entitled *at-Tanazzulat al-mawsiliyya* (The Revelations of Mosul) in which he describes the esoteric mysteries related to ablution and prayer and their spiritual significance. In 1209, in Aleppo, he finished a work entitled *Kitab at-tajalliyat* (The Book of Theophanies) based on a series of theophanic visions he had had over time concerning the perfection, generosity and mercy of God. These visions, which generally stem from verses in *Sura Al-Baqarah* (the second *sura* in the *Qur'an*), include dialogues with great mystics such as al-Hallaj (Tur, c. 857 – Baghdad, 922), Junayd (d. Baghdad, 910) and many others. In 1214, he returned to Mecca, where he completed *Tarjuman al-aṣwaq*. Finally, in 1223, he settled in Damascus at the invitation of its ruler al-Malik al-'Adil, where he spent the last seventeen years of his life, completing, among other writings, his most important works: *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya* and *Fusus al-hikam*. *Kitab al-futuhat al-makkiyyah fi ma'rifat al-asrar al-malikiyya wa al-mulkiyya* – The Book of (Spiritual) Conquests in the Knowledge of the King and the Kingdom, begun in 1202 in Mecca and completed in 1238 in Damascus, in its 560 chapters, presents all the paths that lead to mystical knowledge. *Fusus al-hikam* (The Mounts of Wisdom) was written after a vision in 1229 in which he met the prophet Muhammad who, after a series of counsels, commanded him to put everything in a book. The result was a quintessence of Ibn 'Arabi's spiritual teachings, in 27 chapters, one chapter dedicated to each of the great prophets mentioned in the *Qur'an*, beginning with Adam and ending with Muhammad. The prophets are compared to the settings of a ring in which gems are placed, which, here, are nothing other than what God revealed to each prophet from His wisdom. The Prophet Muhammad, for whom Ibn 'Arabi had a special reverence, appears here as *al-insan al-kamil* (the Perfect Man), the total theophany of all divine names, the quintessence of the universe.

par excellence. Muhammad is seen as both the prototype of the universe and the prototype of man, perfectly mirroring the Names and Attributes of God. Muhammadan reality – al-haqīqa al-muhammadiyya – encompasses the Word of God, which was revealed in part to all prophets, culminating in the total revelation made to the prophet of Islam, Muhammad, as a human being, as the reality of this world. Another book written in Damascus – in 1229 – is *Kitab al-'abadilah* (The Book of the Slaves of God) in which he describes 117 human types generically called 'Abd Allah (servant of God, but in each case, the word Allah is replaced by one of the names of God or of the prophet Muhammad), each considered a manifestation of one of the "most beautiful names" of God (99 in number) and of the prophet Muhammad (18 in number).

He died in 1240 and was buried at the foot of Mount Qasyun in Damascus, Syria.

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Part III
MARCEL / MIHAIL AVRAMESCU



MARCEL / MIHAIL AVRAMESCU - BIOGRAPHICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Laurențiu HORODNIC

Marcel Avramescu was born on 17 January 1909 in Bucharest. He attended the Spiru Haret High School, where his classmates included Constantin Noica, Mircea Eliade, Alexandru Paleologu, Dinu Pillat, and Nicolae Steinhardt.

He became a well-known name in avant-garde circles starting in 1928, when he published Tudor Arghezi's Bilete de papagal (Parrot Tickets) – Chitanțe de Pelican (Pelican Receipts) and Rumor Zambezi, in Avramescu's ana-gram in Comedia infra-umană (Infra-human Comedy) – some "verbal exercises" that were intended to be more than just a literary experiment.

His presence in the pages of Arghezi's magazine can be seen until the end of 1931.

The year 1931 is crucial in a much deeper sense than the simple semantics of the word. According to his holographic autobiography, starting in 1931 he turned towards Christianity, with his conversion taking place in 1936. But 1931 was above all the year of his meeting with René Guénon (1886-1951), the most fierce critic of modernity, but also of modern occultism.

He discovered the work of the French metaphysician thanks to his former Latin teacher, Nedelea Locusteanu – Neofrast Lămu-reanu in Comedia infra-umană (The Infra-Human Comedy) – who gave the young Marcel Avramescu a collection of a magazine with a title that encouraged the deciphering of mysteries: "Le Voile d'Isis". From the magazine collection, he moved on to books, which he apparently borrowed from Mircea Eliade.

It was an encounter that rearranged the data of his spiritual positioning. An assiduous correspondence with Guénon suddenly interrupted, polemics with another Guénonian of Islamic inspiration, Vasile Lovinescu, right in the pages of the first issue of the magazine "Memra", translation projects, the conversion to Guénonism of Mihail Vâlsan (who, after Guénon's death, would become editor-in-chief of *Etudes traditionnelles* and would collect Guénon's articles, scattered in various magazines, in the posthumous collection *Simboluri fundamentale ale științei sacre* [Fundamental Symbols of Sacred Science]).

Under *Memra*, in a rather minimalist font, and the subtitle "Studies of Esoteric Tradition," appears the name of Mihail Avramescu, with the neutral specification of "editor." "Beyond all modern counterfeits of the initiatory Tradition, beyond all 'neo-spiritualist' currents and all pseudo-esotericisms, this magazine aims to express the results of authentic metaphysical knowledge. Against the products of mediocre intellectual quality of all dilettantism with pretensions of spirituality, against all modernist improvisations of a mystical-occultist nature, this magazine intends to oppose a firm attitude of doctrinal traditionalism."

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Guénon, scattered in various magazines, in the posthumous collection *Fundamental Symbols of Sacred Science*.

In 1934, he graduated from the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in Bucharest with a thesis dedicated to the ideology of Nicolaus Cusanus, and two years later he abandoned the Mosaic religion and converted to Orthodox Christianity, marking a definitive break with both avant-gardism and occultism.

Although he enrolled in the Faculty of Theology in the capital in 1939, he would only complete his studies a decade later, due to both the world war and years of forced labour.

In 1951, he was ordained a priest at the Antim Church, then, after a fierce spiritual and emotional crisis, amplified by divorce, he retired to Banat, initially serving at the parish in Văliug, then at the one in Jimbolia until 1976, and spent the last three years of his life with one of his daughters, Mariana Macri.

Despite the fact that between the two world wars the author was a prolific presence in the Romanian magazine scene, publishing fiction and esoteric texts in *Contimporanul*, *Viața literară*, *Orizontul*, *Adam*, *Floarea de foc*, and *Bilete de papagal*, and being diagnosed by Petru Comarnescu as "a man deeper, but also more diabolical than Emil Cioran," Marcel Avramescu made his editorial debut only after his death, with the volume *Fragmente reziduale disparate din Calendarul incendiat al lui Ierusalimus Unicornus* (*Disparate Residual Fragments from the Burnt Calendar of Ierusalimus Unicornus*) in 1999, 15 years after his death.

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MARCEL AVRAMESCU – GUÉNONIAN FOLLOWER

Laurențiu VÎNĂU

Alongside the other two Guénonian disciples, Vasile Lovinescu and Mihail Valsan, Marcel Avramescu carried out a intellectual activity of great spiritual and esoteric significance.

The year 1931 marked his meeting with René Guénon. The discovery of the work of the metaphysician from Blois is due to his former Latin teacher, Nedelea Locusteanu, who gave the then young Marcel Avramescu a collection of a magazine entitled "Le Voile d'Isis", which since 1928 had been the most representative publication of what would be called Guénonian traditionalism. Starting this year, a series of emblematic names became contributors to the magazine, such as Guénon, Argos (Georges Tamos), Gaston Demengel, Marcel Clavelle – these in the early period – and then Andre Preau, René Allar, and Frithjof Schuon. The magazine changed its name in 1935 from "Le Voile d'Isis" to "Etudes traditionnelles" and was definitively marked by René Guénon's conception.

In December 1934, issue no. 1 of Memra magazine (memra = logos in Hebrew) was published, the first and only Guénonian-inspired publication in Romanian culture, edited by Marcel Avramescu. Above all the profane and profaning conceptions of Western scientism and philosophism, and above all other current pseudo-values, the magazine affirms the priority of esoteric tradition as well as the uniqueness, over the diversity of forms, and permanence over the contingent, of the primordial traditional doctrine from whose central truth derive the principles and methods of traditional sciences as well as the Dogmas, Rites and Symbols of all orthodox religions and those of all Eastern or Western initiatory mysteries. His peers keep the young Marcel Avra-

I have a very special memory. Petru Comarnescu considered himself fortunate to have met, in 1932, a person whose esoteric, anthroposophical, graphological, telepathic, etc. culture made him consider him an interesting man, flattered by the physiognomic analyses made on some personalities of the time, which matched his own observations on them (he was referring to Eliade, Vulcănescu, Mișu Polihroniade, M. Sebastian). Ieronim Șerbu considered Marcel Avramescu the most interesting man he had met from this esoteric generation, being also impressed by his appearance: "thin, ascetic, with large, black, nocturnal eyes, the man exudes a hypnotic aura and his entire physiognomic expression reveals a great power of inner concentration, perhaps due to his intense experience of various spiritual experiences, or an exceptional meditative vocation".

Between 1926 and 1932, Marcel Avramescu worked on the volume "În potriua veacului" (Against the Century) was a work that only saw the light of day in 2005, thanks to his daughter Mariana Macri, who preserved all of her father's works. He is considered an avant-gardist, although he does not appear in the works of researchers and critics, with the exception of Sașa Pană, who includes him in the 1969 "Anthology of Avant-Garde Literature." he nevertheless belongs to this uncertain area, outlined by his refusal to recognise himself in a model, to accept collective artistic obedience, constituting a kind of implicit anarchism, which is one of the features of the movement. In any case, he defines himself as "Father X. Uranus, a free humorist from non-conformist Orthodoxy". Reading the texts themselves supports this classification, as they bring together all the classic techniques of the movement, and the poems of the 1960s confirm the continuity of this vision, which is absurd, mannerist and symbolic at the same time. All of Marcel Avramescu's writings signed with the pseudonyms he identified with at the time (Jonathan X. Uranus and Mark Abrams) can be considered avant-garde literature. There is undoubtedly a dissidence of avant-gardism in which Avramescu stands alongside other writers who express themselves loudly, with fierce independence and an attitude resistant to public exposure, an essentially self-destructive opinion that limits their literary production and differentiates them from the avant-gardists of well-known magazines, although some contacts do exist (Avramescu also appears in

Marcel Avramescu practised a kind of irrational esotericism, influenced by the doctrinal writings of René Guénon.

Of Jewish origin, our protagonist converted to Orthodoxy, studying theology and practising as an Orthodox priest between 1962 and 1976. In 1976, he retired, taking the name Mihail Avramescu.

In the 1930s, we find Mihail Avramescu as a disciple-correspondent of Guénon (whom he also reveals to his friends Vasile Lovinescu and Mihail Vâlsan). Then came the transition to Orthodoxy, together with his entire family. In 1946, he met Father Ioan Kulighin, through whom he came into contact with Hesychasm – the prayer of the heart. After a period of great trials and spiritual falls – perhaps explainable by the ardour with which he wanted to reach the high thresholds of spiritualisation – he remarries and obtains a parish in Jimbolia, where he remains for 20 years. After the death of his second wife, he returns to Bucharest and dies in 1984. In his work "Vremea încercuirii" (The Time of Encirclement) – characterised as a book of unshakeable lucidity, as in "Calendarul incendiat" (The Burnt Calendar) – which is characterised as supernatural, both books refer to time: how to escape time, how to transfigure it, how to bring the muddy breaking of history's barriers back to the womb of eternity. As a disciple of Guénon, he transformed time into destiny, setting its aura ablaze with his Eastern (Guénonian) incantations and appreciating that "eternity is the space between moments" and that the world will be saved from within, from the mysterious core of things, where there is "youth without old age".

References to Bergson –

"Spiritual Energy" or "Matter and Memory" denoted the exigency landmarks, regardless of whether he had actually studied the works cited or had taken note of their content through Guénon, probably. The attraction exerted by the latter is well known, highlighting the interference between knowledge and action, the sacred and the profane. Guénon's perseverance in repeatedly sounding the alarm about the decline of thought in the West, while individual education continues to neglect the sources of fortification treasured in Eastern doctrines, was very important. The influence of his pleas reached its peak after the publication of his exegesis on "The Crisis of the Modern World" (1931). Marcel Avramescu confessed to his friends that he had benefited from early Talmudic instruction and an initiation into Kabbalah (the Parisian exile magazine "Limite"). This information is plausible, given his family circumstances: Marcel was the only child of Isidor and Bella, both of whom were Jewish. Born in Craiova in 1909, where he was a

An emancipated Sephardic community, with a tradition that is not bound by rigid rituals, but rather open to discussion, receptive, dynamic and multilingual, with a superior level of scholarly refinement. Self-critical by nature, he states: "Hear me, naturally by Jonathan X. Uranus. I was. The humorist of the absurd. Master of ceremonies of empty words and a tumbler dizzy with his own vertigo." The actions of the one thus subjected to harsh judgement presented premises other than those of a puppet. "...he was, however, a man whose inner mechanics, despite the mask of humour with which he crystallised himself, sprang from an experience that was, in essence, tragic: from the awareness of the dryness of logic." His partner, Mark Abrams, acted on similar impulses: "The same acrobat, tortured by the mismatch between the confines of the mind and the fullness of life." He too had experienced the "slag of deception," confused by blind faith in the magic keys of the occult. The verdict is categorical: "Today, Jonathan X. Uranus and Mark Abrams, my demented puppets, have committed suicide." In other words, the aforementioned alter egos had their mandate withdrawn. "Search deep within yourself. Within you is the true image of a horizon, from whose distance the Sun of the Unseen has risen so many times."

These phrases have a solemn, litany-like sound. Their meaning can be related to the current predilection for immersing oneself in esoteric waves. However, one can also detect signs of the calling that will convince him to don the priest's cassock. The text must also be corroborated with those symptomatic thoughts towards a clear understanding of the problem of salvation, also dating from December 1931, a completely accidental collaboration with the almost defunct *Contimporanul*. At the heart of the series of dissociations, the ideal of "harmony" and "balance" with triple roots takes shape: moral, intellectual and spiritual. In an increasingly stifling atmosphere, Marcel Avramescu's salvation came from a spiritual life firmly grounded in faith in spiritual values. Metaphors once scattered by Jonathan X. Uranus take on long-lasting resonance: "perched on the tip of a ray, somewhere in the glow of angelic light". At his ordination, he took the name Mihail (the archangel who was called "the messenger of victory against hatred, the spiritual genius of the Jewish people").

MARCEL'S LOGOS AVRAMESCU

Ahile Z. VERESCU & AMMON

Marcel Avramescu¹ will remain in our collective memory, alongside Vasile Lovinescu and Mihai Vâlsan, as one of the three great traditionalists of Guénonian origin that Romanian spirituality has produced. This is despite the fact that he first became known as a colourful character, preoccupied with spirituality and esotericism, and later as an avant-garde and surrealist writer, with some influence in the interwar cultural milieu. After all this journey, which the general public in our country is only now beginning to appreciate in its full value, the seeker of light and truth to whom we dedicate this short study is, finally, the protagonist of a spectacular conversion from Judaism to Orthodoxy (1936), a Freemason – venerable of the Gnosis Lodge (1946), initiated into Hesychasm (1946) and then, in the second part of his life, a parish priest in Jimbolia (Simbolia).

We must point out from the outset that, strictly speaking, Marcel Avramescu cannot be considered an authentic disciple of René Guénon. He is only assimilated as a disciple

¹ Born on 17 January 1909, died on 30 August 1984; Vasile Lovinescu passed away on 14 July 1984.

² The exorbitant man, that is, out of orbit, as he defines himself.

³ Marcel Avramescu's exegetes note his assiduous concern for pseudonyms and the sweet temptation of anonymity. During the communist era, this may have largely saved him from reprisals. Below, in no particular order, are some of Avramescu's best-known pseudonyms: Ionathan X Uranus, IXU, Mark Abrams, Siamese Twin, Dogcatcher, Count Asphalt, Yang, Policeman, etc.

Guénonian, and only in extenso can he be crowned with this title. In fact, after the Memra moment, Marcel Avramescu underwent a different spiritual evolution from that of the other two authentic Guénonian disciples, Vasile Lovinescu and Mihai Vâlsan.

Born and raised in the Jewish religion, initiated into Qabbalah and Freemasonry, Marcel Avramescu is, of course, quickly won over by the spiritual ecumenism preached with meticulousness and rigorous argumentation by René Guénon. The explanations he finds in Guénon's work with reference to symbolism and rituals will provide him with the necessary support for a superior understanding of reality and the sacred and, at the same time, for the consolidation of his convictions and beliefs. However, his fascination did not go so far as to be lured by Sufism to the point of total integration into this tradition, as was the case with Vasile Lovinescu and Mihai Vâlsan.

Avramescu's resistance to Islam is most likely rooted in his Jewish background, through his birth and the education he received in childhood and adolescence, on the one hand, but also in the special attraction that Orthodox Christianity exerted on him. In addition, his opposition to everything that smacks of unjustified syncretism and absurd prostration before insufficiently verified prophets is more than evident. In this sense, his critical attitude towards what Vasile Lovinescu claimed in the pages of the magazine "*Azi*" in October 1934, regarding Bô-Yin-Rô, is edifying. A polemic of ideas related to Bô-Yin-Rô emerges from the very pages of the first issue of the magazine Memra. Avramescu criticises the overly laudatory attitude of the young Lovinescu towards the self-proclaimed authentic envoy of the Great White Lodge among men. In hindsight, Avramescu's cautious and reserved logic proves to be superior to the unjustified admiration (even devotion) proclaimed by Lovinescu at the time.

⁴Joseph Schneiderfranken, a minor mystic-esoteric figure of that period.

⁵Marcel Avramescu, under the pseudonym "*Mem*", makes a disapproving comment about V.L. on the grounds that he unconditionally adheres to the doctrine of Joseph Schneiderfranken, the man who speaks in the first person singular about his brotherhood with Jesus.

Just as we can consider that the most intense proximity to Guénonian doctrine is marked by the publication of the magazine *Memra*, the 1946 meeting with the Russian monk Ivan Kul'fghin (Ioan cel străin) and the initiation into ishihism, at the Burning Bush of the Antim Monastery, could be considered the maximum tangency that Marcel Avramescu⁶ would have reached in relation to Orthodoxy and its mysteries.

As Mihail Constantineanu⁷ shows, Marcel Avramescu came into contact with what we now call the Guénonian conception of primordial tradition in 1931, when Latin teacher Nedelea Locusteanu gave the young man, thirsty for esotericism, a collection of the magazine *Le Voile d'Isis* as a gift. Shortly thereafter, starting with the articles in the magazine he had received, our protagonist read the books written by René Guénon and even had the privilege of maintaining a substantial correspondence with the master. From these searches and from the ardent dialogues he had with René Guénon and his peers, fellow pilgrims like him in the realm of the sacred, but also from the enthusiasm of someone who wants to share knowledge beyond the mundane, his dazzling magazine, entitled *Memra*⁸, whose first issue appeared at the end of 1934. The second and last issue appeared in the middle of the following year and, in practice, brought together in a single issue what should have been issues 2 to 5 of the magazine. The third issue of *Memra* never appeared, even though René Guénon, conscientious and methodical, sent his article entitled "*Are there still initiatory possibilities in traditional Western forms?*" from Cairo. The text is kept at the Romanian Academy Library and was later published in another French publication.

Of course, it is important to note, first and foremost, the presence of René Guénon in the very first issue of the magazine, with a fairly substantial article (4 pages) in which the author presents, in his unmistakable style, an interesting and elaborate lecture on the teaching

⁶ Converted to Christianity, priest Mihail Avramescu.

⁷ In the postcard in "*Calendarul incendiat*" (*The Burnt Calendar*) by Ierusalim Unicornos, alias Mihail Avramescu, Ed. Anastasia, Bucharest, 1999, p. 100

⁸ In Hebrew, *memrah* means *logos*.

initiatory teaching and its particularities. Initiatory teaching is described in contrast to profane teaching and the common representation of this process. By simply appearing in the pages of the magazine and through his authority on the subject, which was fully established at that time, René Guénon gives his seal of approval to the publication, which was just starting out, and, in general, to the initiative undertaken by Marcel Avramescu.

It is also important to highlight the conceptual distinctions⁹ formulated by Marcel Avramescu, as well as the two distinguished contributors, Dr. J. H. Probst-Biraben¹⁰ and Mircea Eliade¹¹, who appear in the first issue of the only magazine dedicated to "*esoteric tradition studies*".

Finally, we note the enthusiasm, competence on the subject matter and admirable editorial and documentary effort undertaken by the initiator, none other than Marcel Avramescu himself (editor and publisher). He is the one who signs with various pseudonyms, as he used to do with his other literary productions, the rest of the articles, comments and notes in this unique Guénonian magazine that appeared episodically in interwar Romania.

This would be the brief history of Memra magazine. As for its content of ideas, the novelty of its approaches and the unreserved adherence of the authors who signed the articles to the Guénonian perspective, we will leave it to the reader to conclude, limiting ourselves to summarising

⁹ "...this magazine aims to express the results of authentic metaphysical knowledge. Against the intellectually substandard products of all dilettantism with pretensions of spirituality, against all modernist improvisations of a mystical-occultist nature, this magazine intends to oppose a firm attitude of doctrinal traditionalism. Above all the profane and profaning conceptions of Western scientism and philosophism, and above all other current pseudo-values, this magazine affirms the priority of esoteric tradition as well as the uniqueness, over the diversity of forms, and the permanence, over contingencies, of the primordial traditional doctrine from whose central Truth derive the principles and methods of traditional sciences as well as the Dogmas, Rites and Symbols of all orthodox religions and those of all Eastern or Western initiatory mysteries."

¹⁰ Contributor to "*Etudes traditionnelles*", professor, writer.

¹¹ Who signs with the pseudonym KRM

presents below a compendium of ideas. The following text is taken almost entirely from Memra magazine, with minor editorial and technical changes. Our aim was to present to the informed reader the concepts and representations that circulated at the time, with due attention to reflecting as faithfully as possible the considerations and arguments of those who contributed to the magazine.

Memra no. 1 – Compendium of ideas

Criteria: The chaos of the modern world is a reality whose tragedy no longer needs to be demonstrated.

Behind the mask of a pseudo-culture without substance, a demonic spirit of revolt and subversion of all authentic values that could still be saved lurks menacingly.

The symptoms – visible – are numerous, diverse and tempting, like most of the instruments in the arsenal of Darkness: humanism, communism, neo-spiritism, theosophy, occultism, etc.

Against the weapons with which the final catastrophe of a world that has long forgotten its origins, purpose and path is being prepared, it is necessary to return to tradition, namely to that *Eternal Spiritual Tradition*, whose doctrine is always identical, albeit in different forms, in all traditional forms everywhere.

Initiatic teaching (René Guénon): Many of those who consider things in a too superficial way stop at appearances and external forms, and thus see nothing more than the use of symbolism. They assume that the initiatic doctrine is, in essence, nothing more than a philosophy like any other, perhaps slightly different in method. However, they will never be able to do more than make the initiatic teaching a kind of extension of profane learning, a complement to ordinary education, for the use of a relative elite.

Another approach, almost as flawed, is that which consists in opposing initiatory teaching to profane teaching at all costs, attributing to it as its object a certain special science,

constantly contradicted and in conflict with other sciences, and always proclaimed superior to them. The partisans of such teachings, so-called initiatory, claim that they are of a completely different nature from ordinary education, be it scientific, philosophical or religious, but they offer no proof and, unfortunately, do not stop there in terms of gratuitous or hypothetical assertions, despite the fact that they have grouped themselves into multiple schools under different names.

But if initiatory teaching is neither an extension of profane education nor its antithesis, if it is neither a philosophical system nor a specialised science, we may wonder what it is, trying to understand its nature.

Thus, if initiatory conceptions are different from profane ones, this reflects that they derive from a different mentality than the latter, from which they differ less in their object than in their point of view. Therefore, if this is the essential difference between these two orders of conceptions, it is easy to admit that, on the one hand, everything that can be viewed from a profane point of view can also be viewed from an initiatory point of view, and on the other hand, there are things that completely escape the profane domain, being specific to the initiatory domain.

There is no doubt that symbolism, as a sensitive form of any initiatory teaching, represents a more universal language than vulgar language, given that any symbol is susceptible to multiple interpretations, which complement each other and are equally true, although they derive from different points of view.

If symbolic initiation, whose role is merely to serve as a basis or support for true and effective initiation, is the only kind that can be imparted externally, it can at least be transmitted even by those who understand neither its meaning nor its value. It is enough for the symbols to be kept intact so that they may always be capable of awakening, in those who are capable of it, all the concepts whose synthesis they represent. This is precisely what constitutes the true secret of initiation, which is by its very nature inviolable and which defends itself against the curiosity of the profane, and whose relative secrecy of certain external signs is nothing more than a symbolic representation. There is no mystery other than the inexpressible, which is obviously

incommunicable by its very nature, each person being able to penetrate it more or less, according to their intellectual horizon.

Thus, the secret of initiation is something that lies far beyond all the rituals and formulas commonly used to transmit external and symbolic initiation.

The expression of an idea in a vital way is, in the end, only a symbol, like the others, just as the translation of an idea, in a spatial way, constitutes a geometric symbol or an ideogram. And if any process of initiation has a correspondence, either with individual human life or even with the whole of earthly life, this is due to the fact that vital evolution itself can be considered, in particular or in general, as a plan analogous to that which the initiate must achieve in order to discover himself, in the full expansion of all the powers of his being. Such plans correspond to the same synthetic conception, so that they are identical in principle and all proceed from a single ideal Archetype, a universal plan drawn up by a cosmic force or will, the Great Architect of the Universe.

Therefore, every being, individual or collective, tends, consciously or unconsciously, to realise within itself, through means appropriate to its particular nature, the plan of the Great Architect of the Universe, thereby contributing, according to its function in the cosmic whole, to the total realisation of that same plan, a realisation which, in the end, is nothing more than the universalisation of its own personal realisation.

Initiatory training, viewed in its universality, must encompass, as so many applications, in indefinite variety, of the same transcendent and abstract principle, all the particular paths of realisation, not only of each category of beings, but also of each individual being. Therefore, if the principles of initiation are immutable, their symbolic representation can and must vary in order to adapt to the multiple and relative conditions of existence, conditions whose diversity means that, mathematically speaking, no two identical things can exist in the entire universe. In particular, it can be said that it is impossible for two different individuals to have two initiations that are absolutely similar, even from an external and ritual point of view, and *a fortiori* from the point of view of the inner work of the initiate.

Initiatory teaching, which is external and transmissible through forms, is not in reality and can only be a preparation of the individual to receive true initiatory instruction through the action of his personal work. The path to follow and the plan to be carried out can thus be indicated to them, and they can be encouraged to acquire the mental and intellectual attitude necessary for understanding initiatory concepts. He can be assisted and guided, his work being constantly monitored, but that is all, for no one else, not even a Master in the fullest sense of the word, can do this for him. What the initiate must necessarily acquire by himself is precisely what by its very nature escapes all profane curiosity, namely the effective possession of the initiatory secret itself. But in order to achieve this possession, teaching must open up to unlimited possibilities, thus allowing him to expand his conceptions indefinitely, instead of confining them within the limits of a systematic theory or a dogmatic formula.

The Hermetic tradition (Yang / Marcel Avramescu): represents one of the many forms of Western esotericism, a traditional form that is all the more valuable because the doctrinal elements it perpetuates are among the most suitable for use in the restoration of a long-lost Western tradition.

Hermeticism is, as its name suggests, a form of tradition linked to the symbolism of Hermes in the Hellenic Tradition. It is an esoteric doctrine tending towards the knowledge of the disciplines attributed to Mercury, sapiential disciplines, but not of a metaphysical order, such as those related to Priestly Initiation, but of a cosmological order – with both macrocosmic and microcosmic applications – related to Royal Initiation. While the former are considered Spiritual Sciences, deriving from initiation into what is understood by *the Great Mysteries*, the latter stem from initiation into *the Lesser Mysteries*, an initiation that aims precisely at the application of the Principles within the limits of the cosmic plane of manifestation. Thus, initiation into the Lesser Mysteries appears everywhere as a first stage of Realisation, concerning the maximum expansion of individual human possibilities, while initiation into

The Great Mystery is that of transcending individuality and the human condition, striving towards the identification of the Personality with the Supreme Principle. These two great stages of initiation are found within every traditional form, so that within each of these forms one can find an equivalent of Hermeticism – a body of esoteric Doctrine that embraces the Cosmological Sciences (Alchemy and Astrology). The counterpart of Mercury in the ancient Egyptian Tradition is Thoth, who represents the principle from which priestly knowledge flowed. As in any traditional form, initiation into the Lesser Mysteries was naturally subordinate to initiation into the Greater Mysteries. However, ancient Egypt gave particular prominence to the Cosmological Sciences which, merging with Hellenic esotericism, constituted the doctrine of this Greco-Egyptian Hermeticism, later incorporated into Islamic esotericism and, through it, into Christian esotericism.

Hermeticism appears as the Western adaptation of a body of esoteric doctrine of Greco-Egyptian origin, belonging to the order of Cosmological Knowledge, as a point of convergence of other currents of Western Tradition such as Qabbalah, Islamic Sufism, Rosicrucianism or Companionship, being, in fact, a particular path of initiation.

Alchemical symbolism uses, above all, complex symbolism: a) of the three principles (sulphur, mercury and salt) corresponding, respectively, to the spiritual principle, the vital principle and the corporeal principle; b) of the four elements (fire, air, water and earth) which refer to the four states of the manifested world; c) the seven metals (silver, hydrargyrum, copper, gold, iron, tin and lead) related, in cosmic order, to the seven planets of astrological tradition (the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn), in human order, to the seven internal bodily organs of traditional anatomy (brain, lungs, kidneys, heart, gallbladder, liver and spleen) as well as, on another level, to the seven subtle centres of the human corporeal being, which also have correspondences in the Sephirotic Tree of Qabbalah.

The transmutation of base metals into gold is, in other words, the reintegration of Man into the Cosmic Order, through the maximum expansion of his powers, which is a particular form of initiation into the Lesser Mysteries, the initiation into the Greater Mysteries referring to the complete transcendence of the human condition, resulting in the resorption of the Personality into the Supreme Principle. In its symbolism, gold expresses human perfection understood as the Realisation of the Integral Man, which means Cosmic Consciousness (gold = Sun), and the incorruptibility of the body. This latter notion (which presents remarkable analogies with the mystery of Eucharistic transubstantiation in the ritual of the Church of Christ) is linked, on the other hand, to that of longevity (the perpetuation of individual life until the end of a cycle of cosmic manifestation), a longevity that the alchemist achieves by absorbing the elixir of life, the drinkable gold, which is one and the same thing as what is mineral light in Brahmanic esotericism, and the golden liquid in Taoist texts. This aspect of hermetic realisation can, of course, only be related to human alchemy, which concerns the possibilities of the subtle state.

Human alchemy has another counterpart in Indian esotericism – Vairayana – a branch of Mahayana. Like its Tibetan counterpart Dorje, the Sanskrit term Vajra has two meanings: one of diamond, when referring to the achievement of incorruptibility, and one of lightning, when it has the double meaning of fertile, creative vital force and destructive force – dual symbolism, expressing the dual nature of the forces involved in the process of achieving the Integral Man. The subtle forces through which this realisation is achieved are symbolically represented by the two serpents of Hermes' caduceus, which correspond to the two channels of subtle force, Ida and Pingala, in the occult physiology of the Indian Tantra systems; these channels rise, crossing each other in a double coil, from the base of the spine upwards, along the Sushumna channel, respectively along the axis of the Caduceus, whose terminal wings represent flight, the elevation of human consciousness towards angelic states, as a result of the activation of these forces. This association of the serpent with the bird is also found in the symbolism of Votan who, as René Guénon observes, is a counterpart of Mercury.

The symbolism of the serpent ¹²(NacHaSh), which is coiled around the Tree of Life in the Centre of the Earthly Paradise, as described in Genesis, expresses a different force than that referred to by the symbolism of the two serpents of the Caduceus. If we consider that the Tree is a symbol of Man, then we can understand that this snake also represents a human aspect of a cosmic force, which is no longer dual, but central. It is that subtle vital force which manifests, in the human organism, what is, in cosmic order, Shakti in the Brahmanic Tradition, namely the force on which the very bodily existence of man is based and which sleeps within the root of the human being.

The awakening of the fiery serpent ¹³, which is coiled three and a half times ¹⁴around the axis of the body and sleeps in the sacral centre (muladhara-chakra), as well as its ascent along the spine, or more precisely along the Sushumna channel that runs through the spine, is precisely the process that, in both Hermeticism and Tantra, leads to the realisation of the integral Man and the attainment of states of supra-individual consciousness.

Hermetic initiation concerns the subtle possibilities of human individuality, being an achievement closely related to the traditional forms of nomadic peoples (Hebrew Qabalah, Islamic Sufism, etc.). This is also the case of the Noble Travellers, the initiated Pilgrims, the initiates who, in the Middle Ages, hid under the symbol of the Rosy Cross, the Companions and the Operative Masons.

¹² There are many interesting considerations regarding the initiatory role of the seven-headed dragon in Romanian fairy tales, related to the general symbolism of Realisation, in which Făt-Frumos represents the Postulant, and Ileana Cosân-zeana represents Initiation, Higher Knowledge, Doctrine, symbolism analogous to the Shulamite in the Song of Songs.

¹³ In the technique of awakening the serpent, the Science of Rhythm is applied in the dual form of the Science of the Word (mantra-vidya) and the Science of Breath (pranayama); this traditional science of rhythm is the basis for the rationale behind verbal incantations (mantra), symbolic figures (yantra) and ritual gestures (mudra) as supports for the inner act.

¹⁴ Initiatory death has a symbolic duration of three and a half days – half of the seven-day cycle.

The intelligent heart (QALB-AQEL) in Sufism (Dr. J.H. Probst-Biraben): Sufism, esoteric and mystical, affirms the supremacy of Love, the virtue of the heart, as a means of approaching God and higher knowledge, without distinguishing it from intelligence.

Orthodox Sufis, such as Ghazali, repeat everywhere: "our religion, our life, is love".

Westerners, accustomed since Descartes to an artificial and false analysis of the human soul, speak of the Heart, understanding by this exclusively affectivity, i.e. emotions, feelings and passions, excluding Intelligence.

The Sufi, enamoured of Unity, does not accept truncated psychology and always speaks of *Qalb-Aqel*, the *Heart-Intelligence*; René Guénon, in turn, attributes both Intelligence and Love to the heart.

Ghazali, in his work "The Miracles of the Heart," states: "The heart is like a basin; knowledge can be brought to it from outside, through the channels of the senses, but if, on the contrary, man closes these channels through solitude and asceticism, and digs deep into his heart, cleansing it of all worldly cares, he will see Knowledge springing from it, filling it completely."

For the greatest teachers, higher knowledge always comes from the heart.

Sheikh-El-Akbar Mohyiddin-Ibn-El-Arabi wrote in his work "Risala" on the Knowledge of the Soul: "Those who follow the mystical method – the Sufis – use the word Heart to designate the Spirit, which proceeds from the divine command and will be in the body as a stranger, returning to its origin and reintegrating into God." In each school, the Soul is given different names. Thus, philosophers call it the rational soul, the Qur'an calls it the Soul of Tranquillity and the Spirit of Divine Solitude, while the Sufis call it the Heart.

Some scholars, such as Asin Palacios, continue – in their studies on Arab Sufism – to distinguish, as Europeans usually do, *between Aqel (intelligence) and Qalb (Heart, affectivity)*.

Mohyiddin is very explicit when, in his work *Risala*, he says: "Certain Sufis maintain that the heart has an eye like the body, and that man sees the exterior with his external bodily eye, and the Essences with the

inner eye of the Heart he sees the Essences. The Spirit of Silence, that is, the Heart, seeks nothing other than Divine Knowledge, and is satisfied with nothing else."

It is understood that the Heart-Consciousness, called by some modern Sufis Qalb-Aqel, is not the region of agitated and troubled emotional life, as described by poets. This conception of the Heart-Intelligence does not refer exclusively to the vital role of the physiological organ, but on the contrary extends it – the Heart being, for Sufis, the centre of all physiological, ethical and spiritual life. It is the permanent domain where the transitory creature meets the Eternal God, and it is also the Bridge between the Primordial, infinite Essence and the Secondary, finite Creature. It is the substance of the Perfect, immortal Being, related to the imperfect and mortal Creature, the relationship between the Universal and the Individual. The heart is the link between the two Worlds, the Macrocosm and the Microcosm.

In the Islamic world, it is said that "if man does not learn and act with all his heart, it is as if he were doing nothing."

To echo René Guénon's statement in his remarkable article "The Radiant Heart and the Fiery Heart," the attribution of Intelligence to the Heart is a notion that stems from the Primordial Tradition.

Arab mystics consider the Heart "as the Seat of Intelligence, but not of that entirely individual faculty which is reason, but of Universal Intelligence (El-Aqlu), related to the human being, which it penetrates from within and illuminates with its radiance."

Intelligence and Love are complementary, aspects of the same principle, just as El-Hay, together with the Sufis, maintain that the Heart is Intelligent.

Thus, according to René Guénon's comparison: The Sun, or Fire, warms – this is the role of Love – and at the same time illuminates – and this is the role of Intelligence.

Katha-Upanishad (KRM / Mircea Eliade):

Introductory note: *Katha-Upanishad* is one of the Indian texts that has enjoyed the most enthusiastic reception in Europe.

According to Brahmanic tradition, it is part of the Black Yajurveda (Krishna Yajurveda). The legend refers to Nachiketas' visit to

the kingdom of Death. From the outset, it is noteworthy that a mortal addresses the god of Death, Yama, in order to be initiated and to discover the ultimate reality that lies behind life and death. Yama tries to tempt Nachiketas by offering him riches and pleasures – which had long been the ideal of Vedic society – but Nachiketas persists, asking him for knowledge.

The text clearly states what this "knowledge" is. The connection between death and initiation, Nachiketas' journey to the realm of Death (i.e. Hell) has correspondences and is explained by other legends such as Gilgamesh, Orpheus, etc., which express the same experiential knowledge, obtained outside human conditions.

Memra no. 2 – breviary of ideas

Gnosis: A traditional civilisation is always the expression, in the social order, of the Universal Principles, which constitute the body of metaphysical doctrine, on whose truths such a civilisation is based. Within an organised community, social functions correspond to spiritual realities. The hierarchy of these functions derives from the natural hierarchy of the Principles that underlie them. In such an arrangement, individuals fit into the function that each has to perform, according to their own nature. Thus, each individual element is placed in the position that naturally belongs to it, unlike in non-traditional or anti-traditional societies, where things happen in a completely different way, where anyone can always fulfil any function – an aberration deriving, as a direct application, from egalitarian prejudices that obviously generate serious social and, above all, spiritual disorders.

Today, *traditional civilisations* include Islamic, Hindu, Chinese and Tibetan civilisations; closer to us was that of the much-ignored medieval "Christianity" which, without reaching the perfection of other traditional forms, represented what the West was able to achieve in terms of a true spiritual organisation of the community.

Knowledge holds the highest place in the hierarchy of values on which a traditional civilisation is based, as it is the adaptation of the intellect to the very essence of Truth and the bridge between the human spirit and the realm of metaphysical realities, on whose expression such a civilisation is built.

of the intellect to the very essence of Truth and the bridge between the human spirit and the realm of metaphysical realities, on whose expression such a civilization is built.

Knowledge was also the supreme value within medieval Christianity, and the height of spiritual achievements that were accomplished at that time, from the Gothic Cathedral to Dante's Divine Comedy, from St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* to the unseen work of the Hermeticists, the Templars, the Knights of the Rose Cross, a height that has not been reached since in the Western world.

Living exclusively in the world of externality, multiplicity and transience, man today is a slave to the crudest aspect of nature. Matter reigns over the masses, who are ruled by all their instincts, it being the supreme good whose conquest is the goal of both the ordinary man and the man of science, who strives only for the practical, technical application of knowledge. Matter scatters the human mind into an apparent, external and fragmented world, where the synthesis of true knowledge can no longer be achieved. That is why the modern Westerner, a slave to matter, can never be a man of true contemplative understanding, but is always a man of reason, a man of emotion and sensation, or a man of action, with all the pride of his deficiencies and, at the same time, a victim and instrument of the Devil, who is not just an image, but a very precise reality. The Devil is for now the master of the many, whom he guides all the more easily towards the fulfilment of his goals, as by remaining unknown, in the shadows, he allows them to believe more in their own initiative. However, the few who know or sense the Truth, in order to fulfil the Law, will place themselves at the service of the One from whom the Law proceeds, and will walk the straight path of Knowledge, the only weapon that has the power to defeat evil, and the only tool that can restore spiritual balance to man and traditional order to the world.

True Knowledge means the identification of consciousness with the known object; in this sense, the transcendental Knowledge of the Supreme Reality is the Union with the Supreme Principle and the metaphysical Realisation of the Absolute. This Realisation is the death of the transitory man for this world of relativity and illusion, and at the same time the re-

birth of the being into the immutable reality of the world of Universal Principles, by placing consciousness in the main Centre of Total Reality.

This True Man will accomplish the work of regenerating a world petrified in the death of the Spirit, and of restoring the spiritual Order, which will mark the beginning of the Age that will follow the chaos of this world, which carries within itself the seeds of its own collapse, like the diabolism from whose venom this chaos feeds.

In the service of the One who will inaugurate the imminent beginning of the new cycle, the chosen few are preparing for the final affirmation of the victory of Truth, under the adamantine sign of Gnosis.

The conditions of initiation (René Guénon): The confusion between the esoteric and initiatory realm and the mystical realm seems to have never been as widespread as it is today. Currently, it is fashionable to label even Eastern doctrines as "mystical."

Mysticism is often considered to be "passive," while initiation is "active," which is true, provided that the meaning of this distinction is clarified. In the case of mysticism, the individual limits himself to receiving only what is presented to him and as it is presented, without intervening in any way, which represents the main danger for him. In the case of initiation, on the contrary, the individual takes the initiative of a "achievements" that will continue methodically, under rigorous and uninterrupted control. This initiative is not enough, for it is obvious that the individual cannot surpass himself by his own means, but it is the starting point of any "achievement" for the initiate, while the mystic has none.

It is often very difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish false mysticism from true mysticism; the mystic is, by definition, an isolated and "irregular" person, precisely because he does not possess pure knowledge.

There are some ignorant people who imagine that one can "initiate" themselves, which is a contradiction, because they forget that the word "initium" means "entrance" or "beginning", confusing initiation with the work that must subsequently be done in order for this initiation, which was virtual at the beginning, to become

fully effective. Initiation, understood in this way, is what in all traditions is known as the "second birth".

We are no longer in the primordial age, when all people normally and spontaneously possessed a state that today is associated with a high degree of initiation. We are in Kali-Yuga, that is, in a time when spiritual knowledge has become hidden, and when only some can still attain it, if they are in the necessary conditions to obtain it. One of these conditions is precisely the one we are talking about, just as another condition is an effort that people in earlier times did not need to make, because spiritual growth took place in them as naturally as physical growth.

To understand this better, we can use the following analogy: all beings that will develop during a cycle are contained from the beginning, in a subtle embryonic state, in the "Egg of the World", so why should they not be born in a physical state through themselves, without parents?

The states achieved by the mystic are not quite the same as those of the initiate, and if their achievement is not subject to the same laws, it is because they are in fact something different.

Thus, the purpose of belonging to a traditional organisation should be clarified, as it cannot in any way be exempt from the inner work that each person must do for themselves, and which is necessary in order to bear fruit effectively. Those who have been designated as custodians of initiatory knowledge cannot transmit it in its entirety, just as the teacher in secular education communicates only bookish formulas to his students. What can be learned are only the preparatory methods for achieving these states; what can be brought in from outside in this regard is at most an aid, a support that greatly facilitates the work to be done.

Therefore, the actual transmission of initiation is essentially the transmission of a "spiritual influence".

The stages of initiation, like those of the hermetic "Great Work", which is essentially one of its symbolic expressions, reproduce the stages of the cosmogonic process. It can be said that the aptitudes or possibilities inherent in individual nature are nothing more than raw material, that is, pure potentiality, in which nothing is developed or differentiated.

differentiated. This is the chaotic and dark state that initiatory symbolism makes correspond to the profane world and in which the being who has not yet reached the "second birth" finds itself. In order for this chaos to take shape and be organised, an initial vibration must be communicated to it by the spiritual powers, which the Hebrew Genesis describes as *Elohim*. This vibration is the *Fiat Lux* that illuminates chaos and represents the necessary starting point for all subsequent developments. From an initiatory point of view, this illumination is specifically constituted by the transmission of "spiritual influence" we mentioned earlier. Thus, by virtue of this influence, the spiritual possibilities of the being are no longer the mere potentiality of before, but have become a virtuality ready to unfold in action through the various stages of initiatory realisation.

It could be said that collective initiation involves three conditions that occur successively and that can correspond to the three terms "potentiality," "virtuality," and "actuality": 1) "qualification" constituted by certain possibilities inherent in the individual's own nature and representing *the raw material* on which the initiatory work will have to reflect; 2) the transmission, through affiliation with a traditional organisation, of a "*spiritual influence*," giving the individual the "enlightenment" that will allow them to order and develop these possibilities that they carry within themselves; 3) inner work through which, with the help of external "adjuvants" or "supports", especially in the initial stages, this development will be achieved gradually, causing the individual to pass, step by step, through different degrees of the initiatory hierarchy, in order to lead them to the final goal of "Liberation" or "Supreme Identity".

Dhikr (Dr. J.H. Probst-Biraben): in the discontinuous and feverish environments of business and pleasure, the lust for gold and artificial intoxication, for ostentatious luxury, does not allow for an interest in *esotericism*, *initiation*, true *metaphysics*, or even *mysticism*, as supports and goals of life.

In India, China, and Tibet, even in the Muslim world, things are different, and for people who live there, materiality has much less significance than spirituality.

The most accomplished are *the* rare authentic *Sufis*, but all kinds of enthusiasts and believers can also be found in the rest of Islamic society, lovers of what is deeper, more inner, even of the uncreated Supreme. Not everyone is suited to the name *Sufi*, which is reserved only for those who live the teachings of a Master (*Sheikh, Pir* or *Murshid*) and who carry on these teachings; many limit themselves to the surerogatory, purifying, soothing devotion of the Khwan brotherhoods, *the foqara*¹⁵ or the poor before *Allah*.

Initiation and *esoteric teaching* should not be confused with the more or less severe *mysticism* of the third Muslim orders. The brotherhoods, called "tariqa" (paths) for this reason, have stages ranging from prayer, litany, religious song or dance (*sama* or *idjdeb*) to the contemplation and ecstasy of a few disciples who are gifted in different ways. Thus, the Arabic word for *litany*, particular to a *tariqa*, if repeated by the *foqara* together (in assembly, *the* so-called *hadra*) or individually in their oratory, after the five prayers of Islam, can take on considerable significance, going beyond the usual devotional meanings, taking on metaphysical meanings and even leading to the most ineffable inner experiences.

The *dhikr* is an adjuvant, a stimulant, a key, which varies according to the categories of people. It is almost always a short Arabic phrase, easy to remember and repeat, which has a high religious significance. It should be as *exoteric* as possible for ordinary believers and *esoteric* for chosen followers. For those in the first category, *dhikr* is an additional pious practice, an act of faith, while for the others it is a subject of meditation and contemplation.

Some distinguish several types: *dhikr spoken aloud* and *dhikr spoken in the heart*, mental and emotional, *dhikr of imitation*, spoken by the whole community, and *dhikr of initiation*, collective and individual. In all cases, it is the same litanies ("*la illaka ila Allah*" or "*stafir Allah*"), very widespread, repeated hundreds and thousands of times, aloud or silently. It

¹⁵ *Foqara* – plural, *faqir* – singular = poor.

easily admit the multiplicity of statements that these formulas imply. Thus, in the first case, the meaning is "there is no God but Allah; that Allah alone exists; that there is no being except Allah" etc., etc., etc., while in the other case, the meaning is that "Allah forgives the sins and imperfections of all; separation from the One etc.", the interpretation being much broader.

Some formulas are very short, simple divine attributes: *la Rahim* – O Merciful One!, *la Haiz* – O Living One!, *la Quiyum* – O Unchanging One!, often even the simple *Hua-Hu* – He.

By unfolding his own potentialities, the disciple experimentally realises certain *states of existence*, either successive or simultaneous, but only under the guidance of a Master.

Awakened through initiation, the disciple – often referred to as a *murid* – who has received the dhikr from *the Sheikh*, but especially *the traditional right* to use it according to his abilities, will or will not ascend the stages of the traditional path. The Sheikh has transmitted only the seed, by virtue of the "spiritual influence" (*Baraka* – blessing), which ascends back from Master to Master, from initiate to initiator, to the origins of the chain of tradition, to *Ali*¹⁶, and from him to the Unseen, the principle of Spiritual Tradition.

In general terms, all brothers are shown three stages that lead to Muslim perfection and even to higher contemplative states:

1) *Islam* – submission, obedience to the prescriptions of the Koran; 2) *Iman* – active faith; 3) *Ihsân* – a felt and especially lived understanding of the Divine. *Ihsân* cannot be attained without fully possessing the first two stages.

One may note the imprudence of certain authors who take dhikr as a simple mechanical, mind-numbing litany, viewing with disdain the *dervishes* who fervently chant Arabic words, exalted by ritual formulas. Therefore, dhikr pronounced with indifference

¹⁶ *The first Imam, Ali* (b. 600 AD, d. 40 Hijri / 661 AD) was the son of the Prophet's paternal uncle, Abu Talib, who had raised the Prophet as his own son and protected him after he began his mission. According to the Shiites, Ali was the first to accept, at the age of ten, the new religion revealed by God to the Prophet.

Without knowing even one of its many meanings, reciting it is nothing but a futile exercise.

Such a formula is never pronounced: a) without perfect bodily cleanliness; b) after consuming illicit foods; c) in the presence of immoral or unbelieving people; d) or in impure places. From a spiritual point of view, the dhikr separates the one who pronounces it from profane concerns, sensations and thoughts, elevating even the ignorant. When repeated in a large gathering, it is both a *dhikr of initiation* and *imitation*. Every individual in the crowd is a member of a *tariqa*, a *faqir* who has acquired dhikr from a *Sheikh* or his deputy (*moqaddem*).

Almost always, such a *hadra* is held in a suitable place, in *the zauia*, a kind of monastery (or *tekke*), often in a mosque, either in the chapel hall (*qubba*) or in the local sanctuary.

Advanced followers take part in communal dhikr, which purifies and uplifts, but does not necessarily give rise to higher ecstasies or contemplation.

Individual dhikr, which takes the initiation further, is done according to the guidance of the master who guides those he considers capable of spiritual ascension, in proportion to their aptitudes. It also requires observing silence, conditions of darkness or semi-darkness, moderate postures, appropriate body attitudes, and especially retreating to a cell or cave, which is called a *khelua*.

In Eastern societies, where *the Word* is always considered an important creative principle, pronouncing it aloud is recommended as having the power to harmonise the body and soul. Unlike what happens with some Christians, here it is not a question of conquering the body, of weakening it, but on the contrary of making it serve spiritual ascension.

All these conditions do not seek to silence and render the physical man powerless, but to place the whole man, body and spirit, in the most appropriate attitude for attaining states superior to reality.

Individual dhikr will go beyond the mode of litany *from the mouth*, turning into meditation on its meanings, on the feeling of its true nature and its true action.

To remove auditory distraction, some practitioners will do it *mentally*, in silence, and then it will be called dhikr from the heart.

The effects of *collective*, audible, more or less mechanical dhikr and those of *individual* dhikr, which takes place in silence, are artificial subdivisions, since the latter – instead of higher ecstasy – can only produce mundane physical effects. In all these cases, we are talking about modes of practice that tend towards *the attunement of sound and rhythm with thought*. The possibilities inherent in sound and rhythm unfold under the ritual direction of spiritual leaders, leading to momentary states of mental concentration and emotional intensity, which are almost mechanical in the case of collective dhikr. It is likely that some inner perceptions begin to develop under the action of dhikr, while ordinary sensations are put to sleep.

The sheikh uses the forces produced by the group reciting the dhikr to help a chosen disciple reach the stages of his spiritual path (raptures and ecstasies). He often uses them, for example, to heal the sick.

The adjuvants of dhikr are flute music, drumbeats, and actions to attune the other senses by burning incense (frankincense, sandalwood, etc.). The chanting of words is aided by movement (*idjdeb*), which can be either a slight regular nodding of the head or a dance involving the whole body.

Some aspects of modern pseudo-spiritualism (Yang / Marcel Avramescu): so far, considerations have been made on *the Hermetic Tradition* because it represents the most typical Western form of Esotericism. Next, we will address some traditional, Near Eastern forms, such as Jewish *Qabbalah* and Islamic *Sufism*, whose infiltration into Western esotericism proper cannot be overlooked. Then, we will address some aspects of Christian exotericism, represented in particular by *the little-understood Rosicrucians*.

Due to the existence of numerous currents of false esotericism, as well as all the "occult" practices that abound, especially in the modern Western world, Westerners who today tend towards transcendental knowledge find themselves, after their first attempts at orientation, in the painful and depressing chaos of multiple and tangled "paths", each claiming to hold the exclusive "truth". Westerners who seek absolute Truth today find spiritualism, occultism, theosophy, anthroposophy, these being only a few of the faces of the new "spiritualism". Those who seek the true Doctrine can only find it today in the East, where Tradition is still alive.

However, those (very few) who still seek in good faith can easily avoid these traps through which the Powers of Darkness constantly try to divert anyone who wants to answer the call of the Absolute from their path.

Here are some examples of presenting "own concepts" as traditional dogmas in order to give them authority: *Allan Kardec* speaks of biblical and evangelical spiritualism; *Papus* finds his "occultism" even in Atlantis; H.P. Blavatsky improvises a Tibetan-Hindu origin for her "theosophy," while her collaborator A.P. Sinnett, ignoring the heterodoxy of Buddhism, invents an "esoteric Buddhism," no less absurd than the "esoteric Christianity" of the other theosophist *Annie Besant*, or the famous "liberal Catholicism" of *C.W. Leadbeater*; *Rudolf Steiner* presents, through transparent allusions, "anthroposophy" as a... modernised Rosicrucianism, identical to the American neo-Rosicrucianism of his dissident disciple *Max Heindel*, and so on. All these pseudo-traditions are, in reality, various individual conceptions of their protagonists, and various conceptions that are very common in the modern Western world, therefore, not at all traditional, and some even anti-traditional: the "communication with the dead" of spiritualists, as well as "reincarnation".

Everywhere, it is a question of achieving, in various ways, a "contact with the Unseen", whether this contact is made, as in spiritualism, in a crude way, such as through the leg of a table, or in a more refined way, through theosophical "clairvoyance." Regardless of whether it is done through various methods of "occult training" (from the multiple Anglo-American pseudo-yogic systems

to Bo Yin Ra's pseudo-mantrism, and to the pseudo-tantric system advocated by *Evola*), in all these cases, these are very dangerous, even deadly practices.

The modern aspirant to *initiation* achieves, at best, a pseudo-initiation through self-delusion, because true initiation can never be attained "by oneself," as all neo-spiritualists claim. True initiation is required, and those who are qualified to be initiated attain it only within an authentic initiatory organisation. Unfortunately, in recent centuries, there has been no authentic initiatory organisation in the Western world.

Against the capital errors of pseudo-spiritualist systems, the unanimous testimony of all traditional orthodox doctrines is strong enough to reduce them to nothingness. They affirm the absolute transcendence of the Principle and therefore, as an immediate consequence, the relativity of the human state of existence. Human individuality, far from constituting that "core of spirituality," is in reality a contingent and transitory element; from the point of view of pure metaphysics, it can be said that, in relation to the Principle, it is nothing more than a mere illusion, the Principle being beyond space, beyond time, beyond existence, and beyond any other determination. This results in the lack of a metaphysical foundation not only for individualism and anthropocentrism, but also for naturalism on the one hand and evolutionism on the other, as well as for scientism in general – all of which reduce Total Reality to the narrow limits of becoming. This Total Reality is Universal Possibility, truly unlimited, like Metaphysics, whose field of research is precisely that of Universal Principles; therefore, metaphysical Realisation, true initiation, is not a shackling of consciousness within the limits of the human state of existence but, on the contrary, a total overcoming of these limits and of all limits; consequently, all the supposed revealers of mysteries, who emphasise their ignorance of "man," "I," "nature," "cosmos," or "evolution," are in reality nothing more than deceivers.

If certain detailed concepts of neo-spiritualist systems are mentioned, it is because they have largely succeeded in spreading, penetrating the general mentality

causing a worrying disturbance of the spirits (we refer to reincarnation and communication with the dead). This ideal of communicating with those who have passed into a state of existence other than the human one, thus losing any possibility of contact in the latter state, is nothing but an aberration.

If, exceptionally, someone can transcend the human state while still alive, then of course they can achieve such communication; but this is the case of rare initiates, not of spiritualist "mediums," whose abnormal abilities always belong to the subconscious and not to the superconscious.

This possibility of "communication with the dead," as well as that of "reincarnation," is formally denied in all traditional doctrines. All traditional doctrines affirm the indefinite multiplicity of states of existence, a multitude that derives from the infinity of Universal Possibility; the repetition of the same state of existence for the same being would therefore mean a limitation of the Infinite - an absurdity that could only arise in the completely ametaphysical mentality of modern Westerners.

From the above, one thing is clear: the unspoken tendency of all neo-spiritualisms is to sever man from any connection with the living trunk of Tradition, reducing him to total metaphysical incapacity by confining his consciousness within human limits and reducing it to the plane of nature. Whatever the claims of these neo-spiritualisms may be, they are in reality nothing more than false spiritualisms, which their unknown supporters conceive as means of chaining man to the Earth, prey prepared for the Subterranean Powers.

Sri Aurabindo (KRM / Mircea Eliade): *Aurabindo Ghose* is, today, the most "accomplished" man in India. The *ashram* he runs - located near the French colonial city of Pondicherry - is perhaps the only place where traditional science and technology remain unaltered by the stupidities of theosophy and the irrelevance of positivism.

His main doctrinal work is *Essays on the Gita* (2 vols. Arya Publishing House, Calcutta; vol. I, ed. II, 1926; vol. II, 1928), which appeared many years ago in the *Arya* magazine edited by *Aurabindo Ghose*. Under the guise of a commentary on *the Bhagavad Gita*, *Sri Aurobindo* expounds, with all its psychological, ethical and

social implications, the traditional metaphysics of India. It is the clearest and most organic exposition written in any European language. Alongside René Guénon's *Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines*, *Aurabindo Ghose's* book is the only authoritative work on traditional Indian truths that can be recommended to European readers without fear of being misled. It is a lucid and pedagogical *Imitatio Christi*.

Starting from the text of the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Aurabindo Ghose* explains the planes of human experience, indicates the hierarchy of these planes, traces the nature of human activities and their transformation through *phalatrishna vairagya* (lit. "renunciation of the fruit of actions"), that is, the autonomisation of human action, understood as a force necessary for the cosmic economy. Reading this book is a must for anyone who wants to learn about an exoteric tradition from the source, and it would be a good read for our contemporaries who suffer from that serious spiritual illness called "confusion of planes," the confusion of different orders of reality.

Aurabindo Ghose, son of a Bengali doctor, completed his education in England, preparing for a career in administration. He failed the exam because he did not know how to ride a horse. *Aurabindo Ghose* then joined the nationalist movement, but never actually engaged in politics; he wrote about Hindu education and the need to restore the Hindu soul. During this time, he became thoroughly acquainted with the traditional metaphysical doctrines of India, after having studied Western philosophy and mysticism with great passion in England. He found himself in a period of preparation, of intimate, unconfessed spiritual experiences. A new world was opening up to him. In this state of total inner transformation, he was caught up in a plot by the English authorities to implicate and convict him. His escape to Pondicherry put an end to all external, political or civil concerns.

In Pondicherry, he lived as a recluse for several years; then he created a small *ashram* outside the city, where he gathered a few disciples, but well-trained ones. He continued to write during this time, but gradually gave up writing completely and shut himself in his cell in *the ashram*, from which he emerged only three times a year for the last 15 years to teach his disciples orally.

Since becoming completely reclusive, *Sri Aurabindo* has done nothing but explore the spiritual worlds, which he has managed to experience. Nothing about this is communicated outside *the ashram*. There was a time when it was rumoured that *Aurobindo Ghose* wanted to try another "external" experience, namely, the creation of a superior human race, with couples being chosen in such a way that their offspring would naturally be endowed with the possibilities of experiencing the higher worlds, but nothing came of it. Master of the entire Indian tradition and the instruments of supersensory knowledge, he has long surpassed the stages of human fulfilment. In his ashram, however, the work is continuous, and much of the knowledge about India comes from there, via France.

The metaphysical irrelevance of the spatial condition (Frithjof Schuon): Space is a manifestation, a symbol of the unlimited realm of divine possibility. Movement comes from the impulse to escape spatial limitation; bodies come into being according to the law of condensation in the field of action of matter. Aspirituality, and the removal from Eden, of bodily limitation is revealed by the force of gravity, which prevents the body from enjoying all the possibilities of space. The body is fullness; its fullness weighs it down, constrains it, limits it, causes it joy and pain: that is why every movement is a desire for freedom. Freedom, however, is a mere notion, not a fact, for if it existed, it would reduce all space to nothingness; it would be the totality and comprehensiveness of all spatial possibilities. Every movement is an impulse towards liberation from the densification through which every thing and being is formed around a centre, a core, just as a cosmic structure is formed around a sun. It can be said that expansion and gravity are causally related, since the impulse to exhaust the possibilities of space, and thus to defeat it, imprints a tendency towards expansion; but this unfolding of expansion results in an increase in weight, an increase that testifies that space is not divine omnipotence, but only one of its symbols. Just as manifestation is, in itself, a form of decomposition, and its content a decomposed truth, so too does space contain, as a reflex of manifestation, on the one hand, indefinite multiplication, and on the other, indefinite division; on the one hand, the impulse from the centre towards

periphery and therefore expansion, and on the other hand fixation in the centre and therefore weight.

Indeed, it can be said that the Divine dwells in the centre, but in manifestation, the interior is turned outward, and the centre of the manifested world, which space mirrors, divides into countless nuclei of consciousness, from whose depths the One Spirit turns again towards the Divine Centre.

Truth is not found in space, for space generates only division and contradiction. Truth is pure affirmation; pure negation is not possible. Everything that can be said about space has both a macrocosmic and a spiritual meaning.

Similar things can be said about time and form, about number, about life...

LI – TSE: The Taoist sage *Li-Tse* (4th century BC) is credited with the treatise *Tsh'ung Hu-Tse-Te-Tshenn-King* (The Transcendent Book of Emptiness and Perfect Rectitude), reproduced in the magazine *Le Voile d'Isis* (Aug.-Sept. 1932).

Initiatory texts in general, Eastern ones in particular, and especially Far Eastern ones, are rarely translated correctly into a Western language and, even more rarely, have been accompanied by a correct interpretation. This is easy to understand if one considers the mentality of modern Westerners, which is the result of a deviation that makes them completely incapable of true metaphysical thinking, whereas the modes of thinking of the East and the Far East are of an eminently metaphysical intellectual structure. For this reason, Eastern texts are difficult for Western researchers to understand, and Far Eastern texts can only be approached by those who are truly capable of metaphysical thinking.

For Westerners who aspire to initiatory knowledge, the texts of the Chinese Tradition represent the highest form of expression of doctrinal truths that is accessible to them. The few fragments from *Li-Tse* have been specifically chosen to serve as an introduction to this particular form of expression of metaphysical thought.

The oldest traditional text in China is *the Yi-King* (Book of Changes), attributed to Emperor *Fo-Hi* (3700 BC), whose name

actually refers to the priestly caste, which adapted the data of the Primordial Tradition to the particular characteristics of the yellow race. The form in which this adaptation presents the principles of the Doctrine is that of linear signs, resulting from the combination of *Yang* (the active principle), represented by a continuous line, and *Yin* (the passive principle), represented by a discontinuous line, signs that give rise to the *eight trigrams* (*kua*), which in turn generate the *64 hexagrams* of the Book of Changes.

In the 4th century BC, it became necessary, also in China, to readapt the Doctrine, so that the metaphysical foundation of the Tradition, established by *Lao-Tse*, which constituted the actual initiatory Doctrine, traditional Chinese esotericism, while exotericism - derived from its principles, involving in particular the application of the Doctrine to the conditions of social life - was built on the precepts of *Kong-Fu-Tse* (*Confucius*).

Taoism and *Confucianism* represent two aspects of a single Tradition, the latter deriving from the former, to which it remains totally subordinate. Thus, *Taoism*, represented by a very small intellectual elite, constitutes the true inner spiritual centre. Similarly, in the Taoist initiate's conception, the "True Man" is the one who has realised within himself the principle of "non-action" (*wu-wei*) and who, by his mere presence, determines the unfolding of the entire manifestation.

The Taoist sage *Tshoang-Tse* states in his teachings that: "to him who has attained perfect impassivity, and to whom life and death are equally indifferent, even the collapse of the universe would cause him no disturbance". Scrutinising reality, he arrived at the immutable truth, at the knowledge of the single universal principle. He allows all beings to manifest themselves according to their destinies, remaining at the immovable centre of all destinies... this spirit, absolutely independent, is the master of men; if he wished to gather them into a crowd, on the appointed day they would all run; but he does not wish to be served."

The absolute transcendence of the Principle is a common element in all traditional doctrines, but nowhere is it more clearly and insistently affirmed than in traditional Taoist texts.

The four great stages: Master *Li-Tse* said: "Considering that Yin and Yang fill Heaven and Earth, that every form is born from

Inform, that Heaven and Earth blossom in harmony, the ancient sages (*sheng-jen*) said: It is a great Transformation (*t'ai i*), it is a great Origin (*t'ai tsh'u*), it is a great Beginning (*t'ai she*) and it is a great Unfolding (*t'ai su*)."

In the great Transformation, there is still no mention of *k'i* (undifferentiated primeval substance); the great Origin is the Beginning of *k'i*; the great Beginning is the beginning of forms; the great Unravelling is the beginning of sensible things. The state when *k'i*, forms and sensible things are confused without any distinction is called *hunn-lunn* (chaos). *Hunn-lunn* means that all beings are confused and form a chaos, without any distinction between them. If you look, you do not see it; if you listen, you do not hear it; if you try to grasp it, you do not touch it. That is why it is called Transformation (*Yi*), as it is not limited by any form. *Yi* changes and becomes one; one changes and becomes seven; seven changes and becomes nine¹⁷; nine is the terminal point, but it changes – in turn – and becomes one.

One is the starting point of the genesis of forms. What is fine and light rises and becomes Heaven; what is turbid and heavy descends and becomes Earth; *what* remains in the middle void becomes Man. That is why Heaven and Earth contain the essence, from which the ten thousand beings originate.

Thus, Humanity occupies an intermediate place between Heaven and Earth; that is why it is sometimes compared to the body of a turtle, enclosed between two shells, the upper (curved) one symbolising Heaven, and the lower (flat) one symbolising Earth; the whole animal represents a symbol of the Universe. It should be emphasised that this place occupied by Man is not only intermediate, but also central, corresponding to the "Invariable Middle". "The True Man"

¹⁷ "Seven is an allusion to the genesis of the seven celestial bodies, the seven rectors of Chinese philosophy. Nine, the last of the simple numbers, is considered in China to be the number of the main constellations. Nine is equal to five plus four, and five is the number of natural agents (wood, fire, earth, metal and water). Four is the number of seasons or main cyclical phases. Finally, seven and nine are reminiscent of the symbolism of the *Yi-King*."

¹⁸ Understood in the sense of "very subtle reality", not as complementary to substance. In this latter sense, it must be said that Heaven contains the "essence" and Earth the "substance" of the ten thousand beings.

¹⁹All beings in the Universe, manifestation in its entirety.

is the natural mediator between Heaven and Earth, because it achieves the "perfectly balanced union" of Yang and Yin and because it participates directly in the K'i remaining in the median void, that is, in a Principle prior to the distinction between Heaven and Earth.

The conditional and the unconditional: the function of Heaven is to give life and cover; that of Earth is to form and carry; that of the Wise is to teach and transform; that of beings is to submit to what is appropriate for them. Thus, the way of Heaven and Earth consists in the alternation of Yin and Yang; the teaching of the wise consists in the alternation of clemency and justice; what is appropriate for the ten thousand beings consists in the alternation of kindness and harshness. Each follows the path that suits them, but cannot escape their situation.

The principle can be Yin and it can be Yang; it can be good and it can be harsh; it can be short and it can be long; it can be round or square, life or death, hot or cold, it can float or sink, it can appear or disappear, be black or yellow, sweet or bitter, smelly or fragrant. Thus, in Taoism we find the idea

"universal illusion" of the Hindu Mâyâ.

The Doctrine of Illusion: Lao-Tsh'eng Tse learns the doctrine of illusion from Master Yin-Wenn, who for three years has taught him nothing. Lao-Tsh'eng Tse asks him to point out his mistakes and allow him to withdraw. The master greeted him (a sign of respect) and led him into his room, where he said: "Once, when Lao-Tan (Lao-Tse) left for the West, he told me that the vital spirit and the bodily form are both illusions (*huan*). The production of a being through generation and modification, its transformation through the play of *yin* and *yang*: this is what is called life and death. That which exhausts the number (destiny), penetrates transformation, determines forms, causes mutation: this is what is called change and illusion. That which produces beings is a marvellous action, and its works are profound; we cannot investigate it, nor can we see its end. That which determines forms, its action is manifest, and its works are superficial, so that appearance and disappearance follow one another. To understand that life and death are but illusion and change is the key to the doctrine of illusion.

Lao-Tsh'eng Tse returned home, meditated deeply on the master's words, and succeeded in becoming the master of life and death, able to change, at will, "the order of the four seasons, to produce storms in winter and ice in summer, to change birds into quadrupeds and vice versa, but until the end of his life he did not reveal his art, so that posterity could not benefit from it."

Taoist works support the idea that life is only a special and temporary state, and death is the transition to another state.

Cosmic movement: in his book, *Huang-Ti* said: "The form that moves (that manifests itself) does not produce a form, but a shadow. The sound that moves does not produce a sound, but an echo. Non-Being (*U*) that moves does not produce Non-Being, but Being (*Iu*). Every form necessarily has an end. What lies beyond this end? No one knows. The Way (*Tao*) (of beings) is to end in the Origin that had no beginning and to move towards the Origin that is beyond time. That which has life returns to non-life (*fu-sheng*), that which has form returns to formlessness (*u-hing*). Non-life does not produce non-life but life, formlessness does not produce formlessness but produces forms. Anyone who wants to prolong their life and prevent death is mistaken in their calculations. The totality of vital forces (*tsing-shenn*) is part of Heaven, bones and flesh being part of Earth. What comes from Heaven is pure and expansive; what comes from Earth is cloudy and cohesive. When the totality of vital forces leaves the body, each of them returns to its true home. That is why the dead are called *Kuei*, because they have returned to their true abode. *Huang-Ti* said: all vital forces re-enter through the gate; bones and flesh return to their origin; how could the self be preserved?"²⁰

²⁰Individuality disappears: only the being itself (supra-individual) persists, passing into another state of manifestation.

FATHER MIHAIL AVRAMESCU

Silviu MIRON

"He had all the structural and existential qualities to be a guru¹ ... He was an apparition in the truest sense of the word: he expressed himself fully in the act of appearing."

Andrei PLEȘU

PThe first point I would like to make regarding the subject of this article stems from my research on the first faith, Marcel/Mihail Avramescu's affiliation with the first religion.

Thus, family circumstances show that Marcel Avramescu had parents of the Mosaic religion, which is why the religion in which he received his first name and in which he grew up, until the moment in time and life when Avramescu passed the childhood phase and was able to freely choose his religion, was the Mosaic cult.

Excerpt from ...Ujica's *"Marcel remained the only child of Isidor (a small tailor) and Bella (née Avram), both parents of the Mosaic religion, and it seems normal that they wanted their son to have a minimum basis for his identity."* Ujica also maintains – contrary to the information in circulation – *"that the boy's emergence into the world took place in Craiova (which would also explain the involvement in the Radical episode), where there was an emancipated Sephardic community, not bound by traditional rituals, but instead open to discussion, receptive, dynamic, multilingual and, therefore, with a greater chance of scholarly refinement."*

¹In the sense of spiritual leader.

Marcel Avramescu - first connections with Orthodoxy

I will begin with a quote from his own work: *"...it is not enough to be a top student, nor to have read a popular work, nor even to be what is called a smart boy."*

This explains his preoccupation with unravelling the mysteries of theology and spirituality in general, his desire to penetrate the essence of his intellectual concerns and to provide himself with long-awaited answers. We also consider the influence of the great Mircea Eliade, and I am referring to the year 1925, when he sparked heated debates on the thorny issue of the relationship between science and occultism. The beliefs formed at the school of rationalism, as the basis of progress, met with opposition from beliefs related to the rehabilitation of religion and the fresh revelations of Eastern gnosis. The rebellion of adolescents, captivated by the fashion of often frivolous adherence to a precarious spiritualism supported by random, misleading testimonies with an apparent magical aura, also played a role.

Marcel Avramescu, then in sixth grade, contributed to the high school magazine *Vlăstarul* on chess topics. This was a way of testing and exercising his sharp mind. Other contributors to the magazine included (but were not limited to) Mircea Eliade, succeeded by Alexandru I. Ciorănescu, Alexandru Elian, Constantin Noica, Arșavir Acterian, Nicolae Steinhardt, and Barbu Brezianu.

I have briefly outlined the environment in which the high school student Marcel Avramescu took the bull by the horns and moved on to the phase of externalising his ideas.

The influence of his arguments reached its peak after the publication of his exegesis on *The Crisis of the Modern World* (1931). A devoted emulator for a time, the former student of "Spiru Haret" took up part of his teacher's argument, translated his texts and took care of their popularisation, for which purpose he occasionally published a magazine called *Memra*.

Also conclusive in Marcel Avramescu's analysis of the journey through religions is a quote from his work: "traditional civilisations today are, for example, Islamic, Hindu, Chinese or Tibetan", leaving Christianity with only the aura

of the Middle Ages. "We will not dwell here on the causes that brought down the spiritual edifice of this Christianity." The text was written at a time when he was influenced by the ideas of his mentor, the philosopher René Guénon, as well as those of Vasile Lovinescu, who had just received a Sufi (Alawite) initiation, and Mircea Eliade.

In 1939, he enrolled at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, but suspended his studies due to both the world war and years of forced labour. He completed his studies a decade later.

A turning point in his religious life came in 1946 when he met Father Ioan Kulighin, through whom he came into contact with Hesychasm, with the "prayer of the heart". After a period of great trials and spiritual falls – "perhaps explainable by the ardour with which he wanted to reach the high thresholds of spiritualisation" – he remarried and obtained a parish in Jimbolia, where he remained for 20 years.

The prayer of the heart is a meditation technique based entirely on the tradition of the Eastern Fathers. Saint Gregory Palamas knows as a higher stage of negative theology a more complete and existential apophatism achieved through pure prayer. It is an ecstasy of inner silence, a total cessation of thought in the face of the divine mystery. In the "pure heart" prayer, the mind and heart are united so that neither the mind nor the heart remain alone.

This prayer is done not by raising the heart in the mind but by lowering the mind into the heart. In other words, the mind opens the horizon to the Great Architect, but the realisation of the Self takes place in the heart.

"Strictly speaking, the mind descended into the heart no longer encounters God through the mediation of ideas, but through the feeling of His presence, which allows it to verify in reality what the mind was thinking. Here, the feeling of untouched reality that the mind experiences is realised in the immediate presence of God" ⁴.

² Dr. Mihail Constantineanu.

³ Website www.crestinortodox.ro.

⁴ Priest Dumitru Stăniloae.

Mihail Avramescu - Orthodox priest

Immediately after the war, he became one of the influential intellectuals of the Romanian Orthodox Church, under the name Mihail Avramescu, and later retired to the priesthood.

At his ordination in 1951, he took the pulpit name Mihail Avramescu. He abandoned the Mosaic religion, converted to Orthodoxy, and definitively broke with both avant-gardism and occultism.

He was ordained a priest at the Antim Church, then, after a fierce spiritual and emotional crisis, amplified by divorce, he retired to Banat, initially serving at the parish in Văliug, then at the one in Jimbolia (Simbolia, as he affectionately called it) until 1976.

The writer Marcel Avramescu also changed his identity, becoming Father Mihail Avramescu of Jimbolia. Nicolae Stroescu-Stânișoara writes about Father Mihail Avramescu

"The reign of quantity and the signs of the times" found him prepared: he confronted them, he calmed them, he transfigured them in the courtyard of liturgical intimacy:

"The truest truth about the Calendar is that it has been burning since the beginning of all millennia, its pages consumed in the fiery sunset of each day (...) The secret incandescence of timelessness scatters into the abyss of nothingness any fabrication of ages, days, moments (...) the dark beasts of stupidity and madness perish in the watchful fire of Truth, together with the monstrous Time from which they never ceased to arise."

Thus, the truest Calendar – the only true one – is the one set ablaze in the wild and free flames of Truth (whose Eternity, knowing it, the arsonist reads its certain, steadfast, very serious signs, under any disguise, in any kind of period costume).

If Nicolae Stroescu-Stânișoara transformed time into destiny, Mihail Avramescu set it ablaze in an aura. The earthly virtues of the former were answered by the oriental incantations of the latter. Basil mingled with incense. The outlaw harassed the beast to the threshold of the tamer Hermit. For both know that eternity is the space between moments. That the world will be saved from within, from the mysterious core of things. Where "youth without old age" is.

As is already known, Mihail Avramescu assumed the role of Father in society and in connection with the divine plan.

There is one fact here with which we cannot but agree: the title of parent is the greatest honour that can be bestowed upon Christians. The great honour of being called Father in Christianity is something completely different from a simple legal codification of an oral teaching from the past or a simple exegesis of a written law: it is a question of true fatherhood, and not just legal or metaphorical fatherhood⁵.

And in relation to our mission to be and act as Freemasons, which we have taken upon ourselves, I quote a conclusive thought that should strengthen us in our work:

"How is it that, despite their efforts, the labourers of our time no longer receive grace as they did in the past? Because back then, love reigned and everyone lifted up their neighbour, whereas now love has grown cold and everyone pulls their neighbour down."

The Prayer of the Heart: Whether you are standing, sitting, walking, or lying down, say unceasingly, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!"

In *The Russian Pilgrim*, written by an author who preferred to remain anonymous, the prayer of the heart, referred to in the book as "inner prayer," is shown to be the Christian method contained in the *Philokalia*. The author recommends reading in the following order:

1. The Letter of Nichifor the Monk (in two parts);
2. The book of Saint Gregory of Sinai, except for some short chapters;
3. Saint Simeon the New Theologian, on the three forms of prayer and the word about faith;
4. The Book of Saints Callistus and Ignatius.

The unknown author goes on to say, "In these Fathers, one finds complete guidance and teachings on the inner prayer of the heart, understandable to anyone. If you want more detailed advice, then look in the fourth part, the form of prayer in brief, written by Saint Callistus, Patriarch of Constantinople."

⁵Vitae patrum III.

⁶ Ibid.

Prayer in the heart, also known as the Jesus Prayer, does not interfere with other prayers. A pedagogical question may be asked: which is greater, the Jesus Prayer or the Gospel? The answer can be found in this superb book: "Both are the same, for the divine Name of Jesus Christ encompasses all the truths of the Gospel. The Holy Fathers say that the Jesus Prayer is a summary of the entire Gospel."

Father Cleopa Ilie writes in a unique way about the Prayer of the Heart. He shows that when you practise this prayer, you encounter several obstacles and gives the following example: "A monk told his spiritual father that he had learned to pray with his mind, but that he had no peace in his heart. The monk, that is, the spiritual father, said to his disciple: 'Get out of your head, because there is a fair (market) there. Do you want to have peace while you are praying with your mind? As long as you are praying with your mind, you are in a market of thoughts, your mind runs sometimes to God, sometimes to matter, but get down there into your heart'. Saint Simeon the New Theologian says that you cannot hide your mind anywhere except in your heart, for that is where the Saviour has left its chamber. When you hear the Saviour in the Gospel say, "When you pray, go into your chamber, shut the door, and pray to your Father in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly,"

The chamber of the mind is the heart. When you want to enter the chamber of the heart with your mind, says St. John Climacus, you have to *lock three doors and pass through two customs offices to get there*. The two customs offices are *imagination* and *fantasy*. Let us pray in one position, for God does not look at position; you can even pray lying down. Saint Gregory of Sinai says: "If you are sick and old, lie down and pray, or sit on a chair, as you can, for God knows your weakness." God looks only at the position of the mind and heart. When you are healthy, stand as you should, and when you are sick, stand as you can. I sit in prayer and want to focus my attention on my heart. The first customs office where the devils meet my mind is *imagination*, *fantasy* or *fantasy*. Whether you have imagined something good or something bad, all imaginations have no place during prayer.

The shortest law of prayer is not to imagine anything during prayer. Why? *Because the mind of*

Christ had no imagination, all the saints say this, Father Cleopa continues.

The Paterikon and the Philokalia are fundamental books of Hesychasm. To these are added the Sbornic (Ed. Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2000, two volumes), a collection of (methodological) texts intended to guide the monk seeking Light and Truth. The book appeared in Romania in the 1940s, brought by Ivan Kulîghin (Ioan cel Străin) to the Antim Monastery. The book was compiled by Igumen Hariton (27 July 1936).

Vasile Andru, a well-known Hesychast psychotherapist, speaking about prayer of the mind in the heart, that is, about Hesychasm, said that this prayer is a great gift, quoting the Philokalia, which shows us how "to purify ourselves, how to enlighten ourselves and how to perfect ourselves." Vasile Andru also writes on his website www.vasileandru.ro as a motto: "the layman who practises Hesychasm does not leave the world but leaves worldliness".

Currently, Hesychasm is practised mainly in our country, in the monasteries of Lainici and Lupşa.

Scientists in St. Petersburg have also discovered the "material" mechanism of this divine phenomenon. "Prayer is a powerful remedy," says Valeri Slezin, head of the Neuropsychophysiology Laboratory at the Bekhterev Psychoneurological Research and Development Institute in St. Petersburg. "Prayer not only regulates all processes in the human body, but also repairs the severely damaged structure of consciousness."

Professor Slezin did something incredible – he measured the power of prayer. He recorded the electroencephalograms of monks while they prayed and captured an unusual phenomenon – the complete "shutdown" of the cerebral cortex. Scientists in St. Petersburg have confirmed through experiments that holy water, the sign of the cross, and the ringing of bells can also have healing properties. That is why bells always ring during epidemics in Russia.

If we discuss the heart as an organ from a scientific point of view, it is important to note that science has made several important discoveries. The HeartMath Institute in California, USA, has published some valuable information, namely that when a child is conceived, the heart begins to beat before the brain is formed. The second and most important revelation is that

the human heart generates an energy field that is much larger and more powerful than that of any other organ, including the brain. The third discovery, which is related to the second, is that the heart has its own brain with neurons.

Another heart-related method is currently emerging and gaining momentum, namely "awakening the enlightened heart," also known as merkaba, although this technique involves more than just activating the merkaba. This school was founded by Drunvalo Melchizedek and appears to be a modern one. Despite all the current marketing elements promoting it, I would like to point out that the technique is based on ancient teachings such as those of the Maori tribe of New Zealand, the Hopi Indians, the Kogi tribe, which descends directly from the Mayans, as well as other cultures.

To illustrate part of the technique of "awakening the enlightened heart": when someone is in the Sacred Space of the Heart (not in the mind) and places the tip of the tongue on the roof of the mouth and begins to massage a specific spot, it produces a "sexual" stimulation between the heart and the mind. This powerful stimulation causes the thalamus to be stimulated, which then spreads throughout the brain, leading to powerful alpha wave emissions. After a certain threshold, a green light appears (it may also have bluish or yellowish hues). This light is also mentioned in the Vedas (6,000 years ago). Then, with intention, the gaze of the third eye – which normally looks upwards – is directed forwards, towards the projection of the third eye between the eyebrows. In the Great White Brotherhood, this process is referred to as "bending the flame". Then, in a certain meditative state, the green light transforms into a spiral (or concentric rays) that reaches the pituitary gland. When the third eye looks through the pituitary gland, a sphere of light forms around the head.

In the book "The Sacred Space of the Heart," I describe two methods by which the technique can be achieved.

The masculine path

This is the masculine path to the sacred space of the heart. See or feel yourself leaving your head and travelling down to your throat chakra, and stay here for a moment, feeling the softness of your throat around you. Now, you move towards your heart; you can feel or see your heart in front of you, or see the field of the torus all around you. Go up, where you can

see the top of the smaller torus. Look down into this torus. Feel which direction your torus is spinning, clockwise or counterclockwise, then let your spirit rest at the top of this field, like a leaf on a river, and let yourself be carried by this vortex. As you float spinning in this vortex, you move faster and faster, heading towards its centre. When you reach the centre, feel yourself begin to fall into the centre of the vortex, like water draining away. Let yourself fall freely. At a certain point, you will find yourself in an extremely quiet place where there is no movement.

The feminine path

When you feel or see the heart in front of you, go forward and pass through the membrane of your heart. Once you are inside, simply trust yourself and let your feminine sense take control; let yourself be guided by your intuition.

Begin to move, knowing that your intuition will lead you directly to the sacred space of your heart. At some point, you will stop and find yourself in a very quiet place. Now you are there, in the secret space of your heart. It's so easy!

It is usually a dark and warm place. The first thing you do is ask for light. Light can appear in different ways, sometimes quickly, sometimes gradually; sometimes it is diffuse, sometimes very bright, in exotic colours. If the light does not appear, do not worry, it will eventually appear. Whether you are in light or darkness, be aware of the vibration that is everywhere in the space around you. Listen to it for a moment. Then use your voice to reproduce the sound of this vibration as best you can.

It is very important to remember this vibration. With its help, you will find your way back whenever you want to return. Emitting this sound of vibration softly, you begin to explore.

Look around you and discover what is there. You may see hieroglyphics and drawings engraved on the walls. You do not know what they mean, but you will find out. There may be crystals around you that hold the knowledge of your past. There may be fields of light that hold the knowledge, the records of your wisdom. Hidden in this space is the reason you came to Earth, the purpose for which you are here, alive. Everyone experiences it differently."

PART IV
ANTON DUMITRIU



E BIOGRAPHICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Laurențiu HORODNIC

Anton Dumitriu was born in Brăila on 31 March 1905, where he attended secondary school and high school. He arrived to Bucharest as a student at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Bucharest, where his professors were Gheorghe Țițeica, Dimitrie Pompei, Traian Lalescu, and Octav Onicescu. In 1929, he obtained his degree in mathematics.

Between 1929 and 1933, he was a mathematics teacher at a school in Brăila, then between 1933 and 1938 he was a teacher at the "Mihai Eminescu" High School in Bucharest.

In 1934, Anton Dumitriu became an assistant in the descriptive geometry course at the Polytechnic School in Bucharest.

Meanwhile, he studied philosophy and in 1938 obtained his doctorate in philosophy with the thesis "The Philosophical Foundations of Science" before a committee chaired by Constantin Rădulescu-Motru.

In the same year, he became an assistant in the Logic course at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest, successively holding the positions of lecturer and full professor in the Department of Logic. For five years (1942-1947), he was the editor of the university publication "Caiete de Filosofie" (Philosophy Notebooks) and, between 1944 and 1946, he was the editor of the weekly magazine "Democrația" (Democracy).

He published in both Romanian (Revista de Filosofie, Revista Fundațiilor Regale, etc.) and foreign journals (The Journal of History of Philosophy, Scientia, Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic, Il Contributo, etc.).

Between 1946 and 1948, he was a member of Parliament, but in 1948 he was dismissed from the University along with other professors, including C. Rădulescu Motru, I. Cartoian, etc. Sixteen years later, in 1964, he was appointed researcher at the Academy's Centre for Logic and later head of the Centre's classical logic research department. He was a member of the *Academia Mediteranea del Dialogo* in Rome, the *Academia Marchese* in Ancona, and the Higher Centre for Logic and Comparative Science, as well as an honorary professor at the Free Faculty of Comparative Philosophy in Paris and the Higher Institute of Human Sciences in Urbino.

His series of philosophical works began with *Orient and Occident*, published in 1943, which was revised, updated and expanded in *Eleatic and Heraclitean Cultures*. The phenomenon that emerged with Descartes—the idea that everyone has the right to develop their own philosophy—culminated in the modern era, in which man loses sight of his own fulfilment. The comparison found in this book does not settle the dispute in favour of one side or the other. As the author says, the comparison is made only to rediscover in Eastern thought a mentality that the West has lost, which is a starting point for defining the ideal type of rational man of our time. The West has lost sight of what is essential for man, that of his own fulfilment, while the East is struggling, as Tagore says, to bring Indian thought out of taverns and temples.

It is relevant that the West has not yet addressed the essential question of creating an ideal, as previous civilisations have done. Analysing the mental form of modern man, dominated by reason, this ideal could be glimpsed in the scientist, dominated by the scientific spirit, whom the most certain evidence would not would make him abandon Descartes' methodical doubt and whose lucid conscience realises that the only possible science is Nicolaus Cusanus' *Docta ignorantia* (an idea developed by Anton Dumitriu in his essay *Marea ignoranță*, 1933). As Henri Poincaré rightly says, the spirit of the scientist has more to do with the spirit of the heretic, who doubts everything, than with the spirit of the believer, who is dogmatic by nature.

Throughout his career, he received numerous awards and distinctions in recognition of his achievements: the Grand State Prize

awarded by the Romanian Academy for "New Logic" – 1940, the Gazeta Matematică Society Award – 1947, the Romanian Academy Award for "The Solution of Logical-Mathematical Paradoxes" – 1968, the Săptămâna Magazine Award – 1981, the Romanian Academy Award for "Alétheia" – 1984, the Flacăra magazine award – 1984, the Atheneu magazine award – 1985.

"In general, the great teachers that my generation had had an undeniable influence on each of us, without this meaning that they moulded us in their image and likeness," recalled Anton Dumitriu.

He passed away on 8 January 1992.

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PHILOSOPHIA MIRABILIS / PERENNIS AFTER ANTON DUMITRIU

Ion RUSU

MThe ancient megalithic monuments that have survived to this day show a superior consciousness of those who built them. built them with unknown technology, a profound understanding of material reality reflected in the plan of a collective consciousness that aims, first and foremost, to position the community in relation to the universe.

Examples include the Terrazza di Baalbek, built from megalithic stone blocks weighing thousands of tonnes, the Puerta del Sol monolith near Tiahuanaco, on which there are petroglyphs depicting bizarre human beings wearing devices similar to jet engines, the tombstone in the pyramid at Palenque, which has a man carved into it sitting in a device full of levers and handles, or the Etruscan ship without sails, etc.

This work is a synthesis of Anton Dumitriu's exceptional work, which is an attempt to bring to light the ancient monuments of human thought in relation to the vestiges left over millennia, as well as their connection to the extraordinary evolution of ancient Greek thought.

The brilliant monuments of universal thought could accompany the inexplicable vestiges of the achievements of the ancient world, which did not have the technology and means to achieve them unless they had a different kind of control over nature.

This work attempts to rediscover a different kind of philosophical relationship: Philosophia mirabilis or the beginning of the systematisation and structuring of human thought as an effect of the reflection of reality in the universe of human consciousness as part of the infinite Universe.

Philosophy has never been defined, and an immediate translation would be the love of wisdom, a partial definition that does not satisfy the claims of thinkers because the concept of philosophy is too complex to be contained in a single sentence.

Aristotle, the great Greek thinker, says that there are three theoretical philosophies: mathematics, physics and theology. From this perspective, it is almost impossible to define philosophy.

In fact, the meaning of philosophical thought would tend towards defining Being as being, a concept that places it outside time and space or the Beginning and which seems quite distant from mathematics and physics, which deal with the unfolding of events in time and space.

According to Martin Heidegger, philosophy is an undefined and indefinable subject because it can be expressed according to the path chosen.

Kant says that philosophy is rational knowledge through pure concepts, which divides philosophy into:

- Pure philosophy or knowledge through pure reason.
- Empirical philosophy or rational knowledge through empirical principles.
- Natural philosophy deals with everything that exists.
- The philosophy of existing morals deals with everything that must be.

Schopenhauer says that philosophy is science expressed in conception, in other words, the entire essence of the world repeated in conception in an abstract, general and clear manner.

Dialectical materialism attributes a strictly scientific character to philosophy scientific character, rejecting the concept of philosophy as such.

But materialism is not a philosophy, but a simple conception of the world that does not need to be verified.

Romanian thinkers also had similar positions to Greek thinkers, saying that philosophy is a striving for wisdom (Titu Maiorescu).

We could conclude that philosophy is a science whose object is not yet fixed (Th. Jouffroy).

What is philosophy?

The word philosophy was used and invented by the ancient Greeks, and the first to use it was Pythagoras, who called himself a philosopher in a conversation with Syciona and the tyrant Leon of the Sycionians, saying that no man is wise, but only GOD.

Philosophy was formerly called wisdom, and those who practised it were called wise to show that they had reached the highest degree of spiritual perfection; a philosopher was *a lover of wisdom*.

This love of wisdom was then diversified into a love of physics, geometry, music and other sciences.

In the last century, Martin Heidegger attempted to restore the original and authentic meaning of Greek philosophy, concluding that philosophy coincides with the birth of our own history, with the birth of the present era of universal history.

The source of philosophy is Wonder, or what is *Being as being*?

Philosophy is the path to the Being of being, that is, to existence.

The Being of Being is based on existentiality, which is the substance that for Plato will be *the Idea* and for his disciple Aristotle, *Energy*.

The reception of Being into existence is the most important thing that can happen to existence.

Therefore, the expression *philein to sophon* is not reduced to the love of sophon but rather means the reception of the Being of the existent or of the Being by the existent at the moment when it philosophises. Of course, the beginnings of philosophy inevitably lead us to the Greeks, to Aristotle, who formulated a thesis on the expression of philosophical ideas, attaching utmost importance to the use of words and grammar. Aristotle says that one must be able to make all the distinctions between the meanings of words, to know the power of names and thus be able to approach the truth.

This is where the need to use symbols with a greater power of concentration of names and which encompass more meanings than a sentence arises, and the need for synthetic expression inevitably leads us to mathematics, says Wittgenstein.

The beginning of philosophy in ancient Greece has its cause in Wonder, for those who doubt and wonder acknowledge that *they do not know*, and wonder disappears with knowledge, with believing before knowing. Wonder is pathos-passion; in Wonder we are *in an* absolutely necessary *pause* in the elaboration of principles. Wonder is the disposition through which Being opens itself to existence and which is, in fact, the harmonisation of Being with existence.

It is necessary to seek the meaning of the words Wonder, Beginning and Passion - the feeling.

Wonder can also be interpreted as a miracle at the moment of knowing. The beginning of philosophy thus appears as a miracle, as a miracle of existence before Being, which generates light in the human intellect and thereby illuminates its own existence as participation in Being.

The revelation produced in existence that it belongs to Being is the great miracle and shows precisely that existence possesses the miracle of awakening through a luminous shock, the proof being the thinkers awakened to philosophy through this miracle.

The effect of Wonder is the cessation as the genesis of the principle of revealing the openness of existence to Being. The meaning of the first philosophy is therefore the principle formulated in response to wonder.

Aristotle says that, through a miracle, people now and from the beginning were driven to philosophise in response to wonder, which is nothing other than a miracle of existence rediscovering itself in Being.

The principle of human capacity is the miracle of realising one's existence as belonging to universal Being; it is the lived experience that triggers the whole range of philosophical acts.

Acroamatic philosophy

In Greek culture, there are two ways of doing philosophy:

- Open or accessible to all
- The closed mode accessible only to a limited number of initiates.

Aristotle is the pinnacle of the systematisation of all philosophical thought.

Alexander the Great's teacher mastered and invented two ways of teaching his sciences to his students:

- One direct or exoteric.
- One indirect or acroamatic.

The direct method is addressed to everyone and covers general sciences: rhetoric, the art of conversation and political sciences.

The indirect or esoteric method refers to the deeper and more subtle problems of philosophy that deal with the study of nature and the field of dialectics, with physics and questions of logic as their main objects of study.

About Aristotle, who defined esotericism or the acroamatic way of transmitting knowledge, Zeller concludes: *"It seems certain that Aristotle published only part of his writings himself, that is, he took pains to disseminate them to a wider circle of readers, while other writings related to his oral teaching were intended primarily as teaching materials for his students. This conclusion seems irrefutable to us, but it also leads us to a clarification regarding the meaning of the term 'acroamatic' or 'esoteric' philosophy."*

Ammonius tells us more: *"The term acroamatic philosophy refers especially to the quality of those to whom it is addressed. Acroamatic writings are intended for those who are eager and truly entitled to philosophise."*

The term *acroatic* or *acroamatic* means auditor in the sense of one who listens.

Therefore, acroamatic writings are addressed to a select group of listeners, those who have heard the voice of the master.

There are three meanings of acroamatic philosophy:

1. Acroamatic philosophy is expressed orally to an initiated listener.
2. Acroamatic philosophy was intended for listeners who recognised the authority of the master's teachings.
3. Acroamatic philosophy was not addressed to the general public; what the master said could only be understood by those who had been taught to listen.

The acroamatic meanings of Aristotle's philosophy can be extended to the whole of Greek philosophy and can be called esoteric, meaning understood with explanations from outside.

We can say that all Greek philosophical schools are based on techniques for transmitting knowledge that came from Aristotle.

Those who were to be initiated had to possess special qualities in terms of character, nature and ease of assimilation. The disciple had to be freed from profane thinking in order to attain pure intellect and be able to receive certain knowledge with great caution so as not to disturb the sensitive change that was taking place.

Therefore, the transmission of Platonic doctrines requires complete purification along with a sincere aspiration for elevation.

In Plato's Republic, we find the Platonic method of educating disciples:

- Rejection of false theories of any kind.
- The comparison of sensations that give rise to contradictions.
- The cultivation of the sciences as a first step into the world of ideas.

Greek philosophy thus had a dual internal structure: it established a hierarchy of persons.

In Greek schools of philosophy, there is an internal filiation of philosophers and philosophies, a succession from master to disciple.

Greek philosophical schools did not depart from the heritage passed down through the centuries; they all remained faithful to the ancient Greek philosophical ideal of perfecting man, of attaining the state of demigod.

Science, theory and system in philosophy

According to Aristotle, philosophy is the science of principles in the sense of the science of first principles. In Greek philosophy, there were three ways of acquiring knowledge:

- The theoretical mode - directly, without intermediaries.
- The epistemic way - involving theoretical knowledge but also the reasoning and sensory apparatus.

- The systematic way - which consists of the simple organisation of data and knowledge.

In Greek philosophy, the possession of philosophy transcends human nature, "*human nature is intertwined with slavery; only God has the privilege of possessing such knowledge.*" (Simonides)

Thus, philosophy has a divine character and becomes a method of perfection towards the state of God.

What is meant by episteme?

It is a hierarchical construction of truths that begins with a group of principles obtained theoretically, that is, directly, from which other truths are obtained by demonstration.

The idea of a system is only related to the organisation of knowledge into an organic whole.

This results in the three philosophies that constitute Greek philosophy:

- Theoretical philosophy.
- Epistemic philosophy.
- Systematic philosophy.

Theoretical philosophy is the framework of the first principles that can be detected directly and immediately by the intellect.

Epistemic or scientific philosophy logically stems from theoretical philosophy.

Systematic philosophy hierarchises and organises knowledge into a unified whole.

The principle and acceptance of principles is a necessity of thought and its development.

According to Aristotle, there is an obligation of thought to accept principles, the stopping point coinciding with the starting point.

According to Aristotle, the problem of principles has three aspects:

1. The general problem of the logical necessity of principles and their nature.
2. The problem of the possibility of knowing these principles and the way in which they are perceived.

3. The problem of adapting certain principles by listing and analysing their content.

A famous statement by Aristotle with which he begins his *Second Analytics*: "*All rational knowledge, whether taught or acquired, always derives from previous knowledge.*" In order for the chain of knowledge not to lead to infinite recurrence, we must stop at principles that are detected directly without demonstration, principles that are of divine origin.

Therefore, for Aristotle, as for the whole of Greek philosophy, there are two modes of knowledge:

- Mediated or dianoetic, due to rational thinking - dianoia.
- Unmediated, due to immediate thinking - noesis.

In knowledge, the stopping point is immediate knowledge; in other words, the first mover that moves everything must be unmoved!

Without immediate knowledge, mediated knowledge is not possible.

In a deductive science, there is an irreversible order according to which it is not possible for premises to become conclusions or vice versa.

The axiomatic structure of science in Aristotle's conception is:

1. The theoretical part or immediate knowledge:
 - a) terms known by themselves;
 - b) propositions that are true in themselves.
2. Derived meaning or mediated knowledge:
 - a) terms defined with the help of those already known;
 - b) proven propositions.
3. Method of demonstration:
 - a) syllogism.

The starting point of reasoning considers:

1. The definition that shows what a thing is.
2. The axiom or principle.
3. Thesis - the immediate principle of a syllogism.
4. The hypothesis - the thesis that admits the existence or non-existence of a thing

5. The postulate - a true proposition without being obvious.

In conclusion, ancient Greek philosophy presented itself in three independent forms: theoretical, epistemic and systematic.

Theoretical philosophy disappeared at the beginning of the Middle Ages, and epistemic philosophy was replaced by *philosophia perennis*, which is not based on theoretical principles but on revealed principles. The fall of scholasticism led to the freedom of philosophy, with consequences for the construction of the sciences and especially mathematics, the perfect model being Spinoza's *Ethica, more geometrico demonstrata*.

Thus, philosophy became speculative, with everyone able to construct their own philosophy, with the obligation to argue their axioms and primitive ideas.

After the fall of Greek civilisation, philosophy went through the following stages:

- perennial philosophy;
- speculative philosophy;
- systematic philosophy.

Being in the concept of theoretical philosophy

In Aristotle's conception, philosophy is the theoretical science of first principles, and the substrate that supports everything that exists, both individuals and principles, is Being.

Thus, Greek thinkers identified the ultimate substratum of reality as existence as existence or existence in itself, *ens in quantum ens*.

The Aristotelian expression *to on heon* defines Being as an indeterminate existence that precedes the emergence of principles, i.e. categories, and what arouses Wonder is the fact of existing.

Theoretical Greek philosophy will deal with absolute Being, and the science that deals with it must be prior, constituting primary philosophy.

Being has always been the object of Greek philosophy and the eternal object of all research.

What is Being?

The primordial substance called physis, meaning primary, fundamental, persistent, as opposed to secondary, derivative, transitory, is Being or existence itself, thanks to which Being becomes observable and remains observable.

Being is considered in Aristotle's conception to be the primordial element, the existing as existing, and is called by him ousia-essence.

The being of the existing is based on existentiality, and through this Plato calls it ousia, which determines the idea, and Aristotle calls it energy.

Determined being is essence; it is eternal, and the logical consequence of this definition is that nothing can exist from non-existence, nor can it disappear into non-existence; it follows that everything exists from existence and disappears into existence. Being is always considered as being, and the path of Being leads us to Truth. The famous statement "I think, therefore I am" leads directly to Being, for to think is to be. To think, says Parmenides, is to enter into Being; this penetration would not be possible if Being remained an object of thought.

Thought is not defined by Being, for there is nothing outside of Being, says Zeller.

In conclusion, the path to truth is the path to Being, which is the path of the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle.

In immaterial things, there is identity between the thinking factor and the object of thought; by thinking Being, the thinking factor identifies with it.

On the other hand, Being is pure existence and, from this point of view, it can be the object of philosophy, the stopping point, the prime mover.

The existence of Being itself is the simplest and most universal object of thought; it is pure existence, immediately perceptible to our intellect, and thus the series of concepts of the intellect has a *beginning*. Being is the foundation of all concepts, itself *not being a concept*.

Being is the only thing that transcends our conceptualisations, so that all intellectual knowledge will take on an ontological character, being its source and foundation.

How does pure Being become accessible to the intellect?

As long as Being remains intelligible to itself, it cannot act; it manifests itself as existence in itself but also as essence (eidios) as that which is and that which was to be. The only way we can perceive existence is through the Logos.

We define form as the essence of every existing thing and we will call it universal as that which has always existed and exists everywhere, thus the ontological character of the universe and of essence is indisputable.

The Logos is the way in which we perceive existence and has several meanings: foundation, reason or the faculty of thinking, and is determined by its essence, but essence is also called form, which incorporates the structure and function of existence.

By form, I mean the essence of each existing thing, says Aristotle, and the most general meaning of essence is the universal as that which has always existed and exists everywhere, and universals are the objects of science, which is also called episteme or the science of universals.

The relationship of Being as being leads to the determination of Being from its own essences, which make existence itself the bearer of essences determined from forms.

The science of the universal for the Greeks is nothing other than science or theory as a direct and immediate knowledge of Being through its universal determinations.

Apodictic science is mediated knowledge constructed through syllogistic reasoning, where the principle of syllogism is essence. (Aristotle)

The modes in which Being appears

Being is always unpredictable and thus represents the stopping point, the beginning, or the first unmoved mover, so that the principle of deduction is undeductible and that of category is acategorical.

Being cannot be a category, just as the One and the Multiple are not categories, and it is identified with the One, which is not a genus of the existent.

Being is apprehended through immediate theoretical knowledge of universals, and categories are known directly in Being as

its dignities or splendours, and from these categories begins mediated science based on demonstration.

Being appears in the following modes:

1. Essence - what something is.
2. Quantity - how much.
3. Quality - how it is composed.
4. Relationship - what relationship.
5. Place - where.
6. Time - when.
7. Situation - in what situation.
8. Possession - what it has.
9. Action - what they do.
10. Passion - what he suffers.

Principles and connection with Being

The principles belong to Being, which exists in and of itself and cannot and must not be demonstrated; only the rest is demonstrable.

Knowledge of the existence and essence of principles is immediate and non-demonstrative; in other words, the first principles belonging to Being must be known.

The basis of these principles is ontological; they exist in and of themselves, not through demonstration.

There is thus a primordial principle: *the principle of contradiction* or the principle of all principles, which states: *it is impossible for the same thing to exist and not exist.*

According to this principle, Being is Truth and Nothingness is falsehood.

Truth and error imply union and separation; truth corresponds to reality, and error to nothingness, which is a product of the intellect. Truth and error cannot exist at the same time.

The eternal nature of Being is that it does not come from another Being; error is possible when there are doubts about how universals are perceived.

Reality results from the interplay of two factors: matter and form, or essence and potency. Matter is the possibility of becoming this or that.

Form is what makes possibility a reality. The concepts of Matter and Form are specific to human thought.

,and from the combination of form and matter results the entire becoming of reality on the intellectual plane.

The soul is Form in relation to the body, but it is matter in relation to intelligence.

In reality, Form is incorporated into matter; it is pure information that comes with matter.

That which satisfies itself and requires nothing else is *Good*, and the source of errors is pathos when the intellect suffers.

The thought of thought is the Being that carries essences, which thus has a divine character, and the purest thought has *Good* as its object when the intellect and the intelligible are harmonised and ultimately become identical.

The principle of science is the active intellect, which is another faculty of knowing the truth through knowledge of the principle and which is nothing other than the actualisation of the principle.

The realisation of Being

We have seen that the object of Greek philosophy is Being as being. How does the human intellect reach Being?

On the one hand, there is Being, the bearer of essences, of universals, and on the other hand, there is the human intellect, the nous. Greek philosophy identifies Being with the intellect because the intellect simply identifies Being through its essences, "*for to know is the same as to be*" (Aristotle).

Thus, knowledge has an ontological character; it belongs to universals, but a universal essence stops at categories, so that a hierarchy of essences is determined, forming a series of multiple states of existence.

Knowledge of the universal is categorical and can have two aspects: being in several inesses or about several digiturs.

Therefore:

- knowledge is hierarchical because its universal object is hierarchical;
- knowledge is specifically categorical and predictive.
- knowledge is ontological, perceiving in the universal itself the being that is acategorical.

Modern philosophy has chosen the path of digitur or talking about, talking about the world, about man, about the universe.

The goal of theoretical science is truth, and that of practical science is its application. In light of this statement, Being is Truth, and Nothingness is Falsehood.

Catharsis or purification

The way reality is perceived by the passive intellect is spontaneous, without the perceiver making any effort; the senses function spontaneously without being provoked. Under these conditions, the formation of ideas and their rational expression in the universe of language happens by itself. This type of perception is especially characteristic of early childhood.

As for the active creative intellect, it can sometimes function spontaneously, but in order for it to be able to enter into Being and become Being itself, the intellect must be prepared. The idea of methodical preparation for the realisation of Being is present in all ancient Greek schools.

The idea of preparation for triggering the noetic-poietic act that effectively raises the human being to one of the states of Being starts from the conception that: *truth is not something that lies abandoned*¹

Therefore, truth does not need to be sought; it exists for the intellect only at the moment of its realisation.

¹Synesiuss Dion, 52C in *Pathologia Graecae*, t66, p. 114.

It is necessary to prepare the intellect (Plato) in order to perform the noetic act that helps man transcend the world of appearances and enter the world of ideas, of Being. The myth of the cave in Plato's Republic vividly suggests that a period of adaptation is necessary from the darkness of the cave to the light outside, which is too strong for those accustomed to darkness, who will not be able to distinguish objects because they are blinded by the brightness. Similarly, in the world of ideas, a period of adaptation and preparation is necessary in order to perceive the real world, the truth.

Aristotle speaks of the final act of the realisation of Being, which occurs when thought thinks itself and becomes in act itself Being as Being.

According to Plato, this preparation consists in the cultivation of the sciences, arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy, etc., as a first step towards awakening *the reminiscence* of the primary ideas that are necessary for the realisation of Being. Philosophy can be done with a power acquired through sustained effort.

The ultimate goal is to attain pure truth, which can only be achieved by those who, through reasoning, have transcended all that is opinion, all that is mixed and diverse.

In the initiatory doctrines, there is a real preparation for achieving the final goal, which is also that of reaching the stage of supreme happiness expressed by attaining the state of godhood.

The ideal of the realisation of Being is, in Greek philosophy, a possibility due to the fundamental identity between god and man expressed through the Logos or, in purely philosophical terms, through the identity of the nous with Being as being.

The preparation proposed by Greek philosophy for achieving this ideal is gradual, transposed into philosophical language from profane language, there are three types of initiations:

1. initiation into the lesser mysteries or purification;
2. initiation into the greater mysteries or attainment of the state of perfect man;
3. initiation or epoptia – identification with the One.

The first phase of initiation is purification, which, according to the Pythagoreans, was achieved through music as a method of purifying the soul. The idea of purification or catharsis is also present in Aristotelian theory

Aristotelian theory of preparation for reaching the state of contemplation of pure truth, indicating purification as an express condition for the spiritual development of man.

Here is what Aristotle says in this regard: "*Some people under the sway of anger become, when they listen to sacred music, with arias that drive delirium from the soul, imbued with a calm similar to healing and purification for the soul.*"²

On the other hand, Aristotle finds that tragedy, which develops feelings of pity, fear and dread, like music, also acts as a purification, although it can develop other feelings as well.

In fact, the problem with humans is that they are subject to feelings that disturb their rationality, but the absence of feelings does not guarantee spiritual growth.

Therefore, treating temperament more or less through the method of strong emotional triggering, as well as through the triggering of enthusiasm caused by music and ritual dances, is the method proposed by ancient Greek philosophy for purification, thus achieving the first step of *philosophical realisation*.

From this perspective, Plato divides education into two parts:

- physical education, also known as gymnastics – refers to the health of the body;
- education of the soul, which is achieved through music in the broad sense of cultivating the arts represented by the muses.

Poetry was sung by the ancient Greeks, which is the meaning given to the purification of the soul through poetry.

The need for synthetic expression through metaphors and symbols is generated by the soul's turmoil in relation to a reality it does not understand; poetry is the cry of the soul to ultimately assert itself as Being. We distinguish three degrees of initiatory preparation:

- purification or catharsis;
- human perfection;
- divine or ultimate perfection.

² Politics VII. 7.

The soul must be freed from all forms so that nothing prevents it from being illuminated by its original nature, thus enabling it to return and look within itself, becoming Being as being.

This is what catharsis means: purification from any intelligible (categorical) form of beauty, even virtue, and the attainment of the highest beauty of the highest virtue, that of identifying with the Being that bears Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

Sophos and philosophos

Sophos or wise man, in Pythagoras' understanding, is only an attribute of God: *"Only God is wise, and the philosopher is nothing but the lover of wisdom."* This statement is very pertinent because it clearly delimits human power from divinity, that truth belongs entirely to divinity, and man is subject to error. Man's enslavement to vices distances him from the state of God, but it also suggests the method of liberation, that of escaping vices of any kind.

From this perspective, man can approach the state of wisdom if he has developed a moral personality full of virtues that distance him from sophistry and false judgements. We can thus say that, in the interpretation of *Philosophia mirabilis*, Sophos means spreading light or carrying light. The one who carries the light perceives the universal, but the universal being one of the determinations of Being, namely that which is everywhere and always the bearer of light or sophos, realising one of the multiple states of Being, is Being itself as a state in which the philosopher can reach the state of God, the one who knows the Truth.

In Aristotle's conception, the active intellect is the pure possibility of being universal essence, truth or its revealer, light as a primordial element of identification, revelation of Truth, thus creating the possibility of identifying the active intellect with the universal essence, which is the identity between knowing and being.

But the universal essence exists everywhere and always, so it has an eternal character, therefore the active intellect reaches a state of Being, realising at the same time its character of eternity or immortality.

According to Aristotle, the word *Being is potency and act or reality* ⁽³⁾.

The principles belong to Being as a being, so they are eternal like Being, and applying the principle of contradiction, we realise that Being exists regardless of whether the world exists or not.

When the active intellect becomes a pure act, the thought that thinks itself becomes the reality of Being and, through it, pure eternity, having the aspect of knowing, being, and mastering, the act of knowing thus becoming a process of domination and mastery.

The discovered Being is thus mastered by the one who realised it in itself and in all its manifestations, thus immediately recalling Parmenides' famous aphorism: "*For the same thing is to think and to be, or the same thing is to think with being and to master.*"

This is how we arrived at *philosophia mirabilis*, meaning that the philosophical act is a miracle born out of wonder, and the tension of wonder sustains the philosophical act. The beginning of philosophy is triggered by a miracle of truth revelation expressed by the active intellect in the face of reality. When man becomes a *sophos*, a wise man, he realises one of the stages of Being, becoming himself a universal of Being. A change of state towards the world takes place within him, modifying his ontological status, and this is a true miracle.

The miracle thus performed by human intelligence elevates man to the summit of Being, capable of producing miracles. *Sophos*, in this capacity, is a revelatory phenomenon, that is, light, and theoretical philosophy becomes *philosophia mirabilis*, a philosophy of wonder in the realm of knowledge *about*, and the philosophy of wonder in the realm of knowledge *in*.

The word *sophos* in the understanding of ancient Greek philosophy is the bearer of light, the bearer of truth, the one who realised Being in this sense. *Philosophia mirabilis* thus unfolds in three cycles:

1. The cycle of theoretical knowledge or the realisation of the *sophos* man, which is ultimately the realisation of the state of God.
2. The cycle of transition when we speak of *sophos* – it is known to few and is characterised by the fact that philosophical writings appear at that time.

³ Ibidem IV, 5, 1009a.

3. The cycle of epistemic philosophy, which, starting from theoretical philosophy, develops principles and theories.
4. The cycle of systematic philosophy, which synthesises principles, develops the infrastructure of knowledge.

Philosophia mirabilis leads to the realisation of a state of Being with the attainment of godhood, but this state leads us not to the outside world but to the inner world, says Heraclides, following in a way the motto from Delphi: "*know thyself*", and the principle is that the soul must be known, literally.

The path of Heraclidian sophos is the knowledge of the soul, of the Self; the soul must be probed, and what is proper to the soul is the logos that connects it to reason, to the intellect.

HOMO UNIVERSALIS IN THE WORK OF ANTON DUMITRIU

Ion RUSU

The idea of the perfect Human Being has preoccupied all the philosophies of the world, this concept being integrated into everything we know or want to know about this great miracle of the material world: man-matter who knows himself.

Different human cultures have treated this concept differently, but the essence has always been the same: that the perfect human being as a concept can exist. While European philosophy starts from the necessity of the existence of the perfect human being as a philosophical principle, other cultures, especially Eastern ones, describe the "ideal human being" or "true human being" as definitely possible.

In Indian culture, the perfect man appears as the liberated man, in Hebrew culture as the supreme man, and in Greek culture as the man of light or sophos, the bearer of light, like the saint in Christian civilisation or, as we shall see later, the divine man separated from the superimposed ego (Descartes).

Because the concept of man has been different in the cultures of the world, the definition of the perfect man varies greatly in these cultures. Europeans have been axiomatic, seeking to demonstrate the edifice by reducing it to its smallest "brick", which has led to the loss of the essence of the whole, which in this case is man, and which cannot be reduced to the components of the body like any other object, thus inevitably diminishing human personality.

In order to rediscover the concept of the perfect human being, we must start from the human being as a whole, from the essence of his existence - *who is he?*

The lucidity necessary for the analysis of the human being must generate the analysis of the thinker who is himself the object of thought, which has seduced many enlightened minds in their attempt to describe human perfection.

Immanuel Kant said: *"He who says that God exists says more than he knows, he who says the opposite does the same."* So philosophers always say more than they know, but *Truth needs no advocacy; it is the criterion of what exists and what does not exist. Just as light reveals itself and through it darkness, so truth is the criterion for itself and for error.*" Spinoza, Ethics, II 43 Scholium.

In his quest to find homo universalis, Anton Dumitriu drew on the works of two great philosophers of humanity, Aristotle and Descartes, the former who pioneered human thought and the latter who proposed methods of philosophical investigation.

Descartes' idea of uniting the multitude of philosophies, which were often contradictory, preoccupied Anton Dumitriu to the extent that he found a common factor in these philosophies, something that unites them rather than divides them.

He thus quickly realised that the way ideas were expressed often led to differences in philosophical theories, so grammar is very important; in other words, variety results from the variety of ways in which ideas are expressed. It therefore became necessary to restructure on an axiomatic basis, a model borrowed from geometry, to find a beginning in order to escape the recurrence that led nowhere.

These philosophers who adopted such methods of developing concepts, called Cartesians, launched their concepts into a finite space that had a unanimously accepted beginning.

The need to restructure concepts took shape in Leibniz's project to hierarchise the sciences necessary for the development of a concept, the so-called Opus Magnum:

First science: Universal grammar

Second science: Logic

Third science: Mnemonics and topics (the art of learning)

Fourth science: The art of formulas (universal mathematics)

Then the cognitive sciences: Arithmetic, Geometry, Mechanics, Poegygraphy (the physical quality of bodies).

Homeography (classification of bodies into various species), Cosmography, Idography (classification of animal and plant species), Moral Science, Geopolitics (the science of man's relationship with the earth) and Natural Theology (metaphysics).

Things are getting complicated, but Leibnitz's attempt to structure and develop philosophical concepts, to create universal methods of development and research, contributed to the idea that a beginning must be established in the development of any concept.

The variety of concepts also stems from the fact that it is much easier to investigate the external sensory world determined by the five senses than the inner world determined by the intellect through introspection. It has thus been agreed that the reflection of reality by the five senses can be based on correct reception if the subjective element that intervenes in interpretation is minimal, but the existence of this subjectivity has led to endless disputes regarding methods of interpretation.

The need to eliminate the subjective element in the investigation of reality has led to the emergence of highly controversial methods of spiritual disconnection from the matrix imposed on pure thought, such as meditation, forgetting everything you know so as not to alter the reflection of the outside world, while the inner world remained a hidden realm little explored precisely because of the increasingly seductive nature of the outside world. Thus, the idea of pure logic or theoretical logic emerged, developed by the 20th-century philosopher Husserl, according to whom any act of knowledge has three aspects: the psychological relationship between representations, the relationships between things as they appear in science, and the logical relationship between theoretical ideas. It is worth mentioning the philosopher and thinker Martin Heidegger, who states that philosophy is a way of saying more precisely, a privileged way of saying, adding that this way of saying is also a way of responding.

The investigation of reality has led to countless objections regarding the veracity of what is seen by the five senses, which appears to be a possible doubt, but not the doubt of sceptics who doubt everything, that is, their own doubt, thus pronouncing the sentence "I doubt" (*Ego dubito*), with reference to everything. This sentence takes on a paradoxical meaning, becoming impossible to express. We find ourselves in the case of the liar's paradox, who cannot say that he is lying because he doubts!

Therefore, the beginning of a theory should also come from the void of knowledge from which reality would arise. In fact, Descartes states: a conclusion of a reasoning cannot be stronger than its premises, and premises are principles or first propositions, from which, through analysis and demonstration, other ideas and other propositions are obtained. Aristotle tells us that the ancient Greek philosophers took as principles elements of the manifestation of matter: water, fire, earth and air. This way of thinking, so necessary for us to find a beginning for any theory, can be found in all the philosophies of the world, not only in Greek philosophy. The question that arises is that of the nature of these principles, where everything begins and which have no beginning. Aristotle finds three meanings of the idea of principle: 1 - beginning, origin; 2 - starting point, end, extremity; and 3 - command, authority, power. Heidegger asserts that the principle is without principle and concludes that freedom is the ultimate essence of truth, but that it itself has no essence; it is the origin of exposure. However, this theory lacks the clarity of Aristotle, who shows that there are four principles: matter or substrate, a form, a motive cause and a purpose, which can be reduced to two: matter and form. According to Aristotle, form was what gave soul to matter, so matter and form coexist. At the extreme, pure form is separated from matter and is assimilated to pure primordial energy outside space and time, or the absolute in the sense of being untied or unbound from matter. So the first principles have a state outside time and space; in other words, they are eternal and absolute in themselves. In Aristotle's conception, there is no knowledge without principles, and principles are immediate, that is, they are known through themselves, their evidence requiring no demonstration. The faculty of knowing principles directly belongs to the intellect; through it, we come into contact with reality and its principles. The exact truth, says Aristotle, can only be known in two ways: through the active intellect and through science, where the principles of science are known through the intuitive intellect, which becomes the principle of the principle of science. We have seen that everything is made up of matter and form, the former being the potential of the thing and the latter the causal, creative factor. Applying this concept to the intellect, we can say that it is capable of becoming all things and, on the other hand, actively capable of producing them all. This intellect is ineffable, immortal, absolute. The reality of the intellect manifests itself only in activity, apart from which it is nothing but the possibility of thought and nothing else.

Therefore, there is a higher faculty of knowledge, which belongs to the active intellect and produces an immediate perception of the intelligible without the possibility of doubt. But the intellect, being intelligible, can itself become an object of directly perceptible thought, and thus can think itself. Aristotle says that *in immaterial things there is identity between the thinking factor and the thought factor*. There is a direct and immediate knowledge, a perception of the intelligible to the point of identifying thought with it. Aristotle defines this faculty of the intellect as divine, that is, immortal. The nature of the intellect is therefore absolute. Man, through his intellect, is a being who participates in the absolute. In this sense, it is worth remembering a text from the Kabbalah: *the Logos is eternal, but it manifested itself for the first time when matter was created. Before that, the enigmatic Infinite manifested its omnipresence through thought*. The Logos existed before matter in the form of thought. This is how the biblical expositions begin: *In the beginning was the Word*, but Word also means reason, so a translation of the Latin text would be as follows: *In principle there was intelligence (reason), and Reason belonged to the divine, and Reason was the absolute. This Reason belonged in principle to the divine. Everything was made through this Reason, and without it nothing was made of what was made. Therefore, reason is the principle of everything that was made, and being identical with divinity, it is the absolute*.

Man has two faces: one individual, accessible to the senses, the other of a principled nature, accessible through the intellect. This thesis belongs to Aristotle, who distinguished the individual from the universal, as well as sensory knowledge from knowledge through the intellect. Sensory knowledge builds the individual *self*, while knowledge through the intellect leads to the knowledge *of the Self*, the indestructible part of the human being, its universal part. Thus, we could say that the human being has two parts: the individual man and *the universal man (homo universalis)*.

Instead of conclusions

The beginning of the modern era of philosophy coincided with the appearance of Descartes' famous *Discours de la methode* (1637), where

The French thinker seeks the specific point of origin from which any conceptual construction should start. Discovering himself as thought, Descartes reached the point that no longer depends on anything. The human mind is capable of certainties, the first of which is reflection or thought. Descartes' great discovery consists of three observations that do not result from deductions and are perceived directly: 1. *thinking, I think, absolute observation*; 2. *I, a thinking being, am capable of certainties*; 3. *these certainties are obtained by me through immediate intuition, through direct knowledge*. These three observations are summarised in the following statement: *cogito ergo sum, or I think, therefore I am*. The very act of thinking implies the existence of the thinking subject, and through existence we have stepped outside into the universal world. Therefore, the plane of self-consciousness is contained within the plane of universal consciousness. Thus, the idea of God's existence appears absolutely necessary for the elimination of illusion, God supporting the two existential planes. Descartes' argument in this regard is: *I, an imperfect being, have the idea of a perfect being, therefore a being that would have its own existence, so that if it did not exist, its perfection would be diminished, and since we have the idea of a perfect being, it follows that this being exists*. Thus, Descartes makes the greatest discovery that human thought has ever made: he discovers himself as a principle. In this way, he discovers the relationship of the self with the outside world, with universality, with Divinity. Descartes discovers the pure and absolute transcendental ego cogito, which would be the beginning of any philosophy, the Principle of all principles. Our consciousness illuminates us from within and gives shape and colour to things outside us. Saint Augustine says: *Do not go outside, turn to yourself, for in the inner man lies the truth, and go beyond yourself*. Without thinking consciousness, nothing would exist, and if the Universe existed, it would not know that it existed!

SOPHOS¹ , BEARER OF TRUTH AND UNFORGETTING

Ahile Z. VERESCU

NThe numerous references to wisdom as a divine attribute that we find in all sacred writings lead to the conclusion that primordial tradition has always paid special attention to this concept. In *the Zohar*, for example, the transformation of Nothingness into Being is symbolically expressed by a point located at the centre of the universe, which is identified with *Hokhmah*² or, in translation, "*the Wisdom of God*"³. In modern Masonic ritual, for admission to the Middle Chamber, the companion, as a master in the making, is symbolically positioned, like Hiram Abif himself, "...between the square and the compass" or, in other words, "...in the centre of the circle", thus indicating his position of balance and harmony in relation to opposites and the Law⁴ , but also his irrevocable choice for moderation and measure in all things.

In turn, the Hindu initiate represents man or the microcosm as a unified and coherent whole composed of seven different and interdependent modules/principles/planes. The second plane in descending order is *Buddhi*, meaning wisdom or a set of higher spiritual elements, signifying a natural intelligence born of the union of the mind with the heart. *Buddhi* sees

¹ *Wise*, in Greek.

² The second sefirot, between *Keter* (Crown or Spirit of God) and *Binah* (Intelligence/Understanding), together forming the upper triad of the sefirotic tree.

³ Eliade, M. *History of Religious Beliefs and Ideas*, Scientific and Encyclopaedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1988, p. 180

⁴ The set of universal laws that act inexorably and eternally.

The whole (holistic vision) following the mechanism of revealed knowledge and presupposes a deep understanding of the phenomena of the universe, a vast accumulation of knowledge and human experience, living in full accordance with the laws of the universe, in peace, harmony and balance.

In free translation, the deepest connotation attributed to the title Dalai Lama is that of "*ocean of wisdom*". This phrase, which conveys boundless respect, emphasises the importance of this figure, who stands at the pinnacle of Tibetan spirituality and is at its very heart.

In 1988, Hugh Schonfield discovered the key to the cipher⁵ used by the Essenes two millennia ago to encode the names of the characters recorded in the Qumran manuscripts. Applying this key to the writings left by the Templars and the Freemasons, closer to our times, it was found that all these inscriptions can be easily decrypted and understood because they are, in a way, identically coded. Among other things, it has been established with certainty that the famous name *Baphomet*, the mysterious idol worshipped by the Templars, simply means *Sophia*⁶. In other words, these proto-Freemasons, the Knights Templar, worshipped wisdom as a splendid divine attribute that every seeker of spiritual perfection still strives for today.

The major interest shown in the issue of wisdom in all cultures and religions of the world should give us pause for thought, especially since both primordial tradition and metaphysical doctrine place great importance on concerns regarding the enlightenment of man through thought, speech and, above all, action. However, there is still no "Sophiology," a science in its own right that defines and studies wisdom in order to identify its attributes and determine the systematic evolution of the disciple towards light, harmony, and balance. The only path to such a goal, fatally hidden from the many and the uninitiated, is marked by subtle landmarks that are sometimes difficult to observe, except by an authentic spiritual guide, *the geronda*, *the avva*, the spiritual father, as he was called in ancient times.

⁵This cipher is called the "Atbash" code.

⁶ Knight, C. & Lomas, R., *The Secret of Hiram*, Aquila '93 Publishing House, Oradea, 2002, p. 221.

European civilisation also has a special relationship with wisdom. The oldest written sources lead, in particular, to ancient Greek philosophy, which later inspired all the other currents and trends that were in vogue at certain periods in the intellectual world of the old continent. In this context, Pythagoras says of himself that he is not a "*wise man*" in the true sense of the word, but only "*a lover of wisdom*"⁷. Reinforcing his statements, he argued that, in fact, "... *no man is wise, but only God*" and, further, that in the period before him, "*philosophy*" was referred to as "*wisdom*" and those who practised it, because they were able to demonstrate that they saw things clearly and had attained the highest level of spiritual elevation, were called wise men, *sophos*. Therefore, the ancient philosopher was nothing more than an aspirant to wisdom, a diligent seeker still on the path that climbs laboriously towards the celestial peak of consecration, similar to the modern companion in Freemasonry.

From these clarifications, we deduce that the term *philosophia* is a derivative of *sophos* and, therefore, this word must be analysed carefully in order to understand what the love of *sophia*⁸ meant. For Pythagoras, only the god was wise, and he personally did not consider that he had attained this ultimate state, identified with the supreme state. That is why he used the word *philosophos* to indicate that he only diligently strives and aspires towards such an ideal. Heraclitus explicitly states that *sophos* is only the god, while at the same time mentioning that the god wants and, perhaps, does not want this name: "*Only the wise man is one. He wants and does not want to be called by the name of god.*"

The vast majority of historians of philosophy have focused specifically on the original meaning of the word 'philosophy', breaking it down etymologically and finding its compound meaning, that of 'love of wisdom'. Heidegger also proceeds in this way, starting from the components of the word: *philein*, to love, and *sophia*, wisdom. *Philein* also means, literally, "*to receive as a guest*" and, figuratively, "*to receive a revelation*" in the sense of "*to show something to someone,*" as Anton authoritatively tells us

⁷ *Philosophos*

⁸ Guided by Aristotle's words, namely that "*those who know how to distinguish the meanings of words are very close to the truth,*" we must therefore focus on the word *sophos*.

Dumitriu. As a rule, this latter meaning is not taken into account by uninitiated etymologists and, therefore, the deepest meaning given to the term by the sages of Hellas is overlooked. The love of *alétheia* (truth, but also the remembrance of the One, Eternal and Infinite) was, at that time, the measure of Wisdom, which elevated the living to the rank of god, and from this, gradually, *philosophia perennis*, the metaphysical doctrine, was formed.

Seven succinct inscriptions were recorded on the frontispiece of the temple at Delphi. Over time, various scholars have claimed that these inscriptions essentially express the great treasure of wisdom of ancient Greek spirituality and later European esotericism. The inscriptions quoted are extremely interesting even today, brimming with meaning and open to fruitful commentary on the concepts of wisdom, unity/integrity, harmony and balance. However, by far the most important for what we aim to demonstrate below are the first and fifth of these inscriptions, *Thou art and Know thyself!*¹⁰

The beginning of the two hexametric verses was the letter *E*, which obviously hides a huge enigma, long undeciphered. From the many possible solutions and interpretations, it was considered that it was, in fact, the phrase (*Ei*) which could only be translated as "you are". With all the interest we have given to the other inscriptions, the concepts of *sophos* and *sophia* are most profoundly expressed by the maxim *Know Thyself*. Anton Dumitriu affirms this, relying on the following quote from Plato: "*For, in a way, as far as I am concerned, this is what wisdom is: to know oneself; and I agree with the one who put these words on the frontispiece of the temple at Delphi: Indeed, they seem to me to be inscribed there as a form of welcome from the god to those who enter, instead of 'good cheer', because feeling cheerful is not appropriate here, and it is not the case that we should encourage each other to do so, but rather to exercise sound judgement. Of course, this is how the god welcomes those who enter the temple, unlike the greetings of humans, which must have been in the mind of the one who put the inscription there, as far as I can tell; and the god*

⁹ *You are. Honour the God. Listen to the laws. Spare time. Know yourself. Nothing in excess. Pledging brings misfortune.*

¹⁰ *Gnothi seauton.*

says to those who enter steadfastly, only, be wise'. Only he says it more enigmatically, as an interpreter of the divine, for "know thyself" and "be wise" are the same thing, as I say and as the written words show. Therefore, *sophos* is the one who knows his Self (sees the Burning Bush or the Fireball, the Flaming Star, the Inner Light, the Golden Fleece, to use some of the established symbolic names), as Anton Dumitriu impeccably demonstrates in his book *Philosophia mirabilis*.

It is noteworthy that modern philosophy, starting with René Descartes, begins with exactly the same problem. Descartes places, at the beginning of his entire conception, the existence of the one who thinks *Dubito ergo cogito, cogito ergo sum*. Let us make a *tabula rasa* of everything we know, let us doubt everything, everything that has been transmitted to us, and let us see what we are left with; from this constant attitude of systematic doubt, a new light is born; I know that I doubt and by this I prove that I think, in conclusion I become aware of an indubitable fact: that I exist, I am, you are! This (re)discovery of modern philosophy, which indisputably links it to ancient Greek philosophy, did not, however, lead Descartes to an absolute result, nor did it lead his successors to *Being*, in other words, to the supreme Self, which Aristotle said was and is the only object of philosophical research ever. The approach we are talking about represented only a winning argument for confidence in the human intellect's ability to think, to have clear and distinct ideas and, therefore, to forge certain certainties.

The two essential texts from Delphi are, first, *Ei* and second, *Gnothi seauton*. These are the only ones that are significant for understanding the term *sophos*. The other five inscriptions, says Plato, could have been advice added later, while the first two, taken together, make up the derived exhortation: "*seek to become wise!*". What does Apollo actually say to those who enter his temple to find the truth? The first thing you need to know is that "*you are*" an existence, you exist. And you will find this out by knowing your Self, for within you is Being – "*You are in Being and Being is in you!*" (The Square in the Circle and the Circle in the Square, the later dilemma of the West that was solved by the famous formula of squaring the circle). In the most authentic classical, Aristotelian sense, *the wise sophos* is the one who has known, in the literal sense, Being, the Self, and has even realised this as an experience.

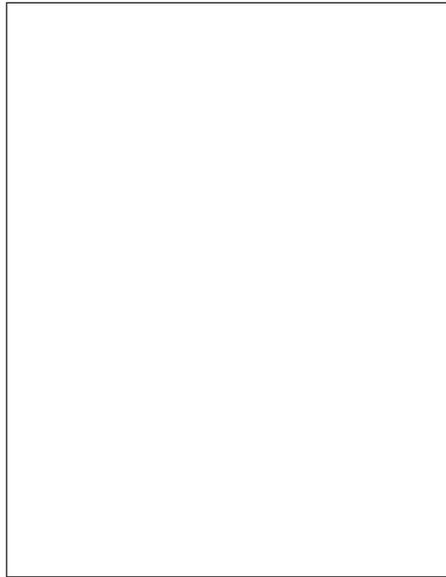
direct experience of enlightenment. The philosopher is an aspirant who speaks about Being (the uncreated inner Light), knows speculatively that this is a real existence, but has not realised Being as a direct, immediate experience, as a state of his existence. The god, in whom the Greek philosophos-ul hopes, says something like: "*You are Being, man, and you will realise this through the knowledge (gnosis) of the transpersonal Self.*"

A complete demonstration of this issue is provided, with great elegance and precision, by Anton Dumitriu in his book *Philosophia mirabilis*, using, for the most part, Guénonian tools and methodology. This admirable scholar, who persevered throughout his life in the search for light as an inner experience, gave Romanian culture a representative masterpiece consisting of two reference works, *Istoria logicii* (The History of Logic, 1969) and *Teoria logicii* (The Theory of Logic, 1973), accomplishes, at the age of full maturity, a superb exercise in spiritual and etymological "archaeology" with references to Greek symbolism and mythology. This extraordinary journey has left us with four unique and incomparable works: *Philosophia mirabilis* (1974), *Alétheia* (1984), *Culturi eleate și culturi heracleitice* (Eleatic and Heraclitean Cultures, 1987) and *Homo universalis – Încercare asupra naturii realității umane* (Homo Universalis – An Essay on the Nature of Human Reality, 1990).

An informed reader will find, in Anton Dumitriu's work, numerous clarifications and explanations regarding man as the bearer of the Divine and of Truth (*alétheia*, meaning unforgettable). Truth gives meaning to life, and this is revealed by the paradoxical event – enlightenment – the miracle from which all world philosophy begins. Instead of conclusions, we will content ourselves with a small edifying quote in this regard.

"The beginning of philosophy thus appears as a miracle, as a wonder. The shock received by the existent in the face of Being generates a light in the human intellect, through which it illuminates its own existence as well as its participation in Being. The revelation produced in the existent following the realisation that it belongs to Being is precisely the miracle: something that has never happened before, something that – according to the natural, known order of the nature of the existent – was not foreseen. Virtually, however, the existing possesses the miracle of awakening through a luminous shock, the proof being the very philosophers awakened to philosophy through this miracle." (Anton Dumitriu – *Philosophia mirabilis*, Ed. Fundației culturale române, 1992, p. 30)

PART V
OTHER TRADITIONAL ASPECTS



THE TRADITIONAL MASONIC FUNCTION

Ahile Z. VERESCU

OAn attempt to define, at this early stage, the meaning of this phrase, which also gives our article its title, would be not only necessary but also, to a large extent, obligatory, we believe. Of course, we will not be able to address the topic we have set ourselves using exclusively an analytical, scientific methodology. Nor is it possible, for that matter. Our master, René Guénon, insisted on this inadequacy, and his disciple, Vasile Lovinescu, through his splendid work, gave our culture a brilliant demonstration of the spiritual-traditionalist interpretation of the fairy tales and legends that were born *in illo tempore*, in these lands. "*For in the end, the light must be brought out from under the bushel...*" and in this spirit we will present, below, our attempt to clarify, as far as possible, the theme we have set ourselves.

With strict reference to the traditional function in general, the most authoritative exegetes of Vasile Lovinescu's work¹ have linked it to the writer's personal act, including his mission to revive Tradition and bring to the surface the profound meanings of symbols and initiatory rituals, even if only on a strictly intellectual level.

Therefore, according to the two Lovinescu disciples mentioned above, a traditional function is:

¹ Florin Mihăescu & Roxana Cristian - *Vasile Lovinescu și funcția tradițională* [Vasile Lovinescu and the Traditional Function], Ed. Rosmarin, 1998, pp. 42-46.

- "...an archetypal category of ensuring the continuity of Tradition, which manifests itself periodically through initiates and intellectuals in spirit, in order to rediscover and redefine traditional truths, to make them known and to determine their influence on the environment or at least on an elite...";
- "...a way for Providence and the spiritual Centre of the World to exercise their beneficial and transformative influence, without which the world would perish...";
- "...the act of presence, whether virtual or hidden, which ensures the life of the world, especially in times of change."

On the other hand, a traditional function, with a balancing role in history and in keeping traditional truths alive, ensures "*...the spiritual legitimacy and presence in the world of a Principle, albeit hidden, [...] attached to the Centre and the King of the World...*"

For a better understanding, we consider it relevant to present a mirror image of what royal art means, in contrast but also in complementarity with priestly art. The Master/King and the Saint/Priest are the characters we will compare here.

In this context, it could be said that the traditional Masonic function means the set of fundamental roles that the Order must assume according to its initiatory and sacramental status.

What follows will not, of course, exhaust the subject, and the *ad hoc* methodology we propose is only one of the possible variants. Consequently, the result of our endeavour can only be an invitation to further study, meditation and debate on the subject, so that, in the end, a satisfactory explanation can be achieved in relation to the requirements of tradition and metaphysical doctrine.

In accordance with these conceptual landmarks, briefly presented above, we should make a clear distinction between priestly and royal art, through the prism of the specific "final product", namely the Saint for the former and the Spiritual Master for the latter. The association of the term "conceptual landmarks", taken from science, is vaguely inadequate for analysing a subject that belongs to a different kind of knowledge, different from scientific, rational knowledge. The Master and the Saint

have as their common basis enlightenment, that disturbing and unquantifiable transcendental, personal, untransmittable experience, the vision of God as inner light, as Saint Simeon the New Theologian calls it. This *peak experience*² is confessed by all who have lived it as the sublime moment of inflection that irreversibly marks the beginning of perfection, of the deification of man or, in other words, of the humanisation of the divine.

The second distinction we will introduce refers to the different ways in which the Saint and the Master evolve after enlightenment, the former (the East) gathering powers in the contemplation of the Divine (*unio mystica*), prophecy and healing, the second (the West) gathering powers for guiding human development, *leadership* (vision, charisma and animating élan) but also for concrete action to build, here on Earth, the Kingdom of God, the ideal Temple of humanity. This difference that we reveal here between the two great categories of powers (*sidhi*) is neither illusory nor uncertain, but only difficult to define in concrete, analytical terms, because these two powers come somewhat intertwined from the depths of Being, the boundary between them being difficult to draw.

As spirits, the High Priest and the Enlightened King are brothers in the Lord, both descending from the same sacredness into man and into the World. In all traditional societies, the royal palace and the cathedral/temple, two buildings usually located close to each other, mark the administrative and priestly centre of the place and the community in equal measure. This division of powers, which we are talking about, like any division, is potentially contentious and has generated and will continue to generate conflicts and mutual contestation. There have been cases in history when a single person has accumulated both powers. Jesus said of himself, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," in other words, I accumulate the function of King and that of Priest.

The Saint (the flower of humanity) will conquer priestly powers, while the Master (the fruit bearing seed) will conquer and exercise royal powers. In a way, the Saint is also a Master in *ars sacerdotalis*, for no one from outside the monastic system will come to train the monks who also aspire to salvation and immortality, just as the Master is a Saint until a certain point. At the level of

²Abraham Maslow - *Motivation and Personality*, Ed. Trei, 2007.

30 of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, the holder is called a Kadosh knight (holy, in Hebrew). As a consequence, the initiatory degrees above this degree are generically called administrative degrees, each of which requires a set of specific qualifications so that the holder can perform, in his own right, a certain complex and highly responsible activity in the service of the community and the divine order. In other words, you cannot be a Master if you have not, at some point, gone through the stage of Saint, just as a fruit cannot exist if it has not once been a flower. We will stop here with the analogies because, like holiness, mastery cannot be defined scientifically.

Finally, a third distinction could be added, namely that the art of the priesthood and that of royalty are different and separate, mainly due to their specific methodologies. For his training, the Saint chooses isolation (breaking ties with the world) and asceticism, while the Master irrevocably opts for action on a socio-human level (practising interconnection to the maximum), as an outpouring of his own knowledge onto human society, the community, the ethnic group to which he belongs and with which he will be saved or will fall into oblivion, as the case may be.

It should be noted that the phrase Royal Art (traditional Masonic craftsmanship, the specific internal process within the workshops) is understood here as the mix between "polishing the rough stone" and "building the ideal Temple of humanity", as two distinct works that take place simultaneously, one on a personal level, of spiritual perfection and elevation, and the other, on a social level, of building a world in accordance with the revealed divine order.

For further clarification, a few additional remarks should be made here about the path to enlightenment. In fact, there are four such paths: three that involve withdrawal from the world³ and the fourth, which is distinct from the others⁴. Through the lens of this typology, the Masonic path (the royal art) seems to identify, literally,

³ The path of the fakir – the body, the monk – emotion, and the yogi – thought.

⁴ The path of the practical man (cunning, as Ouspensky calls him, probably taking the name from his master, Gurdjieff). See P. D. Ouspensky - *"The Fourth Way"*, RAM Publishing House, 1997.

with the fourth path. First, the initiate understands, through strictly speculative approaches⁵, that the Masonic Order is sacramental and initiatory; thus, he becomes charged, in the Lodge, with the motivation and understanding of the phenomenon, after which he "steals" the craft (the fourth path is also called the path of the cunning man, as I said) from an authentic master whom he identifies, in fact, in another tradition.

This is also the profound meaning of the expression "nomadic alternative" which, at first glance, would seem to refer only to the apprentice's travels to other Lodges in order to learn by comparison. In reality, the nomadic alternative "...does not represent (only, n.n.) the possibility of 'visiting' other lodges of the same obedience or of 'friendly' obediences... The nomadic alternative, which is a necessary stage in the initiatory process, consists of a true journey through similar or different traditions." ⁽⁶⁾ It is, therefore, an incursion into other living, authentic traditions that have secretly preserved an active method of spiritual elevation. From here, the aspiring Freemason will take his technique, from Zen, Tao, Sufism, Hesychasm, the one that will propel him to the celestial peak of enlightenment and bliss. Consequently, we can only conclude that Guénon is absolutely right when he tells us that Western tradition needs to be restored and revitalised because it lacks its very essence, the set of instructions that make human enlightenment possible.

There is a fundamental difference between all the spiritual paths we are discussing, on the one hand, and the Masonic path, on the other. In the first case, as I said, the aspirant must withdraw from the world into asceticism, isolation and prayer, while in the second case, the initiate will ascend while remaining socially active, not disconnected from worldly matters. We must admit that it is much more difficult to remain in the world and, at the same time, make progress in

⁵ In which analogy, symbol, ritual, metaphor and allusive, persuasive language are the specific and established tools.

⁶ Boyer, Rémi - "*Freemasonry, a path to spiritual evolution*", Ed. Nestor, 2008, pp. 63-64

⁷ According to him, of all Western organisations with initiatory pretensions, there are only two which, however decadent they may be as a result of the ignorance of their members, can claim an authentic traditional origin and a real initiatory transmission: the Companionship and Freemasonry.

spiritual elevation and enlightenment. That is why the number of truly enlightened Freemasons is extremely small, the success rate being insignificant in terms of percentage. Freemasons say that they do not know the Truth but that they are on the verge of discovering it, that is, they maintain, through effort and consistency, the path of knowledge, gnosis and continuous improvement. However, there are very few master Freemasons who achieve the supreme performance and can ultimately describe to their apprentices the ecstasy and state of bliss that accompanies enlightenment.

Lucian Blaga identifies two forms of knowledge, one paradisiacal (ordinary, normal, seeking to determine the object of knowledge through the senses, measurement, weighing, etc.) and the other Luciferian (initiatory, analogical, revelatory, seeking to elucidate, as far as possible, the mysteries of reality)⁸. In the first case, the knowing subject is separate from the object of knowledge, while in the second case, the subject, object and process of knowledge form a single whole. In other words, paradisiacal knowledge consists in researching data, information and knowledge from tangible reality, while Luciferic knowledge concerns otherness, the apparent world, subtle reality, which can be accessed more difficultly and only intuitively, through extrasensory perception, through analogies and similarities, etc.

The descent of the Holy Spirit is truly a divine grace, a blessing, and does not depend on human will; even if the Freemason practitioner shows maximum diligence, he has no guarantee that he will ultimately see the Burning Star (a phenomenon similar to the vision of the Burning Bush – the Fire of Fire, the Inner Light). On the other hand, in 1717, the method was removed from Freemasonry, leaving only vague traces of operative approaches here and there, and the seed of the true masters almost perished. These two inherent difficulties are difficult obstacles for the Freemason who aspires to enlightenment. Those who understood this attached to their own metaphysical software spiritual techniques from other living, authentic traditions. Only in this way did they find the lost keys of Freemasonry and understand the profound meanings of our Order.

⁸ Blaga's distinction should not be confused with that between empirical and theoretical knowledge or between intuitive and rational approaches, etc.

To a certain extent, the Saint and the Spiritual Master follow a common path, that of initiatory knowledge, the traditions that are formed over time as a result of the two generic characters mentioned above being both contradictory and complementary. The first of these forms the priestly/Brahmanic art, the other, royal mastery, the art of the Kshatriya caste. World history abounds in data and information about the sometimes confrontational, sometimes collaborative relationship between the two groups, metaphorically and rightly called the pillars on which humanity has risen in its aspiration for progress, peace and prosperity.

In a narrow sense, with strict reference to the personal experience of enlightenment, tradition therefore essentially encompasses the entire body of testimonies concerning experience (generically, the Book of Sacred Law), the teachings and beliefs that come to us from the earliest beginnings, those that man received through revelation and which initiates in full capacity have the duty and responsibility to transmit to their disciples in order to ensure the perpetuation of knowledge as an authentic experience. In particular, the Masonic tradition was gradually formed from the testimonies of those who had the privilege of seeing the Light, from their metaphorical, sprinkled and allusive language, but also from the dogma imposed by those responsible for the faithful transmission of the canons and landmarks. These testimonies of those who lived, usually recorded posthumously, were retained and introduced into Masonic doctrine, thus constituting the golden fund referred to whenever an aspirant shows signs of becoming thirsty for knowledge of the sacred and eternal.

In all spiritualities, tradition is made up of written sources, but also of oral sources, passed down from generation to generation, through the whisper of the master in the ear of the apprentice. Tradition itself is a living continuation of teaching, spirituality and the experience of the transcendental. As a rule, Masonic mastery is transmitted through rituals, symbolism and established legends, from person to person and through the spoken word. *"Light from light and true God from true God"* seems to be the motto of the tradition.

In this context, here is what Oswald Wirth says at one point about the current state of Freemasonry and its mission:

"When Freemasonry has enlightened masters, able to read and write in its sacred language, then our institution will move from

symbol to reality. It will embody authentic initiation and will build the Temple of supreme human wisdom..."

More generally, tradition consists of all the rules, customs and traditions that can be found in the spirituality of a people, which together represent concrete forms, repetitive actions and approaches that emphasise the cyclical nature of time and a certain form of reaction to individual and social events. Masonic tradition is no exception. Over time, it has developed its own terminology and hierarchy. We will therefore identify a visible and rough succession of hierarchies, but also an invisible one of teachings and concrete ways of transmitting knowledge. In the transition from operative to speculative, one of the peculiarities of the Masonic tradition is that, starting in the year of grace 1717, the role of the master as spiritual father has steadily diminished, becoming almost insignificant, while the Lodge, in its entirety, has taken over the role of transmitting the teachings.

The royal art, as it is currently transmitted within the Masonic workshop, is foreshadowed as living with meaning, living for an ideal, for a value, that is, axiologically oriented living with the ultimate goal of achieving communion between the individual and the absolute, while, in social terms, the construction of the ideal Temple of humanity would be the horizon of sacrifice and dedication.

In symbolic lodges and even higher, in lodges of perfection, the specific internal process is the polishing of the rough stone, in other words, the ennoblement of the aspirant with that *software* consisting of knowledge, skills and responsibilities, through which he differs from the profane man. This programme, gradually assimilated by the aspirant through successive initiations, counts towards the overall economy of building the ideal Temple of humanity. Guarantees in this regard are provided by repeated oaths, initiatory trials and purifications, as well as traditional catechisms.

Masonic literature is only part of the tradition and cannot be considered its foundation; the basis for the formation of any Freemason lies in the experience gained in the Lodge, the state of peace and harmony practised in the workshop. It is here and only here that the aspirant's subconscious will be directly and immediately imbued with that sublime knowledge (experience) that cannot be taught in any school in the world.

The construction of the ideal Temple of humanity is the main mission of the Master Mason, and for this he assumes personal sacrifice, the role of cornerstone in one of the three variants suggested by the administrative degrees, superior (inferior, if we look at it from another perspective) to the 30th degree. Therefore, the main mission of a Master Mason is not to have disciples, to transmit the royal art justly and perfectly, as one might think, but to sacrifice himself for the building of the ideal Temple of humanity.

We call ourselves masons (builders, architects, constructors...) and our symbolic tools (trowel, hammer, square, plumb line...) speak for themselves about the role we should assume, according to tradition. After first becoming a polished stone, the master finds his own place in the edifice that is being built according to plan and, with responsibility, shows his willingness to be used as a simple building block. It is yet another metaphor, one might reproach us, an analogy that hides an ideal that is not very clearly defined. For the most part, this is indeed the case. However, beyond the curtains of analogies that fruitfully interpose themselves between the subject and the object of knowledge, we will identify a serious philosophical debate about eternal universal transformation, the eternal cosmic dance, and the divine order as a mathematical order identified by man, through revelation, everywhere in matter and society, as a living signature of the Great Architect of the universe on his creation.

Here is how Albert G. Mackey summarised it in his extensive monograph *Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* (vol. I - 1873 and vol. II - 1879), a reference taken from Masonic symbolism in connection with the supreme mission of our Order: *"Of all the objects (symbols, rituals, n.n.) through which Masonic science is expressed [...], the most important, the most precious and, by far, the most relevant is the Temple of Jerusalem (from a conceptual point of view, the phrase has the same meaning as the expressions Solomon's Temple and the ideal Temple of humanity, n.n.). Its spiritualisation (that of the Temple, n.n.) is the element of prime importance, the capital element among all the symbols of Freemasonry."*

Freemasonry has often been labelled as Luciferian and Satanist. *Nota bene*, an educated person makes a minimal distinction between

Lucifer (the light bearer) and Satan (Seth, Sheitan, the Devil), the two mythical characters, are in fact totally different entities. Only ignorance or bad faith can confuse them. The distinctive signs are, for Lucifer, the emerald on his forehead (the Eye of Horus, the Cyclopean Eye or the third eye) and for Satan, the Devil's pitchfork (Y, temptation and accusation). As can be seen, they are totally different things.

We do not intend here to rehabilitate Lucifer after so many centuries of vilification, but only to point out a major deviation from the original meanings. It should be noted that at the head of every Masonic workshop is a venerable (the title of the position comes from Venera, which is another name for Venus, Lucifer). The Morning Star is the third luminous body after the Sun (masculine) and the Moon (feminine), just as man (*Rex Deus*) is a mediator between Heaven (masculine, spirit) and Earth (feminine, matter) and, equally, a result (child, salt in alchemy) of the interaction of the two cosmic forces. This is the great triad, revealed to us by Guénon. In the temple, in the east, between the Sun (left hemisphere, rational) and the Moon (right hemisphere, emotional) is the triangle with the Eye of Horus (son of Osiris – masculine, Sun, and Isis – feminine, Moon, Selena, Elena, Lina, Alina, Cătălina, Diana).

Legend has it that Lucifer was an angel who fell from Heaven to Earth. It is also suggested that he was stripped of his rights because he became arrogant at one point, believing himself to be God. Another meaning could be added here. Lucifer may well have been an illustrious initiate who saw the fiery Star with his own eyes, thus encountering the great Light within his soul, and then, as a sign of sacrifice, was placed by the Order as a cornerstone and thus returned to the world to build on Earth the heavenly Jerusalem, as it was revealed to him, with its harmonious proportions, always the same, governed by the golden ratio. Of course, Lucifer's construction can only be a pale copy of the divine Creation, an attempt to transpose the order from Above, here, into the material world, uncertain and precarious.

There is a representative sign (gesture) in this regard that I would like to explain briefly. At higher degrees, when an illustrious visitor ritually enters the workshop, the venerable one is obliged by custom

to welcome him on the steps of the East and symbolically hand him the instrument of power, thus inviting him to continue to lead the work of the workshop. At this moment, the visitor makes a consecrated gesture of rejection to illustrate his firm decision not to accept the hammer, even though he is fully qualified and invested to preside over the ceremony. This conveys the message that occupying a leadership position requires, above all, suffering and self-sacrifice, and therefore the wise choice for the initiated man would be to decline the offer, however tempting it may seem. At first glance, some less prepared brothers might label the gesture we are referring to as an escape from responsibility. In reality, however, this staging is the Masonic tradition's response, revealed only to initiates, to signal the danger and risk of slipping from the status of Lucifer to that of Satan. As is well known, as a leader you no longer do what you want, but only what needs to be done; this is the essence of sacrifice, as is also evident in the legend of Master Manole.

As an example, we will bring to the reader's attention a significant case study. Towards the end of his term, when Alexandru Ioan Cuza was showing signs of becoming a minor tyrant and believed that everyone should obey him unconditionally, thus ignoring previous agreements, a minor initiatory incident took place that was difficult for an uninitiated, untrained eye to notice. At one of his secret meetings with his chief advisor, Mihail Kogălniceanu, a master Freemason, it is said that the latter addressed the ruler gently: "*Coane Alecule, don't forget, we put you there!*" This was the Masonic warning addressed by the initiate to Lucifer, who had just begun, as if in a dangerous slide, towards the position of Satan; what followed is nothing more than a page in the history book.

Perhaps we could also discuss the relationship between the Saint and the Master throughout history. The Brahmin and Ksatryash castes have not always been on the best of terms. History is marked by numerous moments of great tension. See the biblical episodes with Cain (king) and Abel (priest), the prophets against the kings, the murder of Hiram Abif and, later, that of Jesus, etc. The king and the priesthood are the two pillars of history on which, traditionally, the edification of human society from Sumer to the present day is based.

traditionally, the edification of human society from Sumer to the present day. Do not misunderstand, we are not talking about the king as a monarchical institution but about the initiated man, *Rex Deus*, the master who knows that he has a divine spark within him (Lucifer, Emanuel, Christopher – in the Christian version), has seen the burning Star, and thus realises that he is the king of nature, invested by God to rule creation in his place.

There is a holiday in the Christian calendar called All Saints' Day. However, we do not have a similar commemoration for all masters. Saints, as I said, can no longer err, but masters do so frequently, often allowing themselves to be carried away by the structures they build and the powers temporarily conferred upon them, leading to abuse, tyranny and excess, like an excessively vain Lucifer who, for a moment, dares to believe himself to be God himself and thus ends up irretrievably becoming a poor Satan.

Finally, it is worth mentioning a confrontation, a state of contradiction specific to the Order, between the true initiates (the qualitative, vertical dimension) and the Masonic hierarchy (the quantitative, horizontal dimension), somewhat similar to the confrontation between the prophets and kings in the Old Testament, as a source of custom. horizontal dimension), somewhat similar to the confrontation between the prophets and kings in the Old Testament, as a source of custom. The hierarchs are those brothers, most often incompetent and corrupt, who are concerned only with taking over the administrative helm, the management of the internal affairs of our Order; their main goal is to collect metals and manage the patrimony. At the same time, true initiates are motivated by the desire to restore the specific internal process (the polishing of the rough stone and the royal art) in accordance with the requirements of Masonic tradition. It should be noted that the reference system with which the true initiates compare Masonic life (decisions, actions, the ability to determine notable events in the construction of the ideal Temple) comes from the three founding myths, from landmarks and from the custom of adopting decisions in the middle chamber. At the same time, the hierarchs of Freemasonry have as "performance indicators" quantitative elements that are irrelevant and subsidiary to the true requirements of our Order. This is the source of the dispute, the split and, in general, the inability to properly exercise the traditional Masonic function.

I will now give a small example of how an important postulate of Masonic doctrine can be converted (for the worse). Our Order has nothing to do with granting scholarships, awards, subsidies, institutionalised aid, etc. If it does, it is certainly substituting itself for other institutions. In relation to Masonic tradition, the adoption of such programmes involving various forms of funding constitutes a serious error that can only be explained by the ignorance of the decision-maker; I do not wish to go any further with my assumptions...

Traditionally, charity only has an effect when it is done individually, when the donor empathises with those in need and does not boast about his act of mercy. These donations "...give me the money and I'll know who to give it to..." have no value in relation to what we have to do. The act of charity must be strictly anonymous and soften the donor's heart a little, directly and personally, only then will this heart be more ready to receive the great Light, Lux inens. You cannot experience enlightenment with a hardened heart. This is the profound meaning of charity, and that is why Masonic doctrine preaches mercy and tolerance, to help the aspirant and prepare him to see for himself the burning Star in his heart.

RENÉ GUÉNON AND THE ANGUISH OF METAPHYSICAL

Alex. GRIGORESCU

Anxiety and metaphysics seem like two terms that cannot be linked, given that at first glance they would be related to different fields, such as psychology, psychiatry and philosophy. However, some common points can be identified if we refer to metaphysics as interpreted as an exegesis of being, with anxiety being part of the experiences to which human beings are subjected throughout their lives, throughout their existence.

In René Guénon's opinion, metaphysical anguish is an absurd term that represents a fashion that has taken hold of morally decadent Western society.

Guénon seeks to explain why this notion was introduced into intellectual circles by saying that those who put it forward have no idea what metaphysics means. In its current meaning, metaphysics (*Greek* μετά (meta) = "after", φυσικά (phisiká) = "things about nature") is a field of *philosophy* whose object of study is the explanation of the nature of the world. It is the study of *being* and *existence*, and therefore of *reality*. (1)

In its ontological sense (in the 20th century), the concept of metaphysics signifies that which is beyond physics, beyond the physicality of the surrounding world and, therefore, beyond *the real* or *the experimental*" (Wikipedia).

The fundamental problem of *metaphysics* is "being in its character as being". It is considered that being has a multiple determination "in the sense of its multitude of meanings".

However, we must mention the complexity of the term metaphysics from Aristotle, who was concerned with being in its intrinsic component, his work subsequently being elaborated after another one that

The term "physics" was called metaphysics, in the sense of transformation and change; "Fizi" means nature, body, matter, material or concrete; taking them together, opinions are divided. The dictionary tells us that "it is a general method of knowledge opposed to dialectics, which considers objects and processes in isolation, conceiving development as a simple process of growth..." Metaphysics is a "meaning", "a path", because the knowledge and transformation of material forms will always have a "before" and an "after". Every cause has an effect and every effect has a cause, one of the universal laws tells us, even if metaphysics encompasses them all simultaneously.

Metaphysical knowledge seems logical and common sense when it says that you cannot move "after" or beyond a thing (event, experience, surprise) if you do not know, understand and use it, without being left with "rational black spots", sequelae, fear, mistrust, uncertainties or, in short, lack of faith. Metaphysics is a "spiritual science" that allows us to permanently correct all aspects of life. (2)

Guénon believes that this inappropriate association of the terms anguish and metaphysics is due to the "state of imbalance and instability of all things".

René Guénon attributes the "agitation" of his contemporaries to the desire to search within themselves and not to discover a truth, a truth in which these contemporaries do not really believe. The mental unease that arises before any research endeavour is natural, but it would be better defined by the term curiosity. Anxiety disappears once knowledge is complete. All the more so, this anxiety or curiosity must disappear when we talk about metaphysical knowledge, which is knowledge par excellence. The author states that to speak of metaphysical anxiety would be tantamount to denying metaphysical knowledge.

René Guénon seeks to explain the origin of fear based on Vedic (Vedantic) philosophy. In this philosophy, fear stems from a splitting of the being, because a single being would have no reason to be afraid. (3)

From a soteriological point of view, the realisation that a follower of Vedanta presupposes and seeks can be seen as a healing. The suffering that this doctrine or method seeks to heal

is psychological, it is the pain and fear of the individual. The disciple is ready to surrender himself completely to the master, just as a man engulfed in flames is ready to throw himself into a lake. This means that it is not intellectual curiosity that motivates this approach, but a feeling: the anguish of facing death. (4)

Further analysis of Guénon's reflections on anguish suggests that it could be caused by ignorance in the sense of a lack of initiation into esotericism.

In René Guénon's opinion, those who speak of metaphysical anxiety demonstrate a total ignorance of metaphysics.

The debate initiated by René Guénon on metaphysical anxiety ends with references to pathological anxiety, a mental disorder through which the thinker is no longer a philosopher but a patient. (5)

Among the experiences of human life are also ti-meric states such as: restlessness, fear, terror, anxiety, anguish. These are attributes of existence, similar to the shadow companions of human impulses and trials, which are sometimes realised and understood, while at other times they remain an incomprehensible mystery. They are inevitable experiences, obstacles for the human being on the path to becoming, to perfection; they can provide an impetus, motivate people to move forward, to resist fears or, on the contrary, they can be real obstacles that hinder development, that disrupt the natural course of individual formation on a physical and especially psychological level. In psychology/psychiatry literature, two of the most discussed such experiences are anguish and anxiety, which in common language are often confused in terms of terminology and meaning. Some argue that they belong to the pathological sphere, while others consider that they exist in every individual (either as mere reminiscences or expressed), falling within the limits of normality. (6)

Certainly, anguish is not limited to irrational fear. In many cases, it would be irrational *not* to feel anguish. For example, a person who has just been diagnosed with cancer has every right to feel anguish. We would be alarmed if they did not feel it. Although some of that person's fears may be irrational, the fact that they are afraid is not irrational at all.

Irrational anxieties can often be found in phobias – such as fear of spiders, thunder, open spaces, and so on. However, these phobic anxieties sometimes have a real basis. A more useful definition, which does not need to appeal to the real or imaginary nature of fear, is

"a reaction to a factor that is as yet unknown, either in the environment or in one's own being. The reaction may arise from conscious or unconscious sources. This definition captures uncertainty as a central factor of anxiety and is very close to Bion's definition of "premonition of an affective experience," which emphasises that anxiety is related to an emotional experience that is likely to be experienced imminently and highlights its unknown nature. (7)

We could also interpret the debate on metaphysical anxiety from another perspective, by considering the new philosophical current that emerged in the last period of René Guénon's life, namely Existentialism. We can validate the notion of metaphysical anxiety as a driving force behind the ontogeny of this philosophy. The term was first used in 1943 by the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel. Sartre took up the term and included it in a discussion on existential themes that took place at the Club Maintenant in Paris.

"It is clear that his primary concern is the concrete existence of the individual and the problems that arise from human subjectivity and self-awareness. Existentialism is a deviation from existential philosophy, a philosophical term introduced by Fritz Heineman in 1929 through his work "New Paths in Philosophy. Spirit, Life, Existence."

The becoming of the human being: Existentialism is not a philosophy of quietude; it invites man to build his life through effort, through a transcendence of his present state at every moment.

The fragility of human beings: I am always exposed to my own end, to my destruction as a human being, because I exist as such only through my own effort. Hence the feeling of anguish that accompanies our existence. (8)

In conclusion, metaphysical anguish can exist in the understanding of existentialism. However, existentialism is not an initiatory philosophy. For esotericists, metaphysical anguish can only exist at the level of the noöphyte, its essential cause being ignorance. Hence the resolution of

of anxiety through knowledge, but not that objectless knowledge described by René Guénon, which leads to agitation and then to anxiety, but rather knowledge par excellence, which is the metaphysical realm.

In a broader sense, anxiety could be equated with fear. In this case, it is necessary to discuss the fact that fear represents a lower level of consciousness. On the path of spiritual development, fear must be overcome in order to reach the level of courage, a borderline between the lower and higher levels of consciousness.

For this process, we must start from the fundamental "aids" of the ego, which are represented by assimilated pride and desire, which represent a continuity of the propagation of ignorance. Fear is also a component of the ego, and in this case we refer to the fear of death. The ego is vulnerable because it is illusory and therefore subject to disappearance.

In the context in which the body gives us physical individuality, the mind is the tool that helps us survive. Humans have daily fears, worries that are so widespread that they have entered the realm of so-called normality. 2,500 years ago, Buddha listed the main fears of humans as being: fear of illness, poverty, ageing and death. These fears are summarised in the fear of loss (of youth, opportunity, property, life). The common element governing these fears, as David Hawkins notes, is that everyone considers happiness to be dependent on external factors. This is actually an illusion, and overcoming it will eliminate all our previous fears. Overcoming fear comes from understanding that the source of happiness lies in understanding our own existence, which does not depend on external factors and is uninterrupted. The idea that one can only be happy if one wins or obtains what one desires leads to fear and unhappiness. Fear disappears if we accept the internal quality of the human condition, which leads to the realisation that the discomfort of one person affects others as well. This understanding leads to compassion, love and the disappearance of fear. According to the same author, who summarises several philosophical and religious concepts, life never ends, but only changes form. The source and essence of life is God, who never disappears. (9)

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SHAKESPEARE AND THE FAIRIES

Florin MIHĂESCU

In the Earth's orbit around the Sun, there are several nodal points – four, two equinoxes and two solstices – which are to important events on earth, such as Christmas after the winter solstice and Easter after the spring equinox, or others that are marked by celebrations and legends such as Sânzienele (the birth of St. John the Baptist) after the summer solstice, or the conception of St. John the Baptist after the autumn equinox.

The summer solstice, which we are now passing through, marks the celebration of Sânzienele (Sanctus Dies Johannis), which has generated many legends and even literary works such as M. Sadoveanu's "Noap̃ile de Sânziene" (The Nights of Sânziene) and Mircea Eliade's "Noaptea de Sânziene" (The Night of Sânziene). We will now recall a much older and much more famous work: "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by the great English playwright W. Shakespeare. We will say, very briefly, that in this comedy two pairs of lovers who no longer understand each other and are mistreated by their families and even by the ruler of the city. Theseus, Duke of Athens – an imaginary, symbolic Athens, of course – takes refuge on Midsummer Night in the forest near their city, where a couple of fairies, Oberon and Titania, reign with their retinue (equivalent to the fairies) and their servant, the sprite Puck. And between them there is a conflict that influences human behaviour:

*Titania – This rush of misfortunes / Sprang
from our quarrels*

We are their parents, both of us (II, 1)

To restore understanding between these couples, Oberon sends Puck to find a flower of love that can, through touch,

restore harmony between lovers. Oberon reveals the story of this flower to Puck:

Oberon –

*Come closer, Puck! Do you remember
I was sitting on a rock by the sea...
And I saw—you could not see— Cupid
armed, floating beneath the moon,
Aiming at the proud Vestal, enthroned
On a throne facing the West and releasing
From his quiver the swiftest arrow
... But I saw the flaming arrow
Extinguished in the cold ray of the moon.
Unharm'd, the imperial Vestal pass'd
Unperturb'd in her thoughts
The arrow then fell on a flower Whose
white colour chang'd to purple,
And the girls call it – silent love. (II, 1)*

Interpreting this legend in a traditional symbolic way, as we know has been done before, we could say that the Vestal Virgin could be the Western tradition itself (Vesta is the goddess of the family, Hestia in Greek mythology) which withdraws because of the disharmony of the world. What remains is a flower symbolising quiet love (love in idleness). In our interpretation, this could be the rose, which also plays an important role in other Shakespearean plays (*As You Like It*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, etc.). However, it is known that the rose, with its cup shape, was, towards the end of the Middle Ages, a symbol of an initiatory order, that of the Rosicrucians (Rose-Croix), which replaced the Holy Grail in the West, withdrawn to the East after the dissolution of the Order of the Temple (1314). It should be noted that ROSE is an anagram of Eros, and his arrow is found in the author's name: Speare.

It therefore seems to us that these Shakespearean verses speak of the withdrawal of the Grail tradition (and therefore of Templarism) and its replacement with the symbol of the rose cross, itself a cup bearing the Tradition. There are other symbols in this play and in many others in

which Shakespeare supports this hypothesis. We will mention just one from the tragedy Hamlet. There is a well-known scene in which an amateur theatre troupe performs before King Claudius, the usurper and murderer of the prince's father, a play that reveals the crime of the false king. At the end of the performance, when the audience shouts "lights, lights," Hamlet enthusiastically tells Horatio:

Hamlet – *So runs the world away* -

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers, if the rest of my fortunes turn turk with me, with two Provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players?

(Don't you think, sir, that a forest of feathers on my hat, if fortune does not turn against me, and two roses from Provins on my shoes, would not get me accepted into a troupe of actors?)
III, 2

These shoes with two roses would seem a minor symbol if Provins were translated correctly, not as provincial or Provençal, knowing that Provins was a medieval city where the Templars' medals were minted and where the first roses from Persia were brought.

There is much more to say about the symbolism of the Rosicrucians and Rosicrucianism, which has been passed down to this day in Scottish Freemasonry, among others, whose 18th degree is...

TRADITIONS. A LOOK BY

Augustin IOAN

Tradition is a federation of narratives with varying degrees of generality and complexity (*grand narratives*, but also *petits histoires*) that are significant for a group (family, community) and are passed down from generation to generation. These narratives may concern (re)creation (myths of the genesis of man and gods), but also (pre)creation (*poiesis* and *techné*), i.e. the world in the first case and the world in the Heideggerian sense in the second case. Thus, tradition explains the place and role of beings – individual and collective – in a present that otherwise seems completely meaningless.

A few terms, which I will deliberately refer to by their ancient names, govern every tradition. Firstly, in architecture, tradition seems to consist of three broad, significant narratives: *topos*, *typos* and *techné*. The first describes a science of identifying a site and preparing it for construction. The second concerns the choice of one or another of the established types of building (best practices) and, finally, the third concerns the choice of a mode, considered optimal, for transposing that type onto that site. We find them in all the ancients and, despite the terms used, I will not refer to the ancient Greeks or to Heidegger or Norber-Schulz. We find the same structure in an ancient Indian treatise. An excellent and very detailed commentary on it was made by Jose Jacob in the chapter "Opening the Eye: 'Seeing' as 'Knowing' in Vastu Sastra (Indian Architectural Theory) according to the Treatise Manasara"¹. All ritualised and assumed to be revealed, the operations are as follows: a) identification of the site; b) drawing of the significant axes of the future

¹ In A. Perez-Gomez, S. Parcell (editors) *ChoraFive-Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture* Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2007.

building on the site, its orientation, so to speak; c) the actual foundation and construction; d) decoration and, finally, the ultimate ceremony, equivalent to consecration, involves bringing the statue into the sacred chamber intended for it and the operation of opening the eye, which means incising a small hollow in the eyes of the statue that brings the dead, stone eye to life and makes the statue appear present and alert. This opening of the divine eye is like the keystone of an arch/vault/dome in a Christian place of worship: the culminating event, the purpose for which all the other ceremonies and edifying actions are performed.

Attributes of tradition

1. Arché

Tradition is ancient, and this is precisely where its authority lies. Its origin, age and foundation are often secured by an unearthly, sacred foundation. The appeal to ^{archetypes}, exemplary models, best practices, in any tradition of sufficient age, refers to an unworldly root. At present, it is precisely the wisdom of the oldest holders of the tradition that guarantees its integrity. There is an understanding, not always explicitly formulated (or not openly stated), that traditions are deeply and thoroughly informed by a primordial Tradition. Depending on the literature read or the degree of initiation, there are more or less credible descriptions of the foundations of such an essence of all traditions, which precedes them all in time, without ceasing to subsist, like an archae-scripture, in all its current fragments.

2. Value

The value of tradition stems from its age and its (presumed) unchanged transmission, or at least its unaltered essence. In other words, antiquity and conformity to tradition, co-present, guarantee the quality – for the group attached to that tradition – of the ritual, text or artefact in question. In this sense, participation

² Eliade's somewhat retractative statement in *The Labyrinth Test* regarding his understanding of archetype is interesting: apparently, it is still about exemplary models established through transmission, and not about their epiphanic origin.

Participation in the old, traditional form is a way of flattering the precedents, and innovation means adapting new circumstances as best as possible to the traditional meaning. Value does not stem from difference, usually radical, as we still believe, even though modernity has left us, but from sharing what has already been verified as good.

3. *Post-factum*

Tradition is observed in its existence and development. It cannot be anticipated or predicted/projected. Hence the grotesque failure in scale and decorative delirium of most of the embodiments of the so-called architectural ideology of national specificity in the years after 1967, when the signal was given by the Trade Union Cultural Centre in Suceava (architect N. Porumbescu) and until 1987 (when the same architect's ensemble in Satu Mare was inaugurated).

4. *Id/Alter*

Tradition gives identity to the group, ensures adherence, cohesion and conformity to/within the group through attachment to a tradition. Tradition can be adopted, I can attach myself (to use a Guénonian term) to a tradition into which I was not born, which was not given to me by virtue of belonging to that group. I can convert to another religion, I can adopt the civic values of another urban culture, I can change the way of working in which I was educated by a master. Not infrequently, converts are more traditionalist than those who are native to the tradition, either out of a genuine attachment to it or out of a desire to prove to the group that the attachment is successful and that I, the other, have become identical to them.

5. *(Re)itero*

Repetition with iteration is the central rule of any tradition, which is thus a cyclical process, but more similar to strange attractors than to a circle. There is a vestigial central core, which may consist of a number of myths, legends, grand narratives or *petits histoires*, rules transmitted initiatically and/or through treatises (in architecture, for example), around which all the other components, new or old, which are added over time through successive interactions; these bring the past (or, more precisely, contemporary representations of it) into the present.

Tradition has variable geometry. From the cloud of significant narratives that aggregate a tradition, some acquire new meanings over time, while others are lost. Tradition is thus in a perpetual process of (re)configuration and, to a certain extent, this process of (re)configuration also involves a dose of invention, of novelty, which can be added a rebours as a simulacrum of the principle or of the very history of becoming.

6. Pars pro toto

Each of the parts and joints of a tradition give a fractal account of the image of the whole, i.e. of the world of the community immersed in that tradition, which is shared by the members of that community. Tradition builds communities, strengthening existing ones, but it can also invent a sense of belonging. A handy example is the celebration by architects of vernacular rural architecture, from which they sought to claim their roots (from Neo-Romanian to C-tin Joja, Nicolae Goga, Nicolae Gipsy Porumbescu, the latter even controversially adopting a tradition, the rural one, which was disappearing, still disappearing, right before the eyes of those who adored it). A contemporary example comes from the experience of the HAR Foundation at Capul Dolojman/Jurilofca: while artists and architects sought to learn how to build houses out of earth, covered with reeds, the villagers were going through a reverse process of urbanisation, cementing their earthen houses or building new ones out of concrete blocks and covering them with asbestos cement. Such examples are partly explained by Peter Collins' distinction between being immersed in a tradition (like a fish in water: tradition is not objectified before the user, but is given to them) and opting for a tradition through various processes (migration, conversion, deliberate and conscious assumption).

Case study: tectonic tradition

Tectonics is the science of composition, of articulating otherwise disparate elements into a whole, so that they reflect the correct, harmonious distribution of forces and tensions on the earth. The architect is the elder, the head of the tektoni team, the only one who knows from the outset what the building will look like, the edifice still unfinished. Until postmodernism, architecture was much more conservative

conservative, slower than other arts in terms of the historical time needed to generate and consume change. Postmodernism is the only artistic movement that originated in architecture, so in the case of postmodernism, change, innovation and the break with tradition begin precisely in architecture. There is already sufficient literature on this subject; I would just mention here Kenneth Frampton's introduction to his book *Studies in Tectonic Culture* and Demetri Porphyrios's text *From Techne to Tectonics*.

The Greek word from which tectonics derives is *tekton* (vb. *tektainomai*): carpenter or, by extension, craftsman who works with hard materials, with the significant exception of metal: metallurgists and blacksmiths cannot be *tektons*, as they first subject the material to fire, almost liquefying it, and only then process it. The builder, however, is recovered under the umbrella of the carpenter: the Greek word describing the craft of building seems to have its origins in the Sanskrit *taksan* (axe, hatchet, hatchet), which refers to carpentry and the use of the axe. *Architekton* was therefore the master builder, the most venerable or wisest (*arché*) among them. In recent decades, work on etymology has sparked a direction in architecture that Frampton places under the umbrella of a 1982 definition given to tectonics by A.H. Borbein: "Tectonics becomes the art of joints" (Frampton, 1995, 5). This art of bringing together, of articulating subassemblies – with functional autonomy and their own formal identity – into a whole is, therefore, a "federation" of objects that agree to work together. Therefore, tectonics is opposed to that "autocracy" of building which involves the sedimentation of successive layers of matter where, between the deposited unit (clay, brick, stone block) and the whole, there are no intermediate levels of aggregation. The effort to discharge forces into the ground is a collaborative one, which requires the node and the joint, the articulations, therefore, more than the mass, the field of matter, as is the case in the second example.

Tectonics in the broadest sense is architecture itself. In a modest sense, however, it is only one of two historically established ways of practising this engagement with matter for the purpose of providing shelter, as one of Frampton's most frequently cited authors, Heidegger, puts it. Frampton seems to ignore here the newer disposable architecture, which consists neither in

articulation nor sedimentation? But what about parametric architecture, manufactured file-to-factory? Therefore, the author quoted infers that tectonics is a constitutive gesture that targets not only parts of buildings, but also worlds in general, as is the case with art. Speaking of art, another Greek word must be mentioned: *techné*, later circumscribed by art through the medium of masterful craftsmanship. However, as Frampton himself said elsewhere in 1992, architecture is neither art nor technique – it is (but, above all, must remain) a craft, a work of the hands, a physical engagement with matter.

It is therefore not incorrect to call this art or craft architecture, at least when referring to the product of the mind and hands of the master builder – we thus incorporate into the word the maximum meaning of the term mentioned above. I remember how, during my student years, we were warned not to use the word architecture, preferring instead the word *architectonics*. I no longer remember the reasons for this, other than its similarity to other "Latin-based" languages, as Caragiale put it. On the contrary, recent arguments – which I would not hesitate to call interpretative missteps – call into question precisely this preferred term: architecture. According to David Farrell (1997), we should not even call this art architecture but, on the contrary, *archecture*, since, according to the author, the origin of the term is not to be found in tectonics but in *tiktein*.

However, according to Frampton, we must certainly use the word *architectonics* in at least one specific case: when we refer to that way of practising architecture centred on the rigorous assembly of sub-assemblies that have a variable degree of complexity in their own composition and which retain a certain degree of structural, functional and aesthetic autonomy in the resulting whole. Gothic, like high-tech, is such an *architectonics*, similar to the wooden architecture it claims as its ancestor, and both are clearly opposed to the sedimentary, the "geological" architecture of Romanesque, Cubism and the vernacular of unburned earth, brick or stone that precedes - and inspires - their arrival.

Which probably means that, faced with this semantic uncertainty, it might be best to stick with the term that most clearly signals its origin and, to a large extent if not entirely, its nature: that of *architectonics*?

terms that most clearly indicate its origin and, to a large extent if not entirely, its nature: that of architectonics? Ultimately, there are two arguments against this stubbornness: the first is that there is no real reason other than the whim of the eternal "entry into Europe" - by copying appearances and ignoring essences - for which we should be supportive of a term just because it comes from French, and the second argument is a "democratic" one: when asked quickly, the average person immediately says architectural and not architecture, signalling - perhaps - a kind of wisdom of permanence: lingering in the wake of etymologies and early meanings can sometimes be a sign of a wisdom of preservation that "specialists" tend to discard lightly.

Essentially, here are the conclusions of the second text mentioned above: there is an etymology of the word that refers us to an Indo-European root from which we have preserved the word *taksan* (axe, carpenter's axe); in essence, says Porphyrios, *tectonike*, the ancient Greek word "describes the knowledge of carpentry" (Porphyrios, 129), but also a form of potential order, derived from the ability of wood to be worked (wood has a finite length and cross-section, which forces the craftsman to adopt certain solutions for opening and modularity; it is discontinuous, thus implying a science of joints and knots) but also from the carpenter's ability to assemble it into meaningful forms which, even if they obey the hylic character of wood (as Heidegger would have said), represent a symbolic emancipation of them. Starting from the finite character and formal properties of building materials (Porphyrios, 136), *tectonics* is a technique for articulating parts into assemblies and assemblies into a whole, but also a way of obtaining visual effects from the statics of forms (or, as the author calls them on p. 136: stability, unity, balance, as well as their variations and opposites).

Arché – the principle, the original and the ancient – is captured in the very name of the profession. In relation to the etymology of the profession, *architectonica* – a term which, for reasons I will explain shortly, I prefer to the one that has come to us through French mediation – is therefore the way – verified over time, written with strong essences – in which we articulate elementary units of matter or sub-assemblies between themselves and

in relation to a project at a higher level of complexity, so that each of these levels of articulation, as well as the whole, dynamically and expressively accounts for the multiple tensions generated and composed by the transmission of the tensors of ascent (towards the sky) and gravity (towards the earth).

Corollary: more than a senior, the master of the team of craftsmen capable of carrying out this operation to completion, the arche-tekton was also the only one capable of proposing – in his mind and in anticipation of the work, i.e. towards the future – from the very beginning to the end of all operations associated with the construction (i.e. putting into operation), the entire edifice. From before the beginning, through design, and until, gradually rising, it reveals itself to others (who otherwise hold other secrets of their craft that make them indispensable in their field of expertise), the house is whole and intact (only) in the architect's mind. Its fertile age in the secrets of the profession, its integrative authority and ability to operate with principles, concepts and fundamental rules of space allow the arche-tekton – to the extent that it possesses the above ingredients through a) immersion in the culture of the profession, b) direct experience and c) the ability to experiment continuously within the horizon of tradition – to control the future. The house is a prediction come true, and the architect is a predictor who, in addition, has at his disposal all the means to provoke the future he has invoked. The architect is the one who actualises the potential in which, for the time being, awaiting inauguration, his house is located, incomplete.

Another important thing that the study of tectonics tells us, related to the origin of architecture, is the connection between carpentry and architecture, which the etymology of the word tectonike invokes from prehistoric times. As in clearing glades for setting up a camp or a more permanent form of settlement (see Heidegger's theme), carpentry represents an original tradition of architecture, which lies at its very heart. From what we can deduce from the Bible, not only St. Joseph, but Jesus himself were carpenters, the latter at least until the age of 30, when he began preaching.

In Transylvania, Horea was a carpenter and builder of wooden churches, therefore an initiate into the secrets of what we now call operational mass production.

. In the same vein, the carpentry tradition of architecture is also reflected in the stubborn preservation of wooden architectural forms in the later and more elevated stone architecture of ancient Greek temples: even if they had no other function than decorative (and, at least for builders, symbolic, of their own guild tradition), the signs of wood turned to stone remain, just as in the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple the ark with the tablets of the law was placed. But the reverse was also available to people like Horea: the circulation of architectural models from masonry to wood, in the case of religious architecture - from Finland to just beyond the Carpathians, in Vâlcea, on the north-south axis of Europe, is a fact, in which carpentry reabsorbs in its original character developments in masonry architecture (vaults, semi-domes and domes, the multiple towers of Central European Gothic).

Precautions and warnings

Tradition exists only as a living process. Resurrecting a tradition that is clinically dead, or mummifying a tradition, is called historicism, and its consequence is museumification. Museumification can save artefacts belonging to a tradition, but it cannot, on its own, reactivate the tradition itself. Postmodernism has given us such examples of historicism, from the ideas of Prince Charles in *A Vision of Britain* to architects close to him (the Krier brothers), to Michael Graves or Robert AM Stern. Tradition is affirmative. It keeps the gap between then and now open, present and tense. Tradition does not collapse into a copied past that is opposed to the present. Tradition proposes values (guaranteed by transmission) to the present, it does not oppose them to it.

Of course, after modernity, so (apparently?³) anti-traditional, discussions about tradition have reappeared. Partially, we find soft understandings of tradition in concepts such as genealogy (Foucault), paradigm (Kuhn), critical conventionalism (Anderson). None of these, however, is completely superimposable on the much more, how shall I put it? traditional concept of tradition. Proof of this is the very interest of contemporary generations, who are fed up with historicism and calpes

³ Ioan Andreescu *Spiritual Traditions in Modern Architecture*, Bucharest: Paideia, 2001

invoking traditions which, alas, no longer exist (paradoxically, due to national communism, which invented ancient and at least questionable genealogies for the Romanian people), but which, at the same time, wish to be adopted by (i.e. assume) a somewhat more stable tradition as an alternative to the amoral and fragmented cynicism of the present.

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