

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A CONSERVATIVE?

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ABSTRACT

What does it mean to be conservative (right-wing)? Here's the question of our day. A few considerations, from Nae Ionescu, Petre Țuțea and Roger Scruton. At least five coordinates define the conservative stance: nationhood-God, nuances not resentment, family-childhood-Holliday, the peasant and finally, the doctrinal clarity.

Keywords: utility, God, morality, love, society, democracy, peasant.

THE THREE FUNDAMENTALS

The conservative is fully aware he or she has something to prove of himself, to pay attention to his vocation – to multiply his gifts by serving the others.

The conservative is fully aware that his wording, speech, audible or written manifestations have a **moral utility** as a condition to be effective:

“... any viewpoint has the right to exist through the precision of its wording, through its moral utility. Otherwise, the viewpoint is insignificant”¹³³.

In other words, words should be the path of accomplishments, according to St. Jon Chrysostom.

The third fundamental is **love, not interest**, as the basis for social interaction. Love is the basis of knowledge and doing-acting-creating things. The social fabric where this process is possible is called the community of love as a community of faith, which has two expressions: the Church and nationhood (with its smallest unit: the family). In searching for Truth within the community of love, we acquire the special *spiritual* quality of *foresight*, the basis of any good politics and governance.

From these three fundamentals, we can see the five axes around which we wove the conservative attitude/way of thinking/behaving.

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¹³³ „... orice punct de vedere are drept la existență prin precizia formulării, prin utilitatea lui morală. Altfel punctul de vedere este insignifiant.” in Petre Țuțea, *Între Dumnezeu și neamul meu [Between God and my nation]*, Bucharest, Anastasia Foundation, Graphic Art Publishing House, 1992, p. 59.

THE FIVE COORDINATES OF BEING A CONSERVATIVE

Talking conservative about being a conservative roughly means the following:

1. Placing yourself, your personality, attitude toward everything, between your people – ethnic community and God: Being between God and your nation.

2. To be a man of nuances, a man of sacrifice and grace, not of resentment because you are a defender of life, which takes countless forms. So, defender of life and the freedom of the person are the same.

3. To protect the family and childhood, including the unborn, having the cult of the ancestors.

4. To value the village and to defend the peasant household, islands of clean and healthy economic and spiritual breath, and to integrate them into the whole economy.

5. To think doctrinally on a national and global scale *for* your country, not at the expense of your country, to look for the clarity of categorial thinking, overcoming the trifle and carry of personal opinions. (For example, do not confuse peasant and farmer, or between anarchy and totalitarianism, nationalism, and communism, etc.)

1. Being between Good and my nationhood

Few words about translating from Romanian.

The last four axes of being a conservative are mostly based on the first: Being between God and the nationhood. Strictly translating from Petre Țuțea's saying: "to move between God and nationhood"¹³⁴. This implies the complex activity of thinking, doing, praying – whatever "is significant between the sky and the earth"¹³⁵ concludes Țuțea:

"I am being between God and the nation I belong to. Apart from these terms, I see nothing significant between the sky and earth"¹³⁶.

In doing so, we reach other important drives:

- The mystic attitude,
- The anti-magic attitude,
- *Oikophilia* – love for the household (self-sustained family)
- Sacrifice
- The looking for the wholeness
- Shame
- The spiritual awareness (*trezvia*)

¹³⁴ „mă mișc între Dumnezeu și neamul meu” in Petre Țuțea, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ „Mă mișc între Dumnezeu și neamul din care fac parte. În afară de acești termeni, nu văd nimic semnificativ între cer și pământ.” in *Ibid.*

The idea and the mystic attitude

Idea means, in ancient Greek, the ability to see and to know. For Țutea, it is the only way to see the significant, that is, to have a grasp of what really matters¹³⁷.

The idea is interlinked with the pursuit of wholeness and of spiritual awareness, if blessed with the mystic attitude – that is, the ability to contemplate. Only in contemplation, shows Schopenhauer, we see the wholeness of things, that is the beauty, the truth and the good.

The mystic attitude is defined by Nae Ionescu as follows, quoting from the forebears of Christianity: “I believe to know” (Anselm of Canterbury) and “I believe for it is absurd” (Tertullian).

To fully understand – that is, to grasp the significant, the wholeness of things, is to prove yourself spiritually awoke.

Spiritually awakening means that you shall not be easily diverted from reality (the significant) – this is the anti-magic attitude. You are a *religious educated* believer, not an easy prey for whatever is new, or falsely good: you know because you believe, remember?

Being a believer, having a sound thinking means that you can *sacrifice* yourself. Your job is not just *your job*, it is *your confession* to the world as a believer.

Sacrificing for the other and pursuing for the wholeness of things means, not only that you do not let down your fellow people, but you love and protect the scaffold of the wholeness: the family and its engine, the oikos – since the *oikophilia* – love of the familial framework.

Loving the other by sacrificing and confessing means changing the personal emphasis from the self-assertion towards piety, humility, and shame. If piety is the ability to listen and sacrifice to the other and to incorporate this listening into deeds, shame is one of the main checkers of persons’ integrity: you cannot look to the other as a means, but as being a whole person. Sacrifice and shame are two guarantors of *liberty*, the product of daily conduct under their umbrella.

2. To be a man of nuances, not of resentment

Perceiving nuances is an ability. Resentment is an inability; it is caused by the over exposure to the various ideologies that deny the other the right to think for himself. If the nuances are the product of the *idea*, resentment is the byproduct of the excessive ideologization of reality. The men of nuances’ joy are to see the other free. Resentment strives to constrain people to fixed lines of “guidance”. The highest level of perceiving nuances is *grace* while the lowest is *resentment* that incites to hate and crime and elicits *disgust* and *horror* in the man of nuances.

¹³⁷ Platon, *Opere V, Republica*, edited by Constantin Noica and Petru Creția, notes by Andrei Cornea, Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House, 1986, p. 498.

The conservative spirit is about nuances, for it understands that life comes through infinite forms. Once recognizing it, the conservative spirit agrees that the only way to fully understanding of the world is through contemplation (remember faith?).

The ability to think of nuances comes from *passion* – the essence of the beautiful man, a human type present only in Eastern Europe, since only here humanity suffered from the worst of ideologies – communism.

To be a man of nuances is to respect the other, nature and to strive being a chevalier able to preserve the Lady's Cult, without which there is no beauty in interpersonal relationships.

Nuances imply *grace*. Grace is a precise and beautiful behavior (Schopenhauer).

“The grace consists in the fact that any movement and position are executed as easily, adequately, and comfortably as possible, being therefore the absolutely appropriate expression of his intention or act of will, without anything superfluous, which would prove to be an inopportune occupation and meaningless... and without any insufficiency to give it the rigidity of a wood. Grace presupposes as a condition of a just symmetry of all components and a regular and harmonious physical conformation because only thanks to them full lightness is possible ...”¹³⁸.

Grace is also *providence* (Nae Ionescu):

“The act of salvation is an act of grace, of mercy from God, on the one hand; and on the other, an act of individual initiative”¹³⁹.

3. Family and childhood. The purity of childhood and the village. The school

Being a man of nuances implies the ability to follow the chivalry and the Lady's cult, with all their constellation of grace, manliness, courtship, loyalty, sacrifice, fraternal and agape like love. That is, the ability to be a man or a woman. The scope on being a man and a woman, for being a knight or a lady, is *family*. In this societal reactor (the family), man and woman are *transformed* into another *one*, body and soul. The family body is made of a household of the sexually pacified bodies, and the soul of the family is its relentless pursuit of life – the tamed eros is becoming Logos.

¹³⁸ „[G]rația constă în faptul că orice mișcare și poziție sunt executate cât se poate de ușor, de adecvat și de comod, fiind prin urmare expresia absolut corespunzătoare a intenției sale sau a actului de voință, fără nimic de prisos, care să vădească a fi o îndeletnicire inoportună și fără sens ...și fără vreo insuficiență care să-i dea rigiditatea unui lemn. Grația presupune drept condiție o justă simetrie a tuturor componentelor și o conformație fizică regulată și armonică deoarece numai datorită acestora este posibilă deplina lejeritate ” in Arthur Schopenhauer, *Lumea ca voință și reprezentare [The world as will and representation]*, vol. I, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2019, translation and glossary by Radu Gabriel Părvu, pp. 264–265.

¹³⁹ „Actul mântuirii este un act de grație, de îndurare din partea lui Dumnezeu, pe de o parte; iar pe de alta, un act de inițiativă individuală.” in Nae Ionescu, *Teologia. Integrala publicisticii religioase [Theology. The full text of religious publishing]*, edition, introduction and notes by Dora Mezdrea, Sibiu, Deisis Publishing House, 2003, p. 53.

Family implies purity, that is searching for and preserving the unseen truth between its members. The most palpable truth is the child, the very incarnation of purity, joy, sacrifice, and hope. The family and the child are the products of the *unseen*, where from the Truth is coming. In the early days, the village, was the center of all of these¹⁴⁰. Holidays are expressions of metaphysical reality, too, out of which there is no social harmony.

The family is the bearer of other great metaphysical realities: the Holiday and childhood. The Holiday, a form of the sacred takes, is the total organizer of the existence¹⁴¹, provided it is lived communally and by the Great Tradition (“Predania”). The child and the peasant, writes Băncilă, are the only human formulas that fully live the connection with the unseen:

“The child likes nature, lives the divine, gives himself, rejoices. Then, another good circumstance is the psychology of the teacher when he was not badly influenced. Most teachers are sons of peasants. But the peasant lives the Holiday! Nowhere is the Holiday more alive than in the world of children and in the peasant patriarchal world”¹⁴².

This conception of reality puts a serious emphasis on the spiritual aspect of schooling. Schooling is not for making strong individualities, but strong complete personalities – the Eliade’s *l’homme total* – centered around vocation, as a gift to be fulfilled. *L’homme total* vs. the sexualized man is the distinction between the person vs. individual-made-of-body-parts-and-some-interests (if any).

Eco-friendliness is a byproduct of revering the unborn and the ancestors. Being a conservative is also about respecting nature. Family is not only about the husband and wife and their children. It is about the past from which the spiritual techniques of togetherness are coming and their finality – the unborn. Roger Scruton:

“There is one overwhelming reason for the degradation of the environment, and that is human appetite. In the wealthier parts of the world people are too many, too mobile, too eager to gratify their wake, too ready, in the jargon of economics, to externalize their costs. Most of our environmental problems are special cases of this general problem. And the problem can be more simply described as the triumph of desire over restraint. It can be solved only when restraint prevails over desire, ... when people have re-learned the habit of sacrifice. For what do people make sacrifices? For the things they love. And when do these do these sacrifices benefit the unborn? When they are made for the dead”¹⁴³.

¹⁴⁰ See:

1. Bernea Ernest, *Spațiu, timp și cauzalitate la poporul roman [Space, Time and Causality in the Romanian People]*, Second revised edition, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2005.

2. Vasile Băncilă, *Duhul Sărbătorii [The Spirit of Celebration]*, edited edition [and Preface] by Ileana Băncilă, Bucharest, Anastasia Publishing House, 1996.

¹⁴¹ Vasile Băncilă, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁴² „Copilului îi place natura, trăiește divinul, se dăruiește, jubilează. Pe urmă, altă împrejurare bună e psihologia învățătorului, atunci când n-a fost rău influențat. Cei mai mulți învățători sunt fii de țărani. Dar țăranul trăiește sărbătoarea! Nicăieri sărbătoarea nu e mai vie decât în lumea copiilor și în lumea patriarhală țărănească.” in *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁴³ Roger Scruton, *A political philosophy. Arguments for conservatism*, Bloomsbury, Dublin, 2006 – first edition, 2019, pp. 36–37.

4. The peasant treasure

The peasant and the village are the only known “civilized” solutions for a sustainable society (including its economy). Ecofriendly and more important, childhood friendly, the peasant and its Anthropos – called “village” – are one of the rarest resources Romania still has and must draw upon for its revival. The peasant and the village are functioning according to consumption as needed, where need is different from pleasure. “The engine” behind is the unity between the people’s personality and sacrality:

“Always here and beyond, visible and invisible, time and eternity. The permanent presence of these terms in the human spirit prevents the overflow of the useful and the pleasant over the real ... In the real order, the useful is not confused with the necessary, the useful belonging to the ‘profane’ and the necessary to the ‘sacred’...”¹⁴⁴.

What is a peasant? The peasant is the main social actor of the village. From an economic viewpoint called “subsistence economy”. The subsistence economy is an economy as needed, in the sense that the peasant is only interested in the surplus insofar as he seeks to spend the winter or participate in the small exchange of compensation (food for clothes, for example, of artisans or merchants in the city). In this sense, insofar as he still has knowledge and equipment, **the peasant can procure for himself to a large extent the basic necessities**, for living, from his own household, or through small local trade, with other peasants. We are talking about the primary division of labor, between farmers, animal breeders and craftspersons. From an anthropological perspective, the peasant is the prototype of *homo religiosus*, the inventor of agriculture with direct access to the truth revealed through faith. This complex constellation is called by Eliade *cosmic Christianity*, in the sense that nothing is accidental in the peasant’s household, in the wholeness of the village, where each is in his nature, in accordance with its purposes, with the spirit of the holiday (Băncilă). For the peasant, every gesture on earth has a correspondent in Heaven (Bernea). It is what we mean by transfiguration or *imitatio Christi*.

Being the last true rejuvenator of society (demographically and through the function of the Holiday), the village is the moral lung of the country. Romania still has about 13,500 villages, grouped into about 2,600 communes¹⁴⁵. The number of cities in 2001 was about 265.

¹⁴⁴ „Mereu aici și dincolo, vizibil și invizibil, timp și eternitate. Prezența permanentă a acestor termeni în spiritul omului împiedică revărsarea utilului și plăcutului peste real ... În ordinea reală nu se confundă utilul cu necesarul, utilul ținând de «profan», iar necesarul de «sacru» ...” in Mircea Eliade apud Petre Țuța, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

¹⁴⁵ ***, The Communes of Romania, in *Comune din România*, Available at: <http://comuna.info/>, Accessed on February 12, 2021, and LAW no. 351 of July 6, 2001 on the approval of the National Spatial Planning Plan – Section IV – Network of localities), published in *Monitorul Oficial* no. 408 of July 24, 2011, Hierarchy of existing urban localities by ranks, Available at: http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act_text?id=28862, Accessed on March, 3 2021.

Professor Fițiu shows that in the country in 2017, there were about 12,000 true peasants¹⁴⁶. Let's not lose them.

5. Think clearly, think doctrinally

To think clear is not enough to *want* to think clearly. For being myself is not enough for clarity. I must assume the context. I must be able to sacrifice myself to put things into context. Clarity is not far away from the ability to *contemplate*. Contemplation is not to stare at something. It is the ability to exceed my personal self and to *care*. To be able to do so is to have *faith*.

Thinking doctrinally is the ability to systematize the *care* for a nation. It is the political ideal transposed into ethical coordinates as lines of action. It comprises both the key points of the political discourse and the implementation of the discussed.

The ability to think doctrinally is rarer these days, when policy is more related to the hidden networks of power, disconnected from the people – as a political body to be represented. Where there is no political representativeness there is *no democracy*. Democracy is impossible without the ability to *clearly problematize* at the elites' level. The doctrine is the very foundation on which political awareness is possible. Otherwise, politics becomes a simple act of force.

Some examples include the confusion between peasant and farmer, between nationalism and communism, or anarchy and totalitarianism.

Briefly stating of the following:

1. The peasant is a self-sufficient anthropological actor, while the farmer is a capitalist interested in making a profit¹⁴⁷.

2. Communism destroys the nationhood, since it hates any kind of tradition coming from *illo-tempore*. Communism is based on class struggle against other classes, across the nations. It is internationalist. Nationalism is based on the nation to compete with other nations for the prosperity of its own homeland. It is locally-centered, not an internationalist. Both the nation and nationalism are victims of communism.

3. Anarchy is the ideology aimed at disrupting the very idea of wholeness and order. There is almost no legitimate source of order. Totalitarianism is the ideology aimed at protecting and promoting order based on conserving the systems of the wholeness: the family, the church, the professional bodies. There is the confusion between the pervasiveness of anarchism (aiming at the total destruction of order) and the scope of totalitarianism (conserving the totality, that is, order)¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁶ Avram Fițiu, *Salvarea fermei țărănești [Saving the peasant farm]*, 2nd added edition, Arad, Sens Publishing House, 2017, p. 419.

¹⁴⁷ See "peasant" in Radu Baltasiu, in Bădescu Ilie, Cristea Darie (coord.), *Elemente pentru un Dicționar de sociologie rurală [Elements for a Dictionary of Rural Sociology]*, Bucharest, Little Wallachia Publishing House, 2011.

¹⁴⁸ See Petre Țuțea, *op. cit.*

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