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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARTICLES

Corina Pantelimon, <i>Marriage and ethnic culture</i>	85
George Damian Mocanu, <i>Slavery in the Byzantine commonwealth in the 13th–15th centuries. A regional framing of the beginnings of Gypsy slavery in Romanian countries</i>	99
Alin Bulumac, <i>Romanian interwar newspaper “Our People”. Brief content analysis</i>	105
Radu Baltasiu, <i>The issue of sovereignty and conservative doctrine. A response to the new crisis. Autochthonism and humanity</i>	115
Emanuil Ineoan and Andreea Dăncilă Ineoan, <i>Epistolary fragmentarium: Ion Conea – David Prodan. A geopolitician’s dialogue with a historian</i>	131
Mihail Ungheanu, <i>The technocratic deformation of society</i>	147
Anania-Andreea Iordache, <i>Social capital in the digital age</i>	159
Samira Cîrlig, <i>Discourse and counter-discourse on the “Snowflake-Millennial”/“Me Generation”/“Egocentric Generation”</i>	173
Samira Cîrlig, <i>Theoretical approaches to the “Snowflake- Millennial”/“Me Generation”/“Egocentric Generation”</i>	189

BOOK REVIEW

Narcis-Claudiu Rupe, <i>The current status of the North-Western Romanian border 100 years after the Treaty of Versailles. Research report – Radu Baltasiu</i>	205
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ARTICLES

MARRIAGE AND ETHNIC CULTURE

Corina Pantelimon Bistriceanu¹

ABSTRACT

Culture is the most important characteristic of humanity, and it is reflected especially by the spiritual creation of a community. Within a community, there are certain focal points or generators of culture, which are defined by the fact that they form a certain type of spiritual sociality. Among these, the family is very important. As an act of founding and strengthening the family, marriage carries and generates family culture and, consequently, ethnic culture as well. In Romanian culture, marriage meant a very well-defined passage ritual that leads to the transfiguration of the spouses, especially the wife, to the consecration of the family union, and to the offspring's legitimation. At the same time, marriage is a mythical scenario, with Christian and pre-Christian religious implications being visible both in communal rituals and in popular, artistic, or spiritual creations. The changes made in the definition of culture, morality, and marriage, unsupported by ethnic tradition, destroy this connection. Marriage defined only from a social or legal point of view, the diversification of types of cohabitation that imitate or replace conjugal family, risk differentiating themselves from or even opposing the culturally accepted formulas and, thereby, changing the purpose of the marital relationship from founding and strengthening the family to one of opportunity, favourable to certain social groups.

Keywords: ethnicity, family, marriage, culture.

THEORETICAL CLARIFICATIONS

Culture, in one of its most “traditional” definitions, means the spiritual essence of an ethnic group’s creations and, at the same time, the spiritual source of the creativity itself. This is evident in what German authors (Johann Gottfried Herder, Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Friedrich Schiller and others) described by the term *Kultur* in their dialogue with the Franco-Saxon world, bearer and promoter of the idea of civilization. In this horizon, the ethnicity has a spiritual nature, and it is the main cultural agent of the society.

The role of popular culture and mythology is fundamental to traditional societies, whose understanding is impossible if we ignore the collective imaginary, myths, rites, and symbols². In these societies, among the facts generating sociality –

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² Corina Bistriceanu Pantelimon, *Sociologia tradiției [Sociology of Tradition]*, Bucharest, Ethnology Publishing, 2007.

those that define the specific profile of the community – those generating faith are preferred. Death, birth or marriage are acts of faith and therefore also of sociality, as Roger Scruton pointed out, because they support or restore the solidarity of the group: on one hand, by linking together those who participate in ceremonies and rituals and, as such, know what to feel, how to feel and how to do this together; on the other hand, reintegrating the levels of humanity – the community of the living, the ancestors and the unborn – and distinguishing them again, by the initiative formulas assumed by the funeral service.

“Those things are sacred in which the spirit of the community has taken residence, and in which our destiny is at stake: as it is at stake, for example, in sexual feelings, in attitudes to children and parents, in the rituals of membership and initiation whereby the first-person plural – the ‘we’ – is formed”³.

Roger Scruton notes in his analysis of modern culture, by which he identifies the culture-cult relationship of affiliation. Religion also induces and presupposes an ethical vision (man is object of judgment, having long-term responsibility) and the emotional security that virtue practices guarantee. Virtue is knowing what to feel and how to express, and this teaching is condensed into rites, rituals, myths and beliefs, belonging to the common culture.

“The common culture tells him how and what to feel, and in doing so raises his life to the ethical plane, where the thought of judgement inhabits whatever he does”⁴.

Even if he does not emphasize the link between culture and the ethnic profile of the people’s community, the English philosopher related the most important part of culture – popular or common culture – to rituals and beliefs, to the specific spirituality of an ethnic group, the most intimately conditioned by the spirit of the national community.

In his meditation on culture, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru talks about the “spiritual pattern” that identifies the ethnic type. Ethnic culture is

“a complex of typical manifestations, which the individual finds at birth and to which he adapts without opposition”⁵.

Unconsciously assumed by this instinctive, unconditional adaptation, the ethnos becomes a conscious part of the social personality at the time of the emergence of the need for introduction towards the stranger, the *alter*. The community becomes an ethnic group, therefore, through the formation of the cultural and social consciousness, stratified ascendently by the Romanian philosopher: fundamental is the awareness of the community of origin, understood as blood bonds, kinship; then the knowledge of the community of language appears, of the expressive cultural specificity; the last and

³ Roger Scruton, *Modern Culture*, London, Blumsbury Publishing, 2005, p. 13.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

⁵ „Un complex de manifestări tipice, pe care individul le găsește la nașterea sa și la care el se adaptează fără împotrivire”, in Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Etnicul românesc. Naționalismul [The Romanian Ethnos. The Nationalism]*, Bucharest, Albatros Publishing, 1996, p. 35.

most difficult to assume seems to be the conscience of the community of historical destiny, the presence and historical affirmation of a particular culture. Unlike the ethical finality of folk culture at Scruton, Rădulescu-Motru, recognizing the non-material origin of culture (not the objects of creation, but the spiritual force that leads to creation is the essence of culture), emphasizes the role of the ethnic identification, of the conscious assumption of the cultural identity of a people and of the historical affirmation of its creative capacity.

Closer to Scruton's conception are Lucian Blaga's ideas⁶. The definition of culture is rendered by the style factor, which has a load which is mostly unconscious, abyssal⁷. The unity of style in the creation of an ethnic group can be seen especially by those outside it. The style cannot be easily understandable to consciousness, because it transfers into conscious contents by irradiating the unconscious into the conscious, by manifesting certain accents, attitudes, initiatives etc. The style appears most in the process of spiritual creation and bears the name of personality. In the case of Romanian culture, Blaga emphasizes the popular peasant profile – a childish profile, in the sense of preserving the mythical horizon of the development of and understanding life – of the most prolific spiritual creation.

In all of these three discussed systems, culture is linked to the distinctive community character of a people, *i.e.*, ethnicity, and to the construction of an identity and stability of the self-consciousness of an ethnic community; most often, this identity is specified in the confrontation with the stranger, the different one. Every society therefore develops systems of representations that describe and interpret for each member of the respective society the realms of reality: the cosmos, the social world, the body, space, time, etc. There are certain differences between representations; some, strongly integrated into the common culture, are “long-term” representations: those that explain family relations, hierarchical relationships, the sacred and the profane, life and death, moral good and evil, etc.; others are representations in which intervene certain “generators of knowledge” specific to the historical context, “short life representations”, whose capacity of cultural integration is lower: representations on personal happiness or success, on wealth, even the social order, generally those associated with knowledge within the framework of everyday life. The social representations or ideas about reality and the values attached to it are those that generate facts, organizations, social structures at least to the same extent as they themselves are generated by the objective, external reality.

The cultural capacity of the ethnic group is measurable in the cultural institutions it has. Its cultural incapacity is reflected in the predominant adoption of “short-lived” representations, in the replacement of focal points of cultural

⁶ Lucian Blaga, *Trilogia culturii [The Trilogy of Culture]*, Bucharest, Universal Literature Publishing, 1969.

⁷ While to Freud, the unconscious' content stems from the conscious mind, and to Jung, from compensatory contents, from intuitions or from ancestors' experiences, for Lucian Blaga the unconscious has an organized structure, more stable and more complex than conscience itself.

irradiation with noncultural, anti-cultural or pseudocultural instances. Such an intervention in the cultural being of an ethnic community equals the identity dismissal of that community and cannot be legitimized by any particular process of civilization that would involve it. We will illustrate the consequences of such anti-cultural intervention on the case of marriage.

THE EUROPEAN MARRIAGE'S CULTURAL ROOTS

In the Indo-European culture, the family is a structure supported by two axes: lineage and marriage. The most important is the lineage, powerful from a biological point of view (as a form of physical reproduction of human society), from an economic one (as a way of perpetuating the material heritage of the family, and also as a way of belonging, of continuity between a sacralised space and the family), from a normative one (the values and norms that guide the life of the family group), from a spiritual and cultural one (the domestic cult, the formulas of artistic creation). Marriage is the bond that legitimates and protects descendants. Therefore, it is subordinate, but necessary for family continuity. It seems to have been regulated from the beginning by firm prescriptions: the marital selection, the principles and consequences of marriage, its purpose were the main objects for moral-religious regulation. Incest, for example, was considered by dichotomic thinking the transition point from nature to culture (Claude Levi-Strauss, 1949) or from animality to humanity (Freud, 1913)⁸.

In ancient European culture, marriage was known primarily as an initiation ritual involving the establishment of a new home or family by the transition of the young woman from a virgin status to a mother status. In Émile Benveniste's research⁹, the Indo-European kinship system was dominated by the patriarchal family culture, where the central term was *pater* father. Its dominant use was mythological – this is the most important argument for considering the system of affinity not only as a social reality, but above all as a cultural entity. Jupiter, the ruler of the great Greek pantheon, is a name derived from a family designation, namely *Dyes Pater* or *Zeus Pater*. From the meaning of “founder”, “civilizer”, *pater* formed the family of terms *patrius* (which relates to the world of the father), *patria* (place of ancestors, in the strict spatial sense of the term, as the location of the founding roots). To assign the strict family meaning of biological descent there was the term *atta*, form which gave in the Vedic, Greek, Latin and Romanian languages the word *tata*, a form for childish, affectionate address.

⁸ Nicolae Constantinescu, *Etnologia și folclorul relațiilor de rudenie* [Ethnology and Folklore of Kinship], Bucharest, Universe Publishing, 2000, pp. 96–99.

⁹ Emile Benveniste, *Vocabularul instituțiilor indo-europene* [The Vocabulary of the Indoeuropean Institutions], Bucharest, Paideia Publishing, 1999.

For the mother, the Indo-Europeans used *mater*, which also had its family correspondent in *anna*. This pair may lead to the hypothesis that there was also a maternal mythological hypostasis similar to the paternal, patriarchal one, but much older and almost forgotten within the Indo-European vocabulary. The social, cultural and legal status of the mother was designated by *matrimonium*, a construction which, although similar in constitution to the term *patrimonium*, had a different meaning. Subsequently, in the Romance languages, including Romanian, *matrimonium* means the state inaugurated by marriage. According to linguistic analysis, marriage itself was to Indo-Europeans an action, a ritual, involving two specialized terms, *the man* (the dynamic part, the one who “takes” a woman for marriage) and *the woman*, found in a double stance involved in any passage rite: before marriage, the woman was the virgin, the young girl (*mari*); after marriage she became the mother, the wife, the mistress of the household (*mater*).

The marriage ceremony, in both Greek and Roman societies, involved the same stages: *enghyesis* (gr.) or *tradio* (lat.) – the ceremony of separation of the young girl from her father’s house, whom she had honoured until that time and the one who had protected her; *telos* (gr.) or *deductio in domum* (lat.) – the leading of the girl towards husband’s house; she was covered with white veils, as during the great religious ceremonies; *pompé* (gr.) or *confarreactio* (lat.), meaning the initiation of the young woman into the worship of the new household’s cult, by touching the sacred fire, the lustral water, offering a sacrifice on the household altar and sharing a ritual food (a fruit or a cake) with her new husband¹⁰. Once married, the two obtained the status of parents and leaders of the domestic group.

Marriage was, therefore, a cultural manifestation, through which a unity of worship was born, statutes were consecrated, specialized sacerdocies (of the spouses) were inaugurated, ceremonies were to become mandatory in the newly established family unit. Domestic morality recommends obedience to the wife and commanding to the husband, but also mutual respect. They are not two people bound by particular feelings or interests but share a responsibility that transcends each of them. They carry the same title in the family: *pater familias* – *mater familias* to the Romans, *oikodespótes* – *oikodespoina* to the Greeks, *grihapati* and *grihapatni* to the Hindus. The same principle of the family status bond is suggested in the formula that the Roman women uttered at marriage: “*Ubi tu Caius, ego Caia*” (“*Everywhere you are Caius, I will be Caia*”). He is the leader of the cult, and she is the executor of a large number of rituals, especially those relating to domestic religion. She does not hold the religion by birth, but by delegation; she is not the master of the domestic altar but is initiated into domestic worship of the husband’s family by marriage. She cannot represent the ancestors since she does not descend from them and she herself will not become an ancestor. However, the wife has her own domain and specific rights. Where there is no wife, there are no offspring, and household worship is

¹⁰ George Duby and Philippe Aries (eds.), *Istoria vieții private [A History of Private Life]*, Vol. I, Bucharest, Meridiane Publishing, 1994.

insufficient and incomplete. According to Plutarch, to Romans the presence of the wife is so necessary in carrying out sacrificial rituals that a priest could lose his priesthood while remaining a widower¹¹.

Subsequently, in the culture of Western Christianity, marriage became a sacrament celebrated in the church, a public temple, open not only to families, but to all members of the parish; it tends to refer to itself as an institution *per se*, preceded by the engagement. The cultural elements introduced by the Christian church were the prohibition of incest and the consent of the two young partners, transfigured as an oath before God¹². Sexual roles are defined according to the new religion, in which women and men are equal before God. According to some fathers of early Christianity (Evagrius and his Latin translator, John Cassian), women and men must conform to the angelic model of life which lacks sexuality. Even within the marital relationship, it is good to limit sexuality only to the act of conception, outside of which the husband and wife can live as brother and sister. Fertility is God's gift after man's expulsion from heaven, the compensation for death after the original sin, and the blessing of marital union; however, apart from the birth of children, Christian marriage can have other meanings. Starting from the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians of Paul the Apostle, St. John Chrysostom says that procreation was important for humanity in the time of the First Testament. The New Testament implies a new family morality that has ascetic concern and sexual abstinence at its centre, and for which conception is of secondary importance. The reasons for this change are: 1) the earth has been filled with people; 2) Belief in the resurrection and the afterlife triggered with the coming of Jesus Christ relativizes the importance of survival through followers; 3) women, but especially men can be parents of spiritual sons, not necessarily of natural ones. The marital roles and relationships consecrated by marriage are therefore, through Christianity, resettled in a new cultural interpretation, through which a new type of religiousness, sociality and morality are established¹³.

With modernity into play, marriage is “civilized” in the sense of exiting the cultural, moral, religious sphere. The new ethics of duty is formulated around the principle “must be”; as an enlightened idea, it is linked to law, as a complementary notion, designating the moral obligations of citizens to the state and society. And duty demands obedience, like the religion’s divinities:

“The ancient religious devoutness was prevailed by the modern, hyperbolic religion of ‘it’s your duty’”¹⁴.

¹¹ Fustel de Colanges, *Cetatea antică [The Ancient City]*, Bucharest, Meridians Publishing, 1984, pp. 66–80.

¹² Jacques Le Goff, *Omul medieval [The Middle Age Man]*, Iași, Polirom Publishing, 1999.

¹³ Jean-Claude Larchet, *Etica procreației în învățătura Sfinților Părinți [The ethics of procreation in the teaching of the Holy Fathers]*, Bucharest, Sophia Publishing, 2003, pp. 78–97.

¹⁴ „Străvechii datorii religioase i-a urmat religia modernă, hiperbolică, a lui «ai datorია»”, in Gilles Lipovetski, *Amurgul datoriei [The Twilight of Duty]*, Bucharest, Babel Publishing, 1996, p. 35.

Marriage and sexual morality for a long time remained subordinate to Christian morality (especially through the confession practiced by women, through which the Church managed to impose pre-marital purity and fidelity in marriage). This overlap between secular and religious morality lasted until the 20th century. In parallel, however, there is a current of promoting sexual libertarianism and the liberalization of morals, through the practice of contraception, the spread of naked feminism, obscene writings, abortion and the regulation of divorce. Only at this point can we observe a slow process of deculturalization of marriage, in which the marriage contract is deprived of any moral or spiritual connotation, where the marital roles are no longer prescribed and they no longer imitate any supra-individual pattern, where even the roles of parents are challenged and replaced by vague and non-cultural concepts such as “parenthood” or “parenting”.

SOME TRAITS OF MARRIAGE IN ROMANIAN CULTURE

Southeast European societies, much less politicized than Western ones, predominantly rural, have not experienced the same evolution of marriage. Given their folkloric societies, they do not retain much information about the typical wedding ceremony. Instead, as traditional societies, in which changes have arrived late and with difficulty, they retain until recently or even to present, features of an ancient marriage ritual.

Marriage means the establishment of a new household, the opening of the continuing family; its etymology (*cășă-torie*) refers to the home, household or family. Although the emphasis on continuity is not so pressed in Romanian family culture, compared to Mediterranean ones, for example, marriage is in our popular culture, mandatory for everything that is born and is about to die; it is the peak of existence in this world, the core of universal cyclical existence. The marriage imperative results in continuity with a greater probability and efficiency even than the dynastic imperatives that require at least one descendant worthy to continue the bloodline. The two are, in fact, different forms of continuity: the dynastic one is historical, having to affirm the maintenance of a heritage; the wedding as immanence is anhistoric, fulfilling a cycle of cosmic equilibrium. After passing childhood, the threshold to the maturity is the belonging to the young people social structures (*i.e.*, the ones who participate to the youth dance, *hora*) and, most importantly, the wedding, the transition from the role of one's child to that of one's parent. Not only is the bride finally separated from the life that she had until now, but also the groom who, shaved and ritually trimmed, experience the initiatic transformation from a boy to a man. And he goes through the same ritual scenario of forgiveness, even if he will remain, after marriage, in the parental household: he will no longer be the same person, but another, substantially different one.

Wedding is, in Romanian culture, part of the natural and inevitable destiny of any form of life. It is the action that saves the individual from the smallness and

perishability of his condition: without the eternity that precedes them and the hereafter that will follow them, anyone is without significance. However, each individual must be the bridge between the two eternities, between the world from which he comes and the one to which he must participate, in absolute solidarity with the totality. This bond is made at the very moment of the wedding, by conception. As such, neither animals, nor plants, nor the dead¹⁵, nor the crazy can escape this fate – and the traditional calendar has kept certain moments for celebrating everyone’s weddings¹⁶. Here we recall, for their beauty, but also for the remembrance of the cultural richness of traditional Romanian society, the customs of separating the bride from the virgin state. We use the ethnographic collections, especially the monograph that Simion-Florea Marian, a member of the Romanian Academy, dedicated to the cycle of family life and about which Ovidiu Bârlea said that it has “a durability that seems to increase with the passage of time”. The forgiveness that is asked by dying people before giving their soul, is also taken by brides, before going to marriage. When she leaves her parent’s home, she kneels to listen the oration of the *colăcier* (the bearer of the wedding sacred bread) who asks for parental mercy and blessing in her name. Then,

“she stands up and takes forgiveness from all who are present, beginning first with his father and, passing through all, ending with the youngest member. Even from the newborn in the swing, if it’s there, she takes forgiveness, asking each one in particular to forgive her”¹⁷.

Simion Florea Marian, in his encyclopaedia which talks about wedding and marriage in traditional Romanian culture, counts twenty-seven moments of preparation for the wedding, thirty-four events that constitute the wedding itself and

¹⁵ Gail Klingman, *Nunta mortului [The Wedding of the Dead]*, Iași, Polirom Publishing, 2005.

¹⁶ Ion Ghinoiu, *Obiceiuri populare de peste an [Popular Customs over the Year]*, Bucharest, Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1997, pp. 138–140.

¹⁷ „(Mireasa) se scoală din genunchi și-și ia iertăciune de la toți cei de față, începând, mai întâi, de la tatăl său și, perindându-i pe toți, sfârșește cu cel mai mic. Chiar și de la copilul din leagăn, dacă este, își ia iertăciune, rugând pe fiecare îndeosebi ca s-o ierte”, Meanwhile, one of the wives present at the scene sings a very emotional and slow song:

„Frunză verde-amărăciune,

Ia-ți copilă iertăciune,

De la mamă, de la nene,

De la ceriul cel cu stele.

De la frați, de la surori,

De la grădina cu flori;

De la strat cu busuioc,

De la flăcăi, de la joc;

De la strat cu tămâiță,

De la fetele cu găță;

Din ogradă, de la poartă,

De la fetele cu coadă;

De la uncheși și mătuși

Din tindă și de la uși”, in Simion Florea Marian, *Nunta la români [The Romanian Wedding]*,

Bucharest, Word and Soul – National Culture Publishing, 1995, p. 282.

four more ritual scenarios consecutive to the wedding¹⁸. Vasile Scurtu finds almost fifty terms of kinship that denote the roles given by marriage and the relatedness obtained through alliance¹⁹. Marriage inaugurates a whole culture and society with well-defined and differentiated beliefs, values, roles, relationships and structures.

The culture of marriage is deeply spiritual and extremely rich. The wedding reenacts mythical scenarios and rituals, with its setting and officiants transforming into initiatory realities. The preparations are numerous and meticulous, aiming to find the most auspicious dates and circumstances. The wedding priests, known as *nuni* (godparents) are the ones who officiate the ritual union of the couple, supporting them or even substituting them in the most perilous parts of the wedding ceremony²⁰, giving them advice on how to establish and sustain a family, a household. Once the ritualistic tests were passed, the groom and bride became mythical characters; they temporarily

“leave the profane world, enter the divine world, procreate, and after the wedding, they become ordinary people, householders of the village”²¹.

The wedding has both Christian and pre-Christian traits:

“Following the example of the divine couple’s mating during the wedding (...) and after the fulfillment of the two acts of consecration, one Christian, the marriage (the priest placing the imperial crowns on the heads of the young couple) and the other pre-Christian, the bread or cake breaking, ritual done by the godmother above the bride’s head, the grooms officially became capable of procreation, being two sacred characters who bring forth the child after nine months”²².

Romanian folklore contains the model of marriage and wedding in some of his most well-known myths. *Miorița*, the emblematic ballad of popular culture, culminates in the transcendental wedding of the initiated shepherd, the groom of a “*queen of the world*”, the death-wedding, which transcends the plans of earthly existence to that of a miraculous, supernatural existence; here, death fulfils, like a wedding, the human destiny in a higher plane than the earthly one. The wedding of the Sun and the Moon, another mythical representation of marriage, identifies the limits of the fundamental laws of nature, the only case where the wedding is impossible: the union of the stars, the siblings whose offspring would lead to the end of the world, the reversed wedding, whose culmination is not fertility, but death. We cannot mention the entire cultural

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Vasile Scurtu, *Termenii de înrudire în limba română [Terms of Kinship in Romanian]*, Bucharest, Academy Publishing, 1966.

²⁰ Nicolae Constantinescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 214–216.

²¹ „(ei) părăsesc, temporar, lumea profană, pătrund în lumea divină, procrează și redevin, după nuntă, oameni obișnuiți, gospodari ai satului”, in Ion Ghinoiu, *Dicționar. Mitologie română [Dictionary. Romanian Mythology]*, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Universe – Gold Publishing, 2013, p. 191.

²² „După modelul împerecherii cuplului divin în timpul nunții (...) și după împlinirea celor două acte de consacrare, unul creștin, cununia (așezarea de către preot a cununiilor împărătești pe capul tinerilor) și altul precreștin, colăcăria (ruperea colacului sau turtei de către nănașă deasupra capului miresei), mirii devin ați procreării, personaje sacre care aduc, după nouă luni, pruncul”, in *Ibidem*.

symbolism of marriage and wedding in Romanian tradition here; no single work could encompass such content alone. The statements made so far briefly illustrate a part of it. We conclude this chapter by emphasizing that the social reflection of marriage culture means the assigning of roles to the man and woman, primarily, with all the significance involved in this culture. The two are not individuals; the specificity of cultural existence is, in fact, that a person is never just an individual, meaning a person who lacks specific traits and powers, vocations, missions, and services that elevate them above their particular existence. The woman is a bride, wife, homemaker, and mother, and in these human and superhuman roles, she actualizes powers that are not rightly hers and can only manifest through her. Similarly, the man is a groom, a fulfilled person only through marriage. Even in contemporary Romanian society, marriage still takes place on three levels: traditional culture (preparations, feast, kinship wedding, and community ceremony), the Eastern Orthodox religion (the wedding service), and civil (the marriage contract).

THE WEDDING'S CIVILIZING AS A FORM OF ANTICULTURE

Modernity has always criticised family cultures and marriage. Individual freedom to choose alternative family arrangements and gender equality in all types of social relationships, including family relationships, are ideologies that are incompatible with any kind of culture, in any of the senses discussed in this article.

Freedom manifests itself as the possibility (not only theoretical but applied) to renounce: the stylistic matrices of material or spiritual creation, the supra-individual models, the implications of family life. The exit from culture begins, paradoxically, with the affirmation of the supremacy of reason. John Stuart Mill, concerned with finding the place of individual liberty, affirmed:

“The beliefs which we have most warrant for, have no safeguard to rest on, but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded”²³.

This invitation, a condition of spiritual freedom, is however the end of faith, which cannot be subjected to questioning, but only to its denial; for a contested belief or religion cannot be improved through the contribution of human reason; just as gods cannot be ennobled by attributing human traits to them.

Equality, on the other hand, consecrated in Christianity as the unity of human condition before divine judgment and, in any cultural-communitarian formula, as the unity in relation to the idea of legitimate authority, becomes falsified in the process of its transfer from the strictly political sphere (equality before the law of any nature) to the social and familial sphere (equality between husband/wife, children and

²³ „Credințele cele mai îndreptățite nu au la baza lor nici o altă cheazășie decât invitația permanentă, adresată întregii lumi, de a dovedi că sunt nefondate”, in John Stuart Mill, *Despre Libertate [On liberty]*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing, 1994, p. 31.

parents, etc.). If we only focus on the effect that gender equality policies have in contemporary societies, we observe that what these policies have achieved, beyond establishing real equality in political and civil rights of men and women, is an ideological caricature resulting from the blending of substantial feminine and masculine traits. Their promoters are outraged by the persistence, even in the most advanced societies in this regard, of stereotypical gender behaviours. For example, women's resistance to giving up domestic responsibilities such as caring for children, managing intimacy, and preparing meals, as well as men's persistence in managing aggression and power in public spaces, are indisputable, despite the persistent encouragement of gender equality²⁴.

Apart from these two ideals of Western-European civilization, a third one has strongly emerged in the last 4–5 decades: happiness. It is no longer seen as a transindividual ideal, aiming to restore the primordial unity between humans and the divine, for example, but rather as a political and civic objective²⁵ and, above all, a human right. Contrary to the religious ethical vision which, for Roger Scruton, was specific to culture, contemporary society acquaints itself with intelligent ethics. Unfavorable to both the traditional moral values of antiquity (kindness, beauty, truth, temperance, courage, wisdom, justice) and those of Christianity (purity, humility, love), civilized society asserts itself only within the framework of urban life, where individualism, anonymity, promiscuity, permanent confrontation with strangers, the reduction (quantitatively and qualitatively) of the family, the scattering of kinship result in an “organizing chaos”, a perpetual and prolific dynamism, a fertile interactionism. The solution to controlling this ever-changing reality is “intelligent ethics”, which favors compromise, experimental solutions that take into account interests and particular conditions; “prudent ethics”, a way to “gain time against the evil and the people's pain”²⁶.

In *The Choice of Hercules: Pleasure and Duty in the 21st Century* (2007), A. C. Grayling analyzes the optimal model of life in the contemporary world. The myth of the Greek hero's choice is invoked as a pretext for meditation: enticed in two contrary directions, that of leisure and easy life, and that of toil and suffering, Hercules chooses the difficult and narrow path of virtue. The opposition implied by Hercules' choice is between premodern moralism (synonymous with terrorism and barbarism) and the civilization of welfare based on consumption; a specific “culture” is projected, dominated by objects, self-love (visible as an ethical imperative in narcissistic prescriptions: hygiene, sports, aesthetics, diet), psychologism, and information. Postmodern hedonism is no longer excessive but moderated, rationalized, pursuing “rationalized happiness” as its objective, which prevents the

²⁴ Martine Segalen, *Sociologia familiei [Family Sociology]*, Iași, Polirom Publishing, 2011, pp. 292–295.

²⁵ There are states which have happiness ministries, officials, and folders for efficiently managing happiness e.g., United Arab Emirates.

²⁶ Gilles Lipovetsky, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

potential guilt that could be associated with pure and sincere hedonism. A. C. Grayling demonstrates that the moral problems that ethics has previously concerned itself with “in vain” are, in fact, minor or unreal. Thus, the domain of “family values” and family culture itself proves to be a source of false problems. The nuclear family “is an urban Western industrial phenomenon of relatively recent origin, and it notoriously proves to be unsuccessful, suffocated by structural and ethical flaws”²⁷.

Sex and sexuality should be removed from moral concerns. “Anatomy is no longer destiny”, claims A.C. Grayling, and sexual behavior should be the same for both sexes. Sexual activity is good in itself because it provides satisfaction and establishes connections between people; as such, a reordering of values should liberate sexual relationships from taboos and restrictions. Death remains a problem that cultural models so far have not conveniently solved, according to the author. Convenient would be to relieve of the act of dying, a process that takes place while the person is still alive and should allow the free expression of his options. It is not the sacredness of life, but the quality of life that should be promoted. Thus, euthanasia is a moral good as long as it alleviates suffering. Finally, religion is immoral because it traumatizes, promotes inequalities, kills, etc.²⁸. Atheism, or the manifestation against religious morals, which seeks to control feelings and ideas, is a good attitude, with freedom of expression demonstrating the *maturation of an intellectual community*; thus, contemporary concerns regarding human rights and animal rights, which are much more comprehensive and rational than anything anticipated in religious morality, are encouraged²⁹.

According to the imperatives of civilization, marriage cannot and should not escape this new post-culture. It must open itself to new, non-cultural forms. For example, marriage that starts with the premise of its dissolution, through the conclusion of a prenuptial agreement; an understanding regarding the separate economic status of the spouses is intended to facilitate their separation not only in the case of divorce but also in an economically individualized conjugal “career”. This goes against the primary purpose of the institution of marriage.

According to Nicolae Constantinescu, the distinction between sexes, which laid the foundation for the first social division of labor, instituted not a disjunctive relationship of opposition among members of society, but rather one of complementarity. It is precisely this complementarity of the sexes that makes the union of individuals into family units through marriage a necessity, even an obligation, a sine qua non condition for social existence. The early “*specialization*” based on sex has made men and women dependent on each other, so that marriage is

²⁷ „(Familia nucleară) este un fenomen industrial urban occidental de origine relativ recentă – și se dovedește în mod notoriu neizbutit, fiind sufocată de defecte structurale și etice”, in A. C. Grayling, *Alegerea lui Hercule [The Choice of Hercules]*, Iași, Polirom Publishing, 2009, p. 93.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 139.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 151.

seen, both from the outside and the inside, not so much as an expression of satisfying biological or psychological needs, but rather economic ones:

“(…) in most primitive societies (as well as, although to a lesser extent, in the rural classes of our society), marriage has an entirely different importance, not erotic but economic”³⁰.

Civil partnership or regulated cohabitation is another substitute for marriage born out of the political premise and historical moment marked by the anti-moral revolution of the youth of the 1960s–1970s, in which the liberation of love from bourgeois family values and the commitment of formalized marriage was demanded. The regulation of what was then requested to be deregulated is a self-negation of this formula of domestic coexistence. Currently, most European countries have formalized cohabitation, a form of pseudo-marriage plagued by internal contradictions.

Finally, diversity-based marriages, whether legally regulated or only proposed as measures to affirm freedom and diversity of individual sexual behaviors, contradict each of the formulas that have constituted the cultural basis of marriage: homosexual partnerships (another one of the commitments of Western civilization), those with animals, with real or virtual objects, with oneself, etc.

Norbert Elias (1939) saw civilization as the “expression of the self-awareness of the Western world”, a way of affirming the national consciousness of developed European states that synthesizes the elements through which the West considers itself superior to more “primitive” societies³¹. Western civilization seemed to be built in a complementary way to the ethnic cultures it could serve as a model or guide for political, social, or economic evolution or affirmation. However, the way this civilization defines marriage today openly opposes the culture associated with it.

CONCLUSION

As far as we are concerned, marriage is still a strong focal point of Romanian family and ethnic culture; the losses we would suffer by adopting the proposed anti-cultural models, in terms of individual identity, social cohesion, and spiritual creativity, can be irreparable.

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³⁰ „(…) în cele mai multe dintre societățile primitive (ca și – dar la un grad mai scăzut – în clasele rurale ale societății noastre), căsătoria prezintă o cu totul altă importanță, nu erotică, ci economică”, in Claude Levi-Strauss, quoted by Nicolae Constantinescu, *op. cit.*, 2000, pp. 104–105.

³¹ Norbert Elias, *Procesul civilizării [On the Process of Civilisation]*, Iași, Polirom Publishing, 2002, p. 49.

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SLAVERY IN THE BYZANTINE COMMONWEALTH IN THE 13TH–15TH CENTURIES. A REGIONAL FRAMING OF THE BEGINNINGS OF GYPSY SLAVERY IN ROMANIAN COUNTRIES

George Damian Mocanu³²

ABSTRACT

The existence of slavery in the Byzantine and Constantinopolitan-influenced states is often overlooked, with most attention focused on the slave trade in the Black Sea and Mediterranean Basin in the medieval period. As a first starting point in an attempt to establish the origin of Gypsy slavery in the Romanian countries I propose an overview of the legal regime of slavery in the Byzantine civilizational space.

Keywords: slavery, Gypsies, Byzantine Empire, Serbia, Bulgaria.

SHORT INTRODUCTION

Slavery of the Gypsies in Romanian countries is often characterized as a unique phenomenon in the Eastern European area, in the following lines I will try to specify the framing of the phenomenon of slavery in the wider area of the immediate neighborhood of Romanian countries, especially in the area of influence of the Byzantine Empire, whose social and legal structures were the origin of the Romanian countries in the Middle Ages. The uniqueness of the phenomenon of slavery in Romanian countries is usually asserted without documentary evidence or valid arguments to this effect³³.

GYPSY SLAVERY IN ROMANIA

Gypsy slavery in Romanian countries is documented from the second half of the 14th century, but the exact origin of this legal status has not been established by research to date, it is not possible to say precisely how and when the Gypsies who arrived north of the Danube in the 14th century became slaves³⁴. What we can say

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³³ Petre Petcuț, *Rromii. Sclavie și libertate [Roma. Slavery and freedom]*, Bucharest, 2015, p. 44.

³⁴ George Damian Mocanu, “A historiography of the origin of the gypsy slavery in Romanian countries. Current hypotheses and research directions”, in *Etnosfera Journal*, No. 1/2023, pp. 41–61.

with certainty is that slavery in the Romanian countries functioned within the legislative framework of the Byzantine Empire, so it can only be useful to have an overview of the legal system of slavery in the states in the area of influence of Byzantine civilization, which was the main source of inspiration for the composition of the oldest codes of law.

In a charter issued in 1385, Dan I voivode of Wallachia awards to the Tismana monastery the properties that belonged to the Vodița monastery, founded by voivode Vladislav I around 1370. Vodița monastery ceased to exist most probably in 1376 during the conflict between Hungary and Wallachia³⁵. In the charter of 1385 among other properties of Tismana monastery are listed 40 families of Gypsies (ațigani)³⁶. There is no reference to slavery in this charter, neither in the charters awarded during the following centuries, it is simply stated that 40 families of Gypsies were given to the monastery of Tismana. It doesn't mean that they were not slaves, the Romanian medieval charters rarely use this term and there is a need for an analysis of legal terms regarding slavery in Wallachia and Moldavia.

In order to understand the existence of the slavery system in Romanian countries, it is necessary to trace the status of slavery in the region of the Black Sea, the Balkans, and the Byzantine Empire during the 13th–15th centuries, in order to have an overview of the regional framework in which slavery emerged north of the Danube.

Slavery was a legal, economic, and social reality throughout the existence of the Byzantine Empire, an institution also taken over from the Roman Empire, but one that underwent constant changes during the almost 1000 years of the Byzantine Empire. From a legal point of view, there was no clear definition of Byzantine slavery, but the legal provisions relating to it were numerous and regularly updated: Theodosian Code, Justinianic Code, Eclogue, Novels of Leo, Syntagma of Mathew Blastares. Slavery in the Byzantine Empire was different from that of the Roman Empire, the above-mentioned legislation prohibited masters from killing their slaves, prohibited sexual abuse of slaves, extended the possibilities for their release (by marriage to the master, by military service, by joining the clergy, etc.)³⁷.

The regulation of slavery in the late Byzantine Empire was done through the Syntagma Canonum, a canon law collection made in 1335 by Matthew Blastares, a Greek monk from Thessalonica, together with the Hexabiblos collection made by Judge Constantine Harmenopoulos around 1344. The Hexabiblos defines a slave as a person who cannot do what he wants, but must obey the will of the master, in this sense slavery is likened to death. The master could decide how the slave was punished but could not punish him with death. Slaves could be freed by will or the master's will, if they joined the clergy with the master's consent, if they were

³⁵ Viorel Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2013, p. 14.

³⁶ ***, *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, B, Vol. I, Bucharest, 1966, pp. 19–22.

³⁷ Noel Lenski, "Slavery in the Byzantine Empire", in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, Vol. 2, Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 453–482.

abandoned sick by the master, if they served in the military with the master's consent or if they married a free man with the master's consent³⁸.

The Byzantine Empire's main source of slaves was warfare, with chronicles mentioning numerous instances of those captured in military campaigns being sold throughout the empire. Another source was reproduction within slave families, whose children inherited their parents' status. Towards the end of the Byzantine Empire when its military power declined, Constantinople's role in the slave trade was that of intermediary between the Black Sea (as the main source of slaves from wars fought in the region) and the Mediterranean (as the main market for slaves from the Black Sea region) – the merchants being the merchants of Venice and Genoa³⁹.

Slavery has been present in Bulgaria since the emergence of the state, being an effect of the wars fought by the Bulgarian tribes since their arrival, the prisoners of war being turned into slaves⁴⁰ – although the Slavic population settled south of the Danube practiced enslaving war captives even before the arrival of the Bulgarian nomads⁴¹. The presence of slavery in Bulgarian society in the 9th century is confirmed by Pope Nicholas I's reply to Tsar Boris in 866 in which several questions of faith are discussed.

The Pope appreciates that as a spiritual institution, the Church cannot be positive about slavery because of its cruel treatment of slaves, which is contrary to Christian values. At the same time the Pope appreciates that he does not have the authority to speak out against the institution of slavery and can only make recommendations in the characteristic spirit of charity, as for the Church, the social status of people is not important; what is important is that they share the faith of Christ. In this answer, slavery is rather seen as a social condition that represents an inheritance from the old pagan world that the Bulgarians left with the conversion to Christianity⁴².

The legislation of the Bulgarian mediaeval states existed within the framework of the Byzantine Commonwealth, sharing most of the imperial legislation in a Slavic translation. For example, the Bulgarian Law for Judging People (860–880) is almost entirely based on the Byzantine *Ecloga* (a compilation of Byzantine law issued in 726 by Emperor Leo III the Isaurian in his name and that of his son Constantine, the most important Byzantine legal work following the 6th-century Code of Justinian)⁴³. The mentioned Bulgarian Law for Judging People contains some references to

³⁸ Helga Kopstein, *Zur Sklaverei im ausgehenden Byzanz [On slavery in the late Byzantium]*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1966, pp. 119–125.

³⁹ Noel Lenski, *op. cit.*, pp. 453–482.

⁴⁰ Yanko M. Hristov, "Prisoners of War in Early Medieval Bulgaria", in *Studia Ceranea*, No. 5/2015, pp. 73–105.

⁴¹ Vladimir Angelov, "Slaves in everyday life of medieval Bulgaria", in *Bulgaria Mediaevalis*, No. 1/2020, pp. 333–342.

⁴² Kremena Markova, "'Responsa Nicolai ad consulta bulgarorum' and the information on Slaves and Slavery during the First in Bulgarian Empire", in *Bulgaria, the Bulgarians and Europe – Myth, History, Modernity*, 2020, Vol. 14, Issue 1, pp. 91–109.

⁴³ Ivan Biliarsky, *Word and Power in Mediaeval Bulgaria*, Brill, Leiden-Boston, 2011, pp. 3–5.

slavery: the interdiction of sexual relations with a slave woman and the punishments for this acts; a provision for slaves captured during wars that should be freed after paying their ransom or working the value of their ransom; the obligation of the master to pay for damages made by his slave; the interdiction of enslaving a free man⁴⁴.

Written historical sources from the Bulgarian Middle Ages are quite limited (with the exception of narrative sources), but even so, at least some evidence of the slave trade in medieval Bulgaria has survived to this day. Thus, on 10 September 1350 a certain Jacob of Nessebar sold a slave named Moalba, of Tatar origin, to Giacomo Vasalo of Crete – part of the extensive slave trade practised by Venice and Genoa on the Black Sea-Mediterranean axis⁴⁵. Charter of Tsar John Shishman (1371–1395) to the monastery of St John of Rila in September 21, 1378 mentions the so called “Agupov kleti”, translated as “Egyptians huts” in the sense that there were Gypsies owned by this monastery.

The oldest code of laws in Serbia, the Nomocanon of St. Sava of 1219 contains extensive provisions on slavery, which was a social and legal reality confirmed by this legislation⁴⁶. Inspired by Byzantine legislation, this code of laws takes over most of the imperial provisions on slavery. St Sava’s Code states that slavery is in opposition to nature, which made everyone free, but the need for war created slavery since the law of war states that victors rule losers. Also, a person is either born a slave or becomes a slave (by being captured in war). Masters were not allowed to kill their slaves, only to inflict corporal punishments.

Slaves could be named as priests only with their master’s consent and if given they would be set free; also, the master’s consent was necessary for a slave to become a monk. Another provision states that when a master frees his slave before two witnesses, the slave cannot be enslaved by anyone else. A child conceived between a free mother and a slave father is free.

In 1349, three years after his coronation, the Serbian ruler Stefan Dusan enacted a code with legal force on the territory of his state. The so-called Code of Dusan was based on a translated and abridged version of the Syntagma of Matthew Blastares, eliminating the majority of the canonical dispositions, and preserving the secular ones; the corpus of the text was reduced to 1/3 in comparison to the integral version of Blastares⁴⁷. The provisions regarding the slaves in Code of Dusan concern the right of the master to give his slaves as inheritance, but not as a marriage portion; only the master can free his slaves; slaves living in the same village with dependent

⁴⁴ Kiril Petkov, *The Voices of Medieval Bulgaria, seventh – fifteenth Century*, Brill, Leiden-Boston, 2008, pp. 48–54.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 509.

⁴⁶ Bojan Bozovic, “The very beginning of the Serbian social security law in the Saint Sava’s Nomocanon”, in *Proceedings of the Faculty of Law in Novi Sad*, No. 4/2018, pp. 1765–1773.

⁴⁷ Paolo Angelini, “The Code of Dusan 1349–1354”, in *The Legal History Review*, No. 80/2012, pp. 77–93.

villagers have the same fiscal obligations; slaves cannot appeal by themselves to be judged by the sovereign as the dependent villagers; the owner of the slaves deals with any judicial matters involving them, only in cases of murder, theft and brigandage the slaves shall be tried by a judge.

There is a debate regarding the status of slaves in medieval Serbia for the 14th century: the documents use the word “otrok” to designate them, which also had the meaning of “child” (while in Czech language “otrok” kept its ancient meaning of slave). Some Serbian historians maintain that the “otroks” were dependent villagers with a lower social status, while others equate them with slaves, since their owners could sell or inherit them and since they lacked the right to legal representation in court⁴⁸. Also, among the few Serbian medieval royal charters preserved, there is the charter given by Stefan Dusan to the monastery of Prizren where are mentioned a few Gypsies as property of the monastery⁴⁹.

In the immediate vicinity of Serbia, on the Dalmatian coast slavery was a legal, social, and economic reality attested by written documents beginning with the 9th century up to the 15th. Slaves were owned by monasteries, churches, noblemen and private individuals. They could be sold, inherited, or used for paying debts. Slaves in Dalmatia had no right to representation in court and no property. Diverging from the Byzantine law, the children resulted from the marriage between a free man and a slave woman were also slaves⁵⁰.

The legal provisions concerning slavery in the area of Byzantine civilization were very similar during the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire, which is natural as long as the source of inspiration was imperial legislation. Local adaptations do not constitute major differences, as they are given by the Byzantine code adopted as the main source of inspiration. In Serbia, Bulgaria, and the Byzantine Empire proper, slavery was a different legal status from that of antiquity: several ways of freeing slaves were provided for, slaves could not be punished by death by their masters, the abuse of slaves by their masters was forbidden (although the possibility of corporal punishment was retained), the marriage of slaves was recognised and, in principle, a child born of a relationship between a free man and a slave was also free.

CONCLUSION

The main sources for drawing this picture are the codes of law, especially for Serbia and Bulgaria, where the small quantity of preserved medieval documents does not allow a more detailed image of the slavery regime until the 14th century. The few preserved documents indicate that monarchs south of the Danube in this period used

⁴⁸ Srdan Sarkic, “The legal status of Vlachs and Otroks in medieval Serbia”, in *Proceedings of the Faculty of Law in Novi Sad*, No. 3/2010, pp. 37–51.

⁴⁹ Viorel Achim, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁵⁰ Neven Budak, “Slavery in late medieval Dalmatia: labour, legal status, integration”, in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen-Age*, tome 112, No. 2/2000, pp. 745–760.

to donate slaves to monasteries as labor force, but also that private individuals owned slaves and were engaged in the slave trade. All these main features of the slavery regime up to the 14th century can also be found in the Romanian countries north of the Danube. Here the main legislative code was the Syntagma of Matei Blastares, the Romanian version of this legislation deserving a separate analysis of the slavery regime.

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ROMANIAN INTERWAR NEWSPAPER “OUR PEOPLE”. BRIEF CONTENT ANALYSIS

Alin Bulumac⁵¹

ABSTRACT

This material represents an attempt to systematically present the problems of the Romanian administration in Transylvania during the interwar period. The method of content analysis gives the reader a brief look at the level of tension of the authors by identifying major themes of interest. Moreover, the main themes identified in the newspaper’s contents simultaneously represent the strategic points of intervention of the Romanian state in what could represent a movement to reconquer the intra-Carpathian space.

Keywords: content-analysis, strategic perspective, geopolitics, Transylvania.

INTRODUCTION

This material offers the reader a brief perspective on the content of the Romanian newspaper from the interwar period “Neamul Nostru” (“Our people”)⁵². This newspaper founded by I. N. Țuțuianu and managed by I. Roșu appeared only in 1936, in the city of Sfântu Gheorghe, in 19 issues. This newspaper represents the voice of Romanians from Treiscaune County, a szekelized⁵³ county where Romanians find themselves captive to a phenomenon of assimilation that exceeds individual resistance. To identify and offer a succinct but qualitative perspective on the problems faced by Romanians, the newspaper was analyzed using a content analysis method.

CONTEXT

The vital element through which a nation manages to stand out in history is the social will of its members, but equally important is the influence of geopolitical circumstances.

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⁵² See “Our People” newspaper from Eurocarpatica library, Available at: https://eurocarpatica.ro/?page_id=724.

⁵³ The subtitle of the newspaper: “Weekly paper of Romanians from the szekelized land for national, cultural, science and art propaganda”.

The first major geopolitical event occurred on December 1, 1918, a moment that offered hope that things would improve for the Romanian nation, which for far too long had been tolerated and deprived of basic rights of identity manifestation in Transylvania.

The second major geopolitical event that directly influenced the life and possibilities of the Romanians manifesting their will inside the Carpathian arc was the Treaty of Trianon. In essence, the treaty was thought to provide a legislative framework conducive to the organic manifestation of all nations and the elimination of the idea of a privileged nation. In reality, these privileges have not ceased to exist, especially because of the political – economic intervention of the entire state apparatus, as in the case of Hungary.

ARGUMENT – WHY IT IS A STATE PROBLEM?

This article provides readers with a synthetic perspective on the local realities of Treiscaune County. The first thought that should be imprinted in the reader's mind is that of clarifying the necessity of browsing such a newspaper. The very name of the newspaper "Neamul Nostru" ("Our people") attracts attention because the title draws attention to an element of high regard, the nation. Knowing that

"the state is today only a form of manifestation of the nation, therefore a reality functionally subordinate to it"⁵⁴.

The title indirectly and discretely indicates the urgency and importance of the newspaper itself. In other words, the "Neamul Nostru" ("Our people") newspaper communicates to its readers the fact that "something" happens to the highest social unit, the nation. All the more so as the subtitle of the newspaper directly indicates the cause of the problems in the region through the subtitle of the newspaper "Weekly sheet of the Romanians from the szekelized land for national propaganda, culture, science and art" one must be aware of the fact that the Romanians in that area are facing a series of problems that exceed the local capacity to organize and defend the Romanian identity in the area. This is because there is an inequitable ratio of resources among Romanians, Hungarians, Szeklers, and Saxons. Budapest coordinated, supported, and intervened indirectly to strengthen the Hungarian element in the area. On the other hand, the Romanian community only had the effort and support of the local elites, efforts that tried to be made known to the public through newspapers such as "Neamul Nostru" ("Our people"). Therefore, problems highlighted in the newspaper represent nothing more than a request for help directed to the Romanian state, the only geopolitical actor capable of opposing the intentions and interventions of another state.

⁵⁴ Dimitrie Gusti, *Cunoaștere și acțiune în serviciul națiunii [Knowledge and action in nations's service]*, Bucharest, Royal Cultural Foundation "Prince Carol" Publishing, Vol. I, 1939, p. 4.

“That is why it is not indifferent to a nation if it lives far from the river power of other nations or if it is surrounded or even penetrated by nations which have tendencies to dominate and feel called to carry out a mission hostile to the neighboring nations. The science of the nation must therefore also follow the soul power, the life attitude of the nation, but to the same extent the soul neighborhoods, the countries that surround it and their development intentions, as well as the cohabiting populations, the minorities that may have their own tendencies to achieve, specific missions, against the majority nation”⁵⁵.

ARGUMENT – WHY IT IS A KEY PROBLEM?

The urgency and importance of the problems highlighted in the newspaper are given by the geopolitical imbalance created by the intervention of one state on the citizens of another state. In this case, it is the geopolitical initiatives of Budapest in Treiscaune County. This falls within what is meant by an ethnohistorical conflict, in which the main objective is to preserve the social memory of the dominant ethnicity, especially by eliminating evidence that contradicts the paradigm promoted by Budapest. The political advantage (in some places even the monopoly) of the Hungarians made the Romanian population, although ethnically the majority, deprived of the tools to preserve their identity and to pass on the historical truth.

“(…) the major ethnic groups were able by virtue of their political monopoly to accumulate and preserve their ethnic heritage, especially their ethnohistory. They have rich documents, a diverse and rich memory, developed codes of communication, institutional storage of documents and a class of specialists in the creation, preservation and transmission of such documents, mainly priests and scribes (...) many of the peripheral and demotic ethnicities of smaller size were excluded, kept away from the instruments of political transmission and lacking institutional support, being sometimes also deprived of the specialist class, of communication channels, so they were not able to save much of their ethnohistory beyond the duration several generations”⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ „De aceea nu este indiferent pentru o națiune dacă trăiește departe de puterea de înrăurire a celorlalte națiuni sau este înconjurată sau chiar întrepătrunsă de națiuni care au tendințe de dominare și se simt chemate să realizeze o misiune potrivnică națiunilor conlocuitoare. Știința națiunii trebuie să urmărească deci și puterea sufletească, atitudinea de viață a națiunii, dar în aceeași măsură vecinătățile sufletești, țările care o înconjoară și intențiile lor de dezvoltare, ca și populațiile conlocuitoare, minoritățile care pot avea tendințe proprii de realizare, misiuni specifice, potrivnice națiunii majoritare.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 13.

⁵⁶ „(...) etniile majore au fost capabile în virtutea monopolului lor politic să acumuleze și să își conserve moștenirea etnică, în special etnoistoria lor. Ele au documente bogate, o memorie diversă și bogată, coduri de comunicare dezvoltate, stocare instituțională a documentelor și o clasă de specialiști în crearea, prezervarea și transmiterea unor asemenea documente, în principal preoți și scribi (...) multe dintre etniile periferiale și demotice de mai mică dimensiune au fost excluse, ținute departe de instrumentele transmiterii politice și lipsite de suportul instituțional, fiind lipsite uneori și de clasa de specialiști, de canale de comunicare, astfel că n-au fost capabile să salveze prea mult din etnoistoria lor dincolo de durata câtorva generații.”, in Ilie Bădescu, *Sincronism european și cultură critică românească [European Synchronism and Romanian Critical Culture]*, Iași, Tipo Moldova Publishing, 2016, p. 9.

“The ideology of denationalization, assimilation, or forced and rapid annihilation alongside the idea of the ‘political nation’ has become not only a fighting argument of domination, but its very expression”⁵⁷.

A second aspect of the seriousness of things is the fact that this situation of discrimination and assimilation of Romanians is not new but dates back a long time before the time of the Great Union, a fact that further damages the security projection of the Romanian state inside the arch Carpathian. The role of guarantor of identity security in this area before 1918 was the Church, a role it fulfilled by virtue of the ideal of the reunification of the nation, but combating the actions of a state, especially when it undertakes subversive actions, falls to an actor with similar powers: the Romanian state.

“With great difficulty the Romanians of this land escape from the races that stretched them all day long by the Szeklers, who today in their national fanaticism do not even consider the Romanians human. Among these unfavorable circumstances, who will be surprised to see that apart from a few communes located at the foot of the mountains on the border of Moldova and Romania, whose inhabitants maintained a continuous relationship with the neighboring Romanians as cattle herders, in the other communes with Romanian inhabitants no longer you don’t hear anyone speaking Romanian. Well, these wretched Romanians have lost, apart from their language, the Romanian customs, and customs, which also connected them to their national body. The only shield that escaped the Romanians of today until now in the middle of the times was undoubtedly the church, which if the Romanians were missing, they would have been absorbed by the Szekler nation”⁵⁸.

In other words, the mission of the Romanian state in the Carpathian basin meant nothing more than the recapture of the natural right guaranteed by the signatory states through the Treaty of Trianon.

⁵⁷ „Ideologia deznaționalizării, a asimilării, ori a anihilării forțate și rapide alături de ideea «națiunii politice» a devenit nu numai un argument de luptă al dominației, ci însăși expresia sa.”, in Raoul Șorban, *Fantasma Imperiului ungar și casa europeii [The Phantasm of the Hungarian Empire and the House of Europe]*, Bucharest, Globus Publishing, 1990, p. 18.

⁵⁸ „Cu mare greutate scapă românimea din acest ținut de cursele ce le întindeau toată ziua secuiei, care astăzi în fanatismul lor național românul nici nu-l considera om. Între aceste împrejurări nefavorabile cine se va mira văzând că în afară de vreo câteva comune situate la poalele munților la frontiera Moldovei și României, ai căror locuitori au întreținut ca păstori de vite un raport continuu cu românii învecinați, în celelalte comune cu locuitori români nu mai auzi pe nimeni vorbind limba română. Ba acești români nenorociți au pierdut în afară de limba lor, portul și datinile românești, care îi mai legau de trupul lor național. Unicul scut ce a scăpat pe românii de azi până acum în vitregia vremurilor a fost fără îndoială biserica, care dacă lipsea românii de mult erau absorbiți de neamul secuiesc.” in Ioan Lăcătușu *et al.*, *Românii din Treiscaune, Ciuc, Giurgeu și Odorhei, în presa din Transilvania până în anul 1918 [Romanians from Treiscaune, Ciuc, Giurgeu and Odorhei, in the press from Transylvania until 1918]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Eurocarpatica Publishing, 2021, p. 108.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

1. Selection criteria

Since the newspaper includes various topics, such as aspects of daily life, advertisements, cooking recipes, grammar lessons, and various announcements of local interest, we focused our attention on articles that raised the issue of discrimination and assimilation of Romanians based on ethnic criteria.

2. Analysis criteria

The orientation of the discourse was categorized into three orientations:

- a) “positive” orientation – those articles that describe or urge to action the Romanian community, implicitly the Romanian state, and that do not show any state of suffering of the community;
- b) “negative” orientation – those articles that lament the sufferings of the Romanian community, describe the illegalities or negative public discrimination committed by the leaders of neighboring communities, and describe the way Budapest acts directly in support of revisionism;
- c) “neutral” orientation: articles that mention things, states, and facts that cannot be included in any of the above categories but are related to the identity issue.

3. Context unit – analysis

To decode the orientation of each article, the paragraph was used as the unit of analysis and the article as the context unit. Thus, 631 paragraphs were identified within the 44 articles and were categorized as follows:

- a) Paragraphs with positive orientation: 181 or 28,68%;
- b) Paragraphs with negative orientation: 289 or 45,80%;
- c) Paragraphs with neutral orientation: 161 or 25,52%.

In other words, the dominant orientation of the newspaper is critical of the state of the Romanians in that region, because according to the weight of the orientation of the articles, it emerges that Romanians are discriminated against in approximately 45,80% of the analyzed articles, while an improvement in the state of the Romanians can be glimpsed in only 28,59% of items.

4. Units of meaning

The analyzed articles also offer, in addition to the positive – negative perspective, a synthetic approach. Thus, the 44 articles can be classified around 9 major themes, or “units of meaning” – the smallest statements that are intelligible on their own:

1. **Criticism of elites:** in 12 articles, the administrative elites of the Romanian state are criticized by the local elites because they, being devoid of any national ideal, do not respond to the community needs of preserving and uplifting the Romanian community.

“From top to bottom only personal material concerns, narrow ambitions that nail this proud country to the ground. Today, the moral, conscientious man who seeks to reach an ideal is removed, to make room for the political man, the man without a noble ideal”⁵⁹.

2. The oppressive character of that period and its consequences: In 10 articles, it is confessed that all written testimonies about the invasion of the Hungarians in Transylvania were destroyed precisely by the invaders, so that the point of view of the native population would not be known.

“The origin of the Romanians in Transylvania, before the Hungarian invasion, is much discussed by our enemies, who seek to take advantage of the fact that there are hardly any documents. Or precisely these documents were destroyed by them, because the Hungarians were the last edition of the great barbaric invasions of Mongol-Hunic peoples, who in their rush for conquests swept away everything they found in their path; therefore, also the multitude of written documents”⁶⁰.

3. The weak situation of the Romanian media versus Strong situation of the Hungarian press – In seven articles, the influence and ability of the Romanian media to spread vital information to the Romanians in the region (b) is described comparatively with the influence, support, and aggressiveness of the Hungarian media (a). The paradox lies precisely in the fact that a good part of the funds with which it operated came from the Romanian state.

“a) Compared to the situation in 1918, this means that in Transylvania under Romanian rule, there are ten times as many daily Hungarian newspapers than during Hungarian rule and seven and a half times as many weekly newspapers! we ask now what man of good faith; does this mean the persecution of the Hungarian press in Romania?!”⁶¹.

“b) They were condemned and fined, they clogged the prisons and paid fines, and yet they went into battle with a clear head without thinking about those at home.

⁵⁹ „De sus până jos numai preocupări materiale personale, ambiții înguste care pironesc pe loc această mândră țară. Azi omul moral, conștiincios și care urmărește ajungerea unui ideal este înlăturat, ca să facă loc omului politic, omului fără ideal nobil.”, in N. Văduva, „Să ne deschidem ochii” [“Let’s open our eyes”], in *Neamul Nostru [Our People]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Year III, No. 11/1936, p. 1.

⁶⁰ „Originea poporului românesc în Ardeal, înainte de năvălirea maghiară, e foarte mult discutată, de dușmani noștri, cari caută să profite depe urma faptului, că nu prea există documente. Or, tocmai aceste documente au fost distruse de ei, deoarece se știe prea bine, că Maghiarii au fost ultima ediție a grozavelor năvăliri barbare de popoare mongolo-hunice, cari în goana lor după cuceriri au măturat tot ce au găsit în cale; deci și mulțimea documentelor scrise.”, in Dragoș Tomoiagă, „Românii și secuii” [“Romanians and the Szeklers”], in *Neamul Nostru [Our People]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Year III, No. 5/1936, p. 2.

⁶¹ „Comparat cu situația din 1918, aceasta însemnează, că în Transilvania de sub stăpânirea românească apar de zece ori atâtea gazete zilnice maghiare decât pe vremea stăpânirii maghiare și 7 și jumătate ori atâtea gazete săptămânale! întrebăm acum pe ori ce om de bună credință; aceasta însemnează persecuția presei maghiare din România?!”, in ***, „Situația presei românești din Ardeal înainte de unire” [“Situation of the Romanian press in Transylvania before the Great Union”], in *Neamul Nostru [Our People]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Year III, No. 13/1936, p. 4.

Because by atonement with their foreheads raised, they did nothing but demonstrate the validity of our rights for the fulfillment of our national creed”⁶².

4. **Romanian state:** in six articles, it is described how the Romanian state should support the rise of a Romanian middle class, capable of developing the Romanian community locally and strengthening them by creating new links with other communities outside the Carpathian arc.

“And then the Mocans, endowed with beautiful qualities and a pronounced mercantile spirit, are meant to give us a middle class that will conquer the cities of the region. For this purpose, certain measures are required from the State to help trade, industry and trades, as well as for the establishment of a network of credit institutions”⁶³.

5. **Hungarian propaganda:** in five articles, it is described that Hungarian revisionism manifests itself with greater intensity, despite the achievement of the Great Union. The concern is that Budapest could send news and updates of the rematch attempt to the ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania on a daily basis.

“Every morning, or at lunch, or in the evening, when he comes home from work, every Hungarian in Transylvania, whether pure Hungarian or even a Hungarianized Romanian, receives a Hungarian paper. – And I showed that there are some 57 Hungarian newspapers in Transylvania, – sheet in which he is shown everything he is interested in, but especially everything that the Budapest government thinks, suspects, and implements in performing the revenge plan. This is who the government has authorized to be reborn and strengthened”⁶⁴.

6. **The denationalization of Romanians:** in two articles, the aggressive assimilation of Romanians by the political elites oriented toward the Hungarian ideal of regaining Transylvania is lamented. The most aggressive

⁶² „Erau condamnați și amendați, înfundau temnițele și plăteau amenzi, și totuși intrau în luptă cu fruntea senină fără să se gândească la cei de acasă. Căci prin ispășirea cu fruntea ridicată nu făceau altceva decât să demonstreze temeinicia drepturilor noastre pentru îndeplinirea crezului nostru national”, in ***, „Sărbătorirea ziariștilor români ardeleni” [“Celebration of Transylvanian Romanian Journalists”], in *Neamul Nostru [Our People]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Year III, No. 5/1936, p. 4.

⁶³ „Și apoi Mocanii, dotați cu frumoase calități și cu pronunțat spirit negustoresc, sunt meniți ca să ne dea o clasă de mijloc, care să cucerească orașele din regiune. Pentru acest scop se cere din partea Statului anumite măsuri, cari să ajute comerțul, industria și meseriile, precum și pentru înființarea unei rețele de instituții de credit.”, in Aurel Gociman, „Problemele românești în regiunea săcuizată” [“Romanian problems in the Szekler region”], in *Neamul Nostru [Our People]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Year III, No. 5/1936, p. 1.

⁶⁴ „În fiecare dimineață, sau la prânz, sau seara, când vine dela lucru, tot maghiarul din Ardeal, fie el maghiar curat fie chiar un român maghiarizat, primește foaia maghiară. – Și am arătat că sunt vreo 57 de gazete ungurești în Ardeal, – foaie, în care i se arată tot ce-l interesează dar mai ales tot cela ce gândește, bănuște și pune în aplicare guvernul dela Budapesta în realizarea planului de revanșe. Iată pe pe cine a autorizat guvernul să renască și să se întărească.”, in ***, „Societatea Culturală Maghiară «Emke»” [“The Hungarian Cultural Society ‘Emke’”], in *Neamul Nostru [Our People]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Year III, No. 16/1936, p. 1.

and systematic assimilation programs were carried out on the border to interrupt the communication of Romanians from one side and the other of the Carpathian Mountains.

“And only then, when the enemy by force stuck its border on a part of the body of our country, as happened with Transylvania, taken by the Hungarians, the new rulers, who had come with the intention of Hungarianizing and the stones wore out everything the possible means for the extermination of the Romanian element. Those points were considered where communication between the Romanians on one side and the other of the Carpathians was possible, such as Oituzul and Ghimesul. The places around these passers-by were the main objectives, in the denationalization policy, of the Romanians, and in truth, the enemy of the Romanian nature, was successful, managing to determine the Romanian element, which formed the absolute majority of the population on these plains, to abandon faith, customs and ancestral language”⁶⁵.

7. **Romanian – Hungarian solidarity:** in two articles, the need for inter-ethnic friendship of the population is discussed, because conflict and assimilation are the imperatives of the corrupt elites, rejecting the word of God.

“The press should be a holy pulpit, a pulpit from which to preach daily, with all love. Solidarity is a national, imperative, and absolute necessity. All currents contrary to this solidarity are hostile to the homeland and must be fought and suppressed, because present or future dangers can only be defeated through perfect solidarity. The Romanian, the Szekler, the Saxon, and the Jew are equal before the laws – they have the same rights and duties. And one and the others have the right to multiply their family through honest work, economy, and respect for the laws, according to God’s command: ‘Increase and multiply, fill the earth and possess it’. And one and the others can increase their cattle, increase their fortunes in complete peace. But what is expected of them in return? The same duties for some as for others”⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ „Și numai atunci, când dușmanul prin forță și-a înfipt hotarul pe o parte din corpul țării noastre, cum s-a întâmplat cu Ardealul, luat de unguri, noii stăpânitori, cari veniseră cu intenția de a maghiariza și pietrele au uzat de toate mijloacele posibile, pentru exterminarea elementului românesc. În special s’a avut în vedere acele puncte, unde comunicația dintre Români de o parte și de alta a Carpaților era posibilă, ca de exemplu: Oituzul, Ghimeșul, etc. Locurile din preajma acestor trecători, au constituit obiective principale, în politica de desnaționalizare, a românilor, și în adevăr, dușmanul firei românești, a avut succes, reușind să determine elementul românesc, care forma majoritatea absolută a populației de pe aceste plaiuri să-și lepede credința, obiceiurile și limba strămoșească.”, in C. M., „Învățătorii din zona culturală” [“Teachers from the cultural zone”], in *Neamul Nostru [Our People]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Year III, No. 6/1936, p. 3.

⁶⁶ „Presa să fie un amvon sfânt, un amvon de pe care să se propovăduiască zilnic, cu toată dragostea. Această solidaritate este o necesitate națională, imperativă și absolută. Toate curentele contrarii acestei solidarități sunt dușmănoase pentru patrie și trebuiesc combătute, înăbușite, pentru că pericolele prezente sau viitoare numai grație unei solidarități desăvârșite, pot fi înfrânte. Și Românul, și Secuicul, și Sasul, și Evreul sunt egali înaintea legilor – au aceleași drepturi și aceleași îndatoriri. Și unul și ceilalți au dreptul ca, prin muncă cinstită, prin economie, prin respectul legilor să-și înmulțească familia, conform poruncii lui Dumnezeu: «Creșteți și vă înmulțiți, umpleți pământul și-l stăpâniți». Și unul și ceilalți pot să-și înmulțească vitele, să-și mărească averile în deplină liniște. Ce li se cere însă în schimb? Aceleași îndatoriri și unora și celorlalți.”, in Țepeș, „Presa și rostul ei” [“The press and its purpose”], in *Neamul Nostru [Our People]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Year III, No. 1/1936, p. 2.

8. **Romanian symbolism:** two articles discuss the importance and significance of Romanian national symbols, seen by Romanians as holy gifts given by God. “My soul is filled with joy, when I see that I sew these sheets, fluttering the proud Romanian tricolor, the Flag today sanctified. Yes, watchmen, our tricolor, is a symbol of the bravery of our Romanian nation. And now, this tricolor, which has hung over our heads, is just as holy to us as the body and blood of the Lord, our holy one to touch the ground. Your duty is to ensure that the symbol of the homeland does not touch the ground”⁶⁷.
9. **Orthodox Church:** A brief description of how the Orthodox Church was viewed by the Hungarian Catholic elites. Reporting to the mere existence of the church demonstrates hatred towards everything that is Romanian and ultimately shows the distance of Hungarian Catholic elites from the path of loving one’s neighbor. “Everything that is Romanian is disgusting and to be rejected, it does not deserve any attention: they do not need a Romanian school and church (...)”⁶⁸.

Thus, the 9 dominant themes become strategic elements of the Romanian discourse, indirectly offering a direction to save the situation through the intervention and direct involvement of the state from the central to the local level.

CONCLUSIONS

Browsing the newspaper “Our People”, the reader finds that it represents an X-ray of Treiscaune County in 1936, an X-ray that highlights not the weakness of the Romanian state but the insistence and aggressiveness of the Hungarian state in regaining what it considers to have been unjustly lost.

Moreover, since even today Budapest manifests a hostile attitude toward the northwest border of Romania, the present material must be perceived as a short guide presenting the main axes of revisionist intervention in Transylvania, which it manifests itself most powerfully with or through: (1) elites and (2) the media. The remaining strategic elements identified in the material represent consequences of the actions undertaken by these two, actions that disrupt the organic development of the area in

⁶⁷ „Mi se umple sufletul de bucurie, când văd că pe aceste plaiuri, fâlfâie mândrul tricolor românesc, Drapelul astăzi sfințit. Da străjeri, tricolorul nostru, este simbolul vitejiei neamului nostru românesc. Și acum, acest tricolor, care s-a înălțat deasupra capetelor noastre, este tot atât de sfânt pentru noi, ca și trupul și sângele Domnului Și după cum păcat mare este ca trupul Domnului să atingă pământul, tot așa de mare păcat este, ca steagul nostru sfințit să se atingă de pământ. Datoria voastră este ca să vegheați ca simbolul patriei să nu atingă pământul.”, in Alexandru Nestorescu, „O impozantă manifestație românească în comuna Micfalău Trei-Scaune” [“An imposing demonstration in Micfalău commune, Treiscaune county”], in *Neamul Nostru [Our People]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Year III, No. 5/1936, p. 3.

⁶⁸ „Tot ce-i românesc e scârbos și de lepădat nu merită nici o atenție: școală și biserică românească nu le trebuie (...)”, in Dumitru Făget, „Vrem o școală nu o cocioabă” [“We want a school not a shack”], in *Neamul Nostru [Our People]*, Sfântu Gheorghe, Year III, No. 7/1936, p. 4.

the field (3) of culture as well as the free manifestation of faith (4). In the absence of the latter, the last elements of identity security are eliminated and a way of eliminating Romanian symbolism from the area (5), denationalization (6) and assimilation (7) of Romanian elements is artificially created. Thus, the mission of the Romanian state (8), beyond promoting and encouraging inter-ethnic solidarity (9) represents combating these vectors by raising some elites whose objective is to militate so that historical truth will be respected and bring justice through peaceful means.

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THE ISSUE OF SOVEREIGNTY AND CONSERVATIVE DOCTRINE. A RESPONSE TO THE NEW CRISIS. AUTOCHTHONISM AND HUMANITY

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ABSTRACT

Conservatism and sovereignty are the foundations of the national political movement. In Romanian culture, these concepts have special characteristics. The first refers to the preservation of identity along four lines: autochthonism, humanity, hierarchy of powers, and avoidance of tyranny, while the second refers to the free movement of a nation in the world through the independence of its own state. The political movement stands under the sign of two great precariousness (a weak ability to think ideally-typically, therefore doctrinally and lukewarm Christianity). If it does not resolve them, it will not be able to achieve the social ethical ideal of the organic state, which is necessary in the context of the new crisis into which humanity has entered. In short, these are the guidelines for this study.

Keywords: sovereignty, conservative doctrine, crisis, state, nation.

THE TERMS

1. Souverainism

This is:

- A concept
- A doctrine
- A movement
- A feeling and an attitude, a spontaneous reflex of thought.
- From an administrative point of view, it is a defining issue for nation states. Colonies are administrative structures on the scale of nations without sovereignty.
- Politically, sovereignty assumes that the state moves freely in relation to other states, exercises its right to administer itself on a given territory.
- Internally, souverainism implies the legitimacy of the elites in relation to the people, so the political freedom of movement, in the sense that sovereign can only be a recognized power, otherwise power, no matter how strong, can only move by force. The consequence: tyranny cannot be

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sovereign because it is not related to the people, so power itself is not free, it is anarchic. “The genuine tyrant is the genuine slave”⁷⁰.

- Souverainism is associated with patriotism and nationalism, forms of manifestation of attachment to place, and of understanding the universal as a function of the local reference point.
- Doctrinally, souverainism is “right-wing”, because it has at its center the state as an expression of the nation it legitimizes, with all the gear that makes this possible, having the Church and the family as pillars. Any other discussion, that does not center on the Church and the nation, no matter how much it is called “right-wing”, would be a form without substance, a label.
- The opposite of souverainism is usually the left, especially in its globalist-neomaxist dimension. To the extent that the old “right-wing” doctrines, focused on individual interest and consumption, have become globalist, like liberalism in its various formulas, they have de facto moved to the left and are therefore opposed to souverainism, because they subordinate the national state to transnational interests and ignore or directly advocate for the weakening of the Church and the family. Most of the time, the left is not allowed to think of the transcendent, nor to think of God, and rarely of nationhood.
- Technically, subordinated to a doctrine, sovereignty means sectorial policies in all areas of state and social life: education, health, energy, manufacturing industry, trade, agriculture, village and rural life, food, transport, defense and national security, the administrative configuration of the state, justice – all these centered on the free development of local potential and on the dignified interaction with the other forces in the world.
- Sovereigns are the people, the state, and the monarch. Also, punctually, the professional bodies are sovereign in the acts that concern the organization of their own guild – for example, the exam subjects and their correction, the medical, legal act, etc.

2. Conservatism

- It is part of a fundamental feeling/instinct: the “new instinct”/ “nostratic feeling”, the “preservation instinct”, spontaneous approach to reality.
- It is a concept with which a society can be (re)built.
- It is a doctrine that includes the discussion of souverainism, in the sense that the people and the human personality are sovereign. Conservatism looks at the idea of man in general, including the people in the general idea of man, seen both as a social being, with stature and mystical abilities, part of Creation.

⁷⁰ Platon, *Opere V. Republica [Opera V. Republic]*, edited by Constantin Noica and Petru Creția, notes by Andrei Cornea, Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing, 1986, 579 d, e.

- It is more than a doctrine regarding politics and state administration, it is a cultural paradigm that subordinates itself to a political doctrine, it is a philosophy.
- At the center of the discussion about conservatism is the identity, the essence of man in what he is characteristic of: a creature in the image of God, who goes to the Judgment of the Gentiles and whose language is a gift of the Spirit, so both individuality and its communal form – the people, are attributes of Creation.
- Conservatism is a doctrine that considers man in his entirety, therefore a “totalitarian” doctrine – a term unfortunately wrongly attributed to the most anarchic doctrines of the past and today. In science, conservatism is inherently transdisciplinary, being focused on an acute awareness of issues affecting the integrity and free expression of society, nation, and state.
- Conservatism may be Christian, may be Orthodox Christian. In its Christian Orthodox form, conservative thinking moves in the terms of Petre Țuțea, “between God and my nation”, having identity as a benchmark, in turn expressed through the Church, family, freedom, and property. The conservative although firmly attached to great values, is a man of nuances, protector of childhood, the village, and motherhood. It places the institutional order on the hierarchy of competence and the eminence law of compensation. When he is a Christian, he valorizes humanity (Racoveanu).
- To be more precise, we could say that souverainism mainly concerns the independent state’s attribute of being sovereign, and conservatism refers to the human, general dimension of the imperative to preserve identity.

Souverainism and conservatism are manifested at the level of:

- Essayistic – it is fashionable today to be a souverainist, even among exponents of globalism and political correctness, of neo-Marxism.
- University – timid, because today the University is the epicenter of neo-Marxism, and those who do not obey it are institutionally oppressed and, ultimately, excluded.
- Cultural – where it assumes a *formula mentis* given by a bunch of more or less assumed paradigms, centered on autochthonism integrated in the universal, which for Romanians refer to: Romanian prophetism (Eliade), corporatism (Manoilescu), protochronism (Papu, Ungheanu), baseless forms (Junimea), mystical theology (Crainic, Nae Ionescu), sămănătorism (Iorga), autochthonism (Băncilă, Iorga, Nae Ionescu, Pârvan), eminenceism, etc.
- Political – there are parties with souverainist messages from time to time and declared, respectively assumed, souverainist parties. From this point of view, few political formations have a doctrine, but even fewer have a conservative – souverainist one.
- Common, at the level of the man on the street, who has a sense of identity and belonging, which he perceives as being attacked.

3. The People and the Nation

One of the missions of conservatism is to maintain the capacity of its own peoples to manifest themselves as nations, as peoples with a purpose, to protect societies from massification, from collapsing into the statistical insignificance of generalized slavery.

Placing the love of the people under the umbrella of faith is not a sin, on the contrary, Nichifor Crainic:

“‘Nations (...) are varied units of created nature and they enter as such into the hierarchical body of the Church (...) If we admit that the spiritual universality of orthodoxy claims uniformity in the natural realm of creatures, we should believe that God who created the world in variety and endowed each thing with special capacity would now turn against his building’ (Orthodoxy)”⁷¹.

4. The new crisis

The current crisis is relatively new because, unlike the others, it does not refer to the relationship between the individual or to society but to the very idea of man. The main feature of the crisis is the transformation of collective amnesia into an instrument of power: societies are subjected to a hypnotic slavery in which critical thinking is not only discouraged, as it has been until now through consumerism, but from 2020, prohibited, considered “false”. Until now, most problems arose because of the emphasis placed on one or the other of the two cores of any doctrine, either on the individual or on society, and we could speak of a crisis generated by individualism or collectivism. For example, the consumer society, a crisis of man, is one of individualist-hedonist type, while the collapse of communism was due to the error of considering man as a collectivized good, without any personal property and at the mercy of the state his needs. Today, the crisis arises because of the fact that the elites who control the networks of power have had enough of man: they consider us “too many”, “too consumerist”, “too anti-nature”, etc. It is a war against man, not for his upliftment.

Today’s era is opposed not only to Christianity, but also to the Renaissance, to the man who rediscovered the classical values of the great culture.

The key term of the medical dictatorship and surveillance society (2019–2021 – the Covid dictatorship) – at the starting point of the current crisis was an absolute novelty, the “social distancing”, at odds to any humane solution to the crisis. Man,

⁷¹ „«Națiunile (...) sunt unități variate ale naturii create și ele intră ca atare în organismul ierarhic al Bisericii (...) Dacă admitem că universalitatea spirituală a ortodoxiei pretinde uniformizarea în domeniul natural al făpturilor, ar trebui să credem că Dumnezeu care a creat lumea în varietate și a dotat cu capacitate deosebită fiecare lucru, s-ar întoarce acum împotriva zidirii sale.» (Ortodoxie)”, in Nichifor Crainic quoted by Dumitru Stăniloae in “Introductory Study” in Nichifor Crainic, *Nostalgia paradisului [The Nostalgia of the Paradise]*, Iași, Moldova Publishing, 1994 (1942), p. XII.

as a social being, has at the center of his power to live, sociality: the ability and the need to live together. To this we add the obligation in all circumstances to cover the face – which is the reflection of the divine in everyone⁷²: the person bound to cover his/her face almost all the time is a faceless human.

A corollary of the new crisis is almost complete discrediting of the idea of the political party, even of the idea of the state and national security. In any case, the party has been subordinated to the network rule, an invisible, xenocentric power entity. One of the priorities of souverainist political organizations will be the revitalization of national political office itself and the relegitimization of the public utility of the political party. Without the political floor, people cannot defend themselves in history. From here, the idea of the state as an organic state, can be reconstructed for the people by inverting today's relationship, in which the people are useful to the state.

The political form of the new crisis is what Plato, in the "Republic", calls tyranny – in which the common man is turned into a slave and the government is founded on fear, on the primacy of force, by the passing of the "guards" of the city to the side of the tyrant and by the distortion of the function of services and force structures.

5. The organic state

Very briefly, there are some axes of the organic state: **compliance with the law of compensation** – the elites, through their activity, make the work of those they lead easier, and its institutional configuration should be structured according to the **hierarchy of competences** – you go up in the hierarchy and you are rewarded directly proportional to the efficiency of the effort. Basically, social justice can be summed up in these two principles. Both were formulated by Mihai Eminescu and were developed by the entire significant Romanian interwar literature. The third axis of the organic state is the settlement of society according to the scale of value – **the concordance between income and working done, more precisely its social utility, a corollary of the law of compensation.**

THE TWO GREAT DIFFICULTIES

Souverainism and conservatism can be subject to precariousness, like any human enterprise. Conservative thinking is marked by two major insecurities: a weak

⁷² Daily News, "Turkey and masks for Thanksgiving: Fauci [head of NHI, the 'supreme' medical authority in the US] urges face coverings at home even in small holiday gatherings", November 14, 2020. Available at: <https://www.nydailynews.com/coronavirus/ny-coronavirus-fauci-thanksgiving-20201113-b6kt3prkwvdqjmes5znxbegl7q-story.html>, Accessed on August 10, 2023. The absurdity of the situation: people who are not sick are considered "disease carriers": "According to Fauci, 'community spread' means people without any symptoms, and may not know they are infected, are still spreading the virus".

ability to think ideal-typically, therefore doctrinally, to operate with categories, and lukewarm Christianity, affected by personal idiosyncrasies, humors, Christian behavior of complacency, outside the Teaching (*Predania*), without readings, not accompanied by deeds – fasting, liturgy, prayer, almsgiving, etc. The first weakness can be somewhat overcome by common sense and by keeping the ordinances, but the second is more difficult to overcome: without Teaching, conservatism remains an exercise in philosophical essayism, placed in a precarious political practice, in which the weakness of the soul cannot sustain the deed.

All this because we reach the people, the goal of the conservative doctrine⁷³:

- Through Tradition – and at least we, Romanians, through Teaching (rediscovering the great tradition of Christian teachings).
- By Mystical attitude – by experiencing the collective person from within our individuality.
- Politically, through the rational assumption of the idea of nation, including the assumption of the conservative Romanian tradition of “Junimea”, Eminescu, and the universal thinking (Plato, Scruton, Schmitt, etc.). By connecting to contemporary conservatism. Rational assumption – the development of concrete action directions in relation to the idea of nation. Through the connection with the science of the nation. Through the connection with the ethical ideal – of social justice (care and justice), which puts the politician in a relationship of communication/soul community with the voters – the basis of good governance. The relationship between science and politics is that of knowledge and action. Politics implements the ethical ideal – the good, based on the knowledge of reality, and reality is of the people, because the place is the people’s, the people being, in turn, the places.
- Scientific, through the tradition of sociological knowledge, for example – the School of Sociology from Bucharest, and, before that, at Eminescu. The development of the science/sociology of the nation, the science that seeks to know the problems of social units, not abstractions, and to propose solutions to the politician. As may be the tradition of legal thought, etc.

The impasse of the two difficulties: of the categorical understanding and the practice of Teaching, leads to the incapacitation of the political function of the doctrine, weakening its ability to be embedded in reality, to organize it. Concretely, the person who declares himself a “souverainist”, even if he may have readings that entitle him to a souverainist-conservative position, will not integrate politically, even if he wants to, because his self-esteem will not find enough space for manifestation: he/she will want to be served, not serve, or she/he will make more value judgments than judgments of facts. For its part, the

⁷³ Radu Baltasiu, „Calea noastră și calea popoarelor în Europa” [“Our Way and the Way of Peoples in Europe”], in *Acea Europă în care credem [The Europe We Believe In]*, editor Claudiu Târziu, Bucharest, Rost Publishing, 2023, pp. 122–123.

organization that fails to overcome these two difficulties will not be able to fulfil its basic mission, that of realizing the ethical ideal, by strengthening the personality and bringing it to the level of fulfilling its creative function, as Dimitrie Gusti would say⁷⁴. He will not be able to give his determinations (Noica), and therefore, he will not individualize properly.

To be able to fulfill the social mission, the party must manifest itself as a “free association of citizens, permanently united by common interests and ideas, of a general character, [being an] association that aims, in full public light, to reach to the power to govern for the realization of a social ethical ideal”⁷⁵.

CONSERVATISM AS A MISSION. THE IMPERATIVES

Conservatism today is more than a doctrine; it is a mission. Its mission is multiple.

We are called to resettle the people as the basis of the state and the personality as the basis of social life, and the state thus socialized at the basis of the European Union. We are called to restore the people to their role as the starting point of the act of political thought and action, without which the state will collapse into the anti-human nothingness of transhumanism.

This call to action has several imperatives – what gives it “mission status”:

1. The imperative of autochthonism – we think of Crainic (*The Nostalgia of the Paradise*) and Băncilă, as a form of cultural settlement in the world, of Nae Ionescu
1. The non-tyranny imperative – we can think of any other form of government, but not tyranny. (Plato)
2. The imperative of humanity (*al omeniei*) – as the dominant energy of social organization, “the first beauty”, as Racoveanu extraordinarily calls it. This subordinates the scrutonian imperatives of the integrity of the person, beauty, masculinity, and femininity, as well as that of preserving and uplifting the village (Manoilescu).
3. The imperative of the hierarchy of competences – as a form of institutional organization, alongside the imperatives of the law of compensation and of the settlement of society according to the scale of value (Eminescu, Gusti, Manoilescu).

We will address some of these imperatives in the following section.

⁷⁴ Dimitrie Gusti, *Sociologia Militans [Militant sociology]*, Vol. I, 1934, p. VIII.

⁷⁵ „asociație liberă de cetățeni, uniți în mod permanent de interese și de idei comune, de caracter general, [fiind o] asociație ce urmărește, în plină lumină publică, a ajunge la puterea de a guverna pentru realizarea unui ideal etic social”, in Dimitrie Gusti, „Partidul politic. Sociologia unui sistem al partidului politic” [“Political party. Sociology of a political party system”], in *Ibidem*, p. 124.

THE AUTOCHTHONISM IMPERATIVE

1. Vasile Băncilă

Băncilă – the autochthonization of culture and its expression at the social level is the condition of the freedom of the society, and a natural reaction to the centuries-old imperial aggressions, it is the condition of overcoming the deadlock of forms without substance (Maiorescu):

“Since Maiorescu, we have been talking about the discord between form and substance, which occurred in Romanian society with the dawn of Western civilization”⁷⁶.

“The original Romanian background, a time frustrated and disorganized by the onslaught of Western form, begins, at least in some places, to recover, to take precise knowledge of it, to master form and to create in its deep spirit. This is the meaning of the current of autochthonization of our culture because there is by definition, only autochthonous culture. **There is no culture that does not spring forth spontaneously**”⁷⁷.

“Any society that imitates cannot have a culture. But above all, it cannot have a philosophy. Philosophy springs from the application and fecundation of the Socratic dictum: ‘Know thyself!’”⁷⁸.

The autochthonization of the culture does not mean the isolation of the spirit, on the contrary, it refers to the modernization of the collective soul:

“Once we have entered the path of culture in the modern style, we must wait and make this culture produce a new psychology, according to the sources of our autochthony. This can only be done, in the last analysis, only by philosophy, conceived not in a pedantic and useless sense of a kind of social epiphenomenon, but as a cultural function of society, as happened in the West”⁷⁹.

But for this the village must be rediscovered:

⁷⁶ „De la Maiorescu încoace se tot vorbește la noi (...) de discordanța între formă și fond, care s-a produs în societatea românească odată cu introducerea zorită a civilizației Apusului”, in Vasile Băncilă, *Duhul Sărbătorii [The Spirit of Celebration]*, edited edition [and preface] by Ileana Băncilă, Bucharest, Anastasia Publishing, 1996, p. 186.

⁷⁷ „Fondul românesc inițial, un timp contrariat și dezorganizare de năvala formei apusene, începe, cel puțin pe alocuri, să-și revină, să ia cunoștință precisă de el, să stăpânească formă și să creeze în spiritul adânc al lui. Acesta e sensul curentului de autohtonizare a culturii noastre, fiindcă nu există, prin definiție, decât cultură autohtonă. Nu există cultură care nu izvorăște spontan.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 187, our underlines.

⁷⁸ „Orice societate care imită nu poate avea o cultură. Dar mai ales nu poate avea o filosofie. Filosofia izvorăște din aplicarea și fecundarea dictonului socratic: «Cunoaște-te pe tine însuși!», in *Ibidem*, p. 190.

⁷⁹ „Odată intrat pe calea culturii în stil modern, trebuie să așteptăm și să facem ca această cultură să producă o psihologie nouă, potrivit cu izvoarele autohtoniei noastre. Aceasta n-o poate face, în ultimă analiză, decât filosofia, concepută nu în sens pedant și inutilă a un fel de epifenomen social, ci ca o funcție culturală a societății, așa cum s-a întâmplat în Occident.”, in *Ibidem*, pp. 195–196.

“(…) the richest and most authentic source of the autochthonization of philosophy is the rustic spirituality of the Romanian people”⁸⁰.

2. Mircea Vulcănescu

Mircea Vulcănescu, discussing the mission of young people, of the young generation:

Thinking in Romanian is proof of the connection between people and place. It is a required link. Without assuming the place, one cannot even think. **To think Romanian is precisely thinking** and this has an internal geopolitical mission, to regroup the powers of the people:

“If you are Romanian, you do not have to force yourself to think Romanian. Think only truly. And your thought will be Romanian thought. Know this and do not be afraid”⁸¹.

“If the youth of this country does not manage, in this generation, to reduce the centrifugal human ideals of Romanians from different corners of the country, in a single face of the Romanian man, in which Romanians everywhere can recognize themselves as their good; if the type of Russian, Dostoevsky and Tolstoyan man of the Bessarabians and the Latino-Kantian man of the Transylvanians fails to give a living synthesis with the Byzantine-French man of the Old Kingdom – a synthesis in which the centrifugal tendencies are no longer found except as temptations to universalization of the same man of Eminescu and Creangă – the political unity of this nation, which has been wanted for a millennium (...) seems to me threatened”⁸².

Our autochthony: the Thracian temptation (*Ispita tracică*). Temptation, Vulcănescu highlights, is a possibility of being. Over time, several temptations, possibilities of being have gathered over a nation. For Romanians, the temptation that urges autochthonization, introspection and rediscovering the origins, is the Thracian one, which manifests itself through skepticism, stubbornness, measure, patience, all gathered in the form of living in the village and peasantry, with mystical valences. The liveliest intellectuals of this direction were Vasile Pârvan, Lucian Blaga, Iorga, Nichifor Crainic, etc.:

⁸⁰ „(...) izvorul cel mai bogat și mai autentic al autohtonizării filosofiei e spiritualitatea rustică a poporului român”, in *Ibidem*, p. 200.

⁸¹ „Dacă ești român, nu trebuie să te silești a gândi românește. Gândește numai cu adevărat. Și gândul tău va fi gând românesc. Asta să știi și să n-ai teamă.”, in Mircea Vulcănescu, *Către ființa spiritualității românești. Dimensiunea românească a existenței [Towards the Being of Romanian Spirituality. The Romanian dimension of existence]*, edited by Marin Diaconu, Eminescu Publishing, 1996, p. 113.

⁸² „Dacă tineretul acestei țări nu reușește ca, în această generație, să reducă idealurile omenești centrifugale ale românilor din diferite colțuri ale țării, într-un singur chip al omului românesc, în care să se recunoască românii de pretutindeni ca într-un bun al lor; dacă tipul omului rusesc, dostoevskian și tolstoian al basarabenilor și omul latino-kantian al ardelenilor nu reușește să dea o sinteză vie cu omul bizantino-francez al celor din Vechiul Regat – sinteză în care tendințele centrifugale să nu se mai regăsească decât ca ispite de universalizare ale unui aceluiași om al lui Eminescu și al lui Creangă –, unitatea politică a acestui neam, care s-a dorit un mileniu și care, în clipa în care își dă mâinile nu se mai recunoaște – mi se pare amenințată.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 25.

“[We] would belong to the Thracian world when we would no longer force ourselves to be in any other way than what we are”⁸³.

Autochthony from the Thracian perspective defines some essential data: “the call of the earth”, man – God’s tool bent over the furrow, the moral measure as a border limit, and the functions of God – as the protector of the primordial, Adamic work, the center of the horizon – so of time, which, in fact, is measured in “tomorrow’s toil”⁸⁴.

The demography where this vein of Romanian purity is best preserved is that of the shepherds, the man of the mountain, here we have, Vulcănescu points out, the spirit of the daring, the military virtue – which, for Romanians, is not a warrior in itself, but a defender of that type of horizon, of the worked time and space⁸⁵.

3. Nae Ionescu

Iorga and Nae Ionescu are the ones who tried to
“make the Romanian reality as a measure of the universal man, in the criterion of humanity”⁸⁶.

Nae Ionescu believes that cultural life, and therefore access to the real potential for development and humanity, can only have those societies that express their

“own, original reality, [from] the core itself, the essential and characteristic generating element”⁸⁷.

Moreover, Nae Ionescu shows that Iorga’s great contribution to Romanian culture does not necessarily consist only in understanding the field of history, but in the subsequent result of this titanic work. Starting from here, he offers us one of the most elegant definitions of autochthonism:

“Thus [from Iorga] I learned that the Romanian state and the Romanian civilization can only stand on autochthonism, that is, on **the valorization of the Romanian specificity**, and they only have one source of power – the peasant class”⁸⁸.

This for us, as humans, represents nothing but the “primacy of the spiritual”⁸⁹.

⁸³ „[N]oi am aparține lumii trace atunci când nu ne-am mai sili să fim în nici un alt fel decât cum suntem.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 135.

⁸⁴ „osteneala zilei de mâine”, in *Ibidem*, p. 137.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 139.

⁸⁶ „[să] prefacă realitatea românească în măsură a omului universal, în criteriu de omenie”, in *Ibidem*, p. 116.

⁸⁷ „realitatea proprie, originară, [din] sâmburele însuși, elementul esențial și caracteristic generator”, in Nae Ionescu, *Teologia. Integrala publicisticii religioase [Theology. The full text of religious publishing]*, edition, introduction and notes by Dora Mezdrea, Sibiu, Deisis, 2003, p. 401.

⁸⁸ „Și astfel am aflat că statul românesc și civilizația românească nu se pot ridica decât pe autohtonism, adică pe punerea în valoare a specificul românesc, și nu au decât un izvor de alimentare – clasa țărănească.”, in Nae Ionescu, *Roza Vânturilor [The Wind Rose]*, Bucharest, Wind Rose Publishing, 1990, reproduction after *Roza Vânturilor 1926–1933 [The Wind Rose 1926–1933]*, edited by Mircea Eliade [and George Racoveanu], National Culture Publishing, [1937], p. 191, our underlines.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 193.

Returning to the definition of autochthonism, Nae Ionescu deepens its naturalness, linking it to “the order of nature”. Outside of this, society will move from scandal to scandal, the state and society will weaken, first at the level of the view on important things, then, it will collapse demographically, which is happening today. The collapsed state is above all spiritually collapsed, where is no natural order of things:

“And for six years we have been asking for this scandal against nature to stop. Let’s unmask ourselves. Let us realize that nothing can be created except in the natural order of things. Let us bend attentively, humbly, and understandingly to our realities. Let us know how God made us and where God has placed us”⁹⁰.

“We stand in solidarity with our race; more supportive than many of us. We therefore feel within ourselves, through organic but also conscious contact with this race, the rhythm and direction of its destinies. We feel and we say. Not because we want to, but because we cannot do otherwise. We sing as the bird sings – without any merit, but true. It is our natural function, our duty”⁹¹.

For Nae Ionescu, reality, real, means autochthonous, or relating to it, the rest is waste:

“Our creative operation, if you want, should be reduced to this; to the orientation, systematization, and development of real powers (...)”⁹².

Only then can we discuss our modernization, after we clarify who we are, what “our” means, after we discover our ethos. But for this, the elites must be aware of the imperative of their “own culture”, which is nourished precisely by this ethos⁹³.

Opposed to autochthonism, to the sovereigntist movement **started from culture toward the economic liberation** of the country, was liberalism with its cultural dimension, of cosmopolitanism, Nae Ionescu pointed out.

4. Nichifor Crainic

In “Nostalgia paradisului” (“The Nostalgia of the Paradise”) (1942), Crainic, the founder of Romanian mystical theology⁹⁴, shows that cultural mimicry can only be a first stage in the evolution of a culture, being quickly followed by sterility if not developed autonomously and organically. And being self-sufficient means developing into higher forms starting from the hearth of the peasant soul and orthodoxy:

⁹⁰ „Și tot de șase ani cerem ca acest scandal împotriva firii să înceteze. Să ne desmeticim. Să ne dăm seama că nimic nu se poate crea decât în ordinea firească a lucrurilor. Să ne aplecăm atenți, umili și înțelegători asupra realităților noastre. Să cunoaștem cum ne-a făcut Dumnezeu și unde ne-a așezat Dumnezeu.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 314.

⁹¹ „Suntem solidari cu rasa noastră; mai solidari decât mulți alții dintre noi. Simțim deci în noi înșine, prin contactul organic dar și conștient cu această rasă, ritmul și direcția destinelor ei. Simțim și spunem. Nu pentru că o voim, ci pentru că nu putem altfel. Cântăm cum cântă pasărea – fără nici un merit, dar adevărat. E funcțiunea noastră firească, datoria noastră.”, in *Ibidem*, pp. 310–311.

⁹² „Operația noastră de creație, dacă vreți, la aceasta să se reducă; la orientarea, sistematizarea și dezvoltarea puterilor reale (...)”, in Nae Ionescu, *op. cit.*, 2003, pp. 90–91.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 212.

⁹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae in “Introductory Study” in Nechifor Crainic, *op. cit.*, p. VII.

“Condemned by its nature to sterility, mimicry is a solution of continuity in the normal development of national culture. However, no national culture can grow parasitically on the body of another culture. It is independent and worthy of consideration only in so far as it symbolizes in higher forms the properties of the being of the race. A culture deeply rooted in ethnic autochthonism and absorbing in its creations the spiritual light of orthodoxy alone has the guarantee of its own style. Through mimicry we will never reach it because our own style is the distinctive brilliance of all cultural creations, resulting from a great conception of life in which creative originality meet and are recognized”⁹⁵.

HUMANITY’S IMPERATIVE

George Racoveanu

Humanity (*omenia*) is, according to the icon, the second form of primordial beauty to which man has access, after Jesus Christ. For the phenomenological sociology approach to conservatism, humanity is an excellent starting point. If the icon is the Face shown, metalinguistic display and its dogmatic-theological definition⁹⁶, humanity is the archetype of initial beauty as:

“encounter [of] the human soul with the evangelical teaching as it teaches it The Church”⁹⁷.

Mankind is situated between disfigurement through the loss of faith and holiness. In other words, humanity is the putting into action of showing the Image in the icon, a step toward holiness. Humanity is also called by Racoveanu “humility of love”⁹⁸. This has 12 dimensions, which can be relatively easily operationalized: love of guests – “of people”⁹⁹; keeping the given word – the word is edifying, not talk to the wind, not dissipation¹⁰⁰; doing good as a hidden calculation – “Do good and give it away”¹⁰¹; magnanimity – “The heart of the human being is betrothed to forgiveness”¹⁰²; justice, not legalism, the man of humanity is not a Pharisee, the goal

⁹⁵ „Osândit prin natura lui la sterilitate, mimetismul e o soluție de continuitate în dezvoltarea normală a culturii naționale. Nici o cultură națională însă nu poate crește parazitar pe trupul altei culturi. Ea e de sine stătătoare și vrednică să fie luată în seamă numai în măsura în care simbolizează în forme superioare proprietățile ființei neamului. O cultură înfiptă adânc în autohtonismul etnic și absorbind în plâsmuirile ei lumina spirituală a ortodoxiei are singură de partea ei garanția unui stil propriu. Prin mimetism nu vom ajunge în veacul veacului la el, fiindcă stilul propriu e strălucirea distinctivă a tuturor creațiilor culturale, rezultată dintr-o mare concepție de viață, în care se întâlnesc și se recunosc originalitățile creatoare.”, in Nechifor Crainic, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁹⁶ Sorin Dumitrescu, *Noi și icoana [We and the Icon]*, Anastasia Publishing, 2018, p. 28.

⁹⁷ „întâmpinare [a] sufletului omenesc cu învățătura evanghelică așa cum o predă Biserica”, in George Racoveanu, *Omenia și frumusețea cea dintâi [Humanity and beauty first]*, Predania Publishing, s.a., [2020], p. 24.

⁹⁸ “smerenia dragostei”, in *Ibidem*, p. 38.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

¹⁰¹ „Fă binele și dă-l pe apă”, in *Ibidem*, p. 9.

¹⁰² „Inima omului de omenie e logodită cu iertarea”, in *Ibidem*, p. 10.

of the law being justice and not the law itself¹⁰³; sacrifice – not only of time, work and money, but even life¹⁰⁴; restraint – “fornication being the mortal enemy of mankind”¹⁰⁵; modesty – “you to honor the coat” – the function, not the other way around¹⁰⁶; honor – “the foundation of trust between people”. Man of humanity fears only shame, the last guardian of honor¹⁰⁷; humility – another path to self-restraint. “It is not the nobleman who is worthy of honor, but the one who proves to be worthy of being noble”¹⁰⁸; faith in God – “the crown of all human virtues”¹⁰⁹; the love of the Motherland – is “honest passion”, although the human being is aware that “we humans are all a kinship”¹¹⁰.

Here is a brief description of a behavioral direction, as concrete as possible, both at the individual level and above all at the institutional level. What would an institution built to serve look like? What would her concrete courses of action look like? What would the pre-university, or university curricula for humanity look like? What would the mass media, let’s not talk about political behavior, look like, if humanity – the road to holiness, were their paradigm, their working tension?

The word, although common, is revolutionary from a doctrinal point of view because it lays down a whole plethora of policies in various fields and recalibrates public tension under a comprehensive and positive sign. We remember that before the intolerant age of Covid fear and terror, there was the age of everyone doing what they want, of “tolerance”. Both are negative social tensions, of loneliness: the latter through individual pleasure, the former through irrational fear of the neighbor, of the government, not just of the virus. Humanity reinstates the working regime of neighborly love, brings man not only out of the deadly fear, but also offers him an uplifting, liberating alternative to the alienating consumption-as-pleasure, and really places him on the path of holiness, of the lost paradise. The man will have found his peace finally, without having to leave the world!

TYRANNY

Where the city no longer has integrity, when it no longer has the energy to preserve it, tyranny arises. In other words, tyranny is the expression of the unnatural weakening of the conservative spirit. Tyranny is the consequence of the de-sovereignation of society. We will reproduce some directions of oligarchic and tyrannical regimes in Plato’s “Republic”.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 12

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁸ „Nu cel de neam mare este vrednic de cinstire, ci cel se dovedește a fi vrednic de a fi de neam mare”, in *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

Tyranny is the result of the weakening of the balance in the world, the expression of the collapse of the republic of the soul. The tyrant is the genuine slave, who, though surrounded by a plethora of flatterers, is the poorest in soul and even deprived of a large part of “most satisfactions”¹¹¹.

The social tension is that of injustice, envy, and the leveling of all to the mediocre soul height of the tyrant¹¹². The state thus spiritually collapsed is ruled by force, and education no longer relies on conviction, on the contrary, it cultivates the desire for profit to the detriment of reason and ardor for the ideal¹¹³; the economy, excessively focused on money, has miserliness as its behavioral energy, while the true Muses, related to art, philosophy, and gymnastics, will be less and less present, says Plato¹¹⁴.

When politics does not dissipate itself in acts of force, it is petty¹¹⁵.

Finally, such a city is segregated:

“one of the poor, the other of the rich (...) They are always plotting against each other”¹¹⁶.

Consequence? The regime will not be able to defend the country¹¹⁷.

Who is the man of the city who has fallen prey to oligarchy and tyranny?

“(...) a sordid man, making him have of everything (...) He does not believe (...) that good is preferable to evil, nor is he tamed by reason (...)”¹¹⁸.

These are realities that conservatism wants to avoid. Not since, even before Christianity’s advent, the “Republic” being the first truly “modern” conservative doctrine. All this seems like it happened yesterday, and it is still happening to us.

CONCLUSION

Conservatism and sovereignty must be part of the doctrine of a political movement concerned with the organic development of Romania. Both are concepts, strong directions of action and attitudes towards the national reality, which acquire peculiarities in Romanian culture that are not found in other cultures. While sovereignty is concerned with increasing the independence of a state, conservatism is concerned with preserving human identity. The concrete form in which the two are combined is the organic state, which has as its axes: the law of compensation

¹¹¹ Plato, *op. cit.*, 579 d, e.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, 580 a.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, 553 c, d.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 548 b.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 555 a.

¹¹⁶ „unul al săracilor, celălalt al bogaților (...) Întotdeauna completează unul împotriva celuilalt”, in *Ibidem*, 551 d, e.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 551 e.

¹¹⁸ „(...) un om sordid, făcând avere din orice (...) El nu crede (...) că binele este preferabil răului, nici nu se împlânzește prin rațiune (...)”, in *Ibidem*, 554 d.

(Eminescu), the hierarchy of competences and the correlation of income with work. The social actor capable of creating the organic state is the political party, that free association of citizens with common interests whose aim is to take power in order to achieve a social ethical ideal (Gusti). The conservative and souverainist political movement is vital for Romania as it is the only one capable of defending both identity and progress by preserving the uniqueness of the individual and the community. Without souverainists and a conservative party, the new tyranny threatens us.

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EPISTOLARY FRAGMENTARIUM: ION CONEA – DAVID PRODAN. A GEOPOLITICIAN'S DIALOGUE WITH A HISTORIAN

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to emphasize a thinker considered as one of the fathers of Romanian geopolitics, a cultural profile with a special destiny, still little known to the general public, Ion Conea. Recovering the universe of thought of this intellectual, unjustly forgotten, is a plea for research into his ideational legacy and the way in which the conclusions of his researches are still relevant today. In this sense, the letters sent by Ion Conea to the historian David Prodan are a starting point for a broader investigation of how the science of geopolitics was ordered in Romania in dialogue with history.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Ion Conea, David Prodan, correspondence.

PREMISES

The history of the school of geopolitics in Romania starts at the beginning of the 20th century with the name of the scholar Simion Mehedinți, who tried to structure a field of fertile interdisciplinarity, at the intersection of geography with history, sociology, political science, ethnography, economics. For this scholar, understanding the geopolitics of a people meant interpreting two sets of requirements and benchmarks: those relating to the dynamics of spaces and those relating to the dynamics of peoples¹²¹. Appointed in 1900 as professor at the Faculty of Letters in Bucharest in the first geography department established in Romania, Simion Mehedinți became, in this capacity, a guiding spirit of a first generation of intellectuals interested in the study of geopolitics.

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¹²¹ ***, „Criteriul universalității istoriei cu cel al organicității geopolitice și geo-etnologice a popoarelor, în concepția geografului Simion Mehedinți (1869–1962)” [“The Criterion of the Universality of History With That of the Geopolitical and Geo-ethnological Organicity of Peoples, According to the Geographer Simion Mehedinți (1869–1962)”], in *GeoPolitica*, Available at: <https://www.geopolitic.ro/2018/11/criteriul-universalitatii-istoriei-cu-cel-al-organicitatii-geopolitice-si-geo-etnologice-popoarelor-conceptia-geografului-simion-mehedinti-1869-1962/>, Accessed on September 2, 2023.

Inspired by the theses of the German school, Romanian geopolitics was in the effervescent period of 1900–1948 “geopolitics of the nation”¹²². Mehedinți’s efforts to create a new research discipline are visible both in the number and quality of those who will follow this direction of study, in the materials promoted by the professor and in the emulation around the journal *Geopolitics and Geohistory*, published in Bucharest between 1941 and 1944¹²³.

The present study aims to bring back into focus a name regarded as “the first modern theorist of geopolitics”¹²⁴, “one of the most sophisticated and self-reflective Romanian geopoliticians”¹²⁵, Ion Conea.

Recovering the universe of thought of this unjustly forgotten intellectual means, last but not least, a plea for fruitful dialogue between all those disciplines that can be found under the generous umbrella of geopolitics.

THE GEOPOLITICIAN

Ion Conea was born in Coteana commune, Ilt county, on 15 January 1902, in a peasant family. After completing primary school in his native village, at the suggestion of teachers who noticed their pupil’s potential, his parents agreed to enrol him in 1914 at the Constanța Normal School. From there, Ion Conea transferred to the “Iacob Negruzzi” boarding school in Iași, where he graduated as class leader in 1922. In the same year, he enrolled in the Faculty of Geography, being a close friend of Professor Constantin Brătescu¹²⁶. He was quickly noticed by Professor Simion Mehedinți, and in 1926 he was appointed his assistant. In 1934 he defended his doctoral thesis “Țara Loviștei” [Loviște Land], granted with the distinction “summa cum laude”. Published in 1935, this research was awarded with the Romanian Academy Prize, drawing the attention of Nicolae Iorga. Between 1933 and 1938, Ion Conea was selected Crown Prince Michael’s geography teacher at the Palatine

¹²² Diana Didă, „Orientări și curente în geopolitica românească. Geopolitica, știința integralității teritoriale românești” [“Orientations and Trends in Romanian Geopolitics. Geopolitics, the Science of Romanian Territorial Integrity”], in *Etnosfera Journal*, No. 4, 2010, p. 31.

¹²³ More about Simion Mehedinți’s legacy in establishing geopolitics as a science in Romania in Marius Cristian Neacșu, *Simion Mehedinți și geopolitica românească [Simion Mehedinți and Romanian Geopolitics]*, Bucharest, CD Press, 2018.

¹²⁴ Marius Neacșu, „Ideile lui Ion Conea asupra geopoliticii” [“Ion Conea’s Ideas on Geopolitics”], in *Terra*, L, No. 1–2, Bucharest, 2019, p. 60.

¹²⁵ Călin Cotoi, *Primordialism cultural și geopolitică românească interbelică [Cultural Primordialism and Interwar Romanian Geopolitics]*, Bucharest, Little Wallachia Publishing, 2006, p. 183.

¹²⁶ Constantin Brătescu (1882–1945), geographer, teacher, corresponding member of the Romanian Academy. Assistant to Professor Simion Mehedinți’s geography department, professor of geography at the Normal School in Constanța, and from 1930 dean of the Faculty of Sciences in Chernivtsi 1938 he was entrusted with the direction of the geography department at the University of Bucharest. He was a patron of Ion Conea, guiding him towards the study of geography.

School¹²⁷. From this period also dates the professional approach to the sociological school of Dimitrie Gusti. He participated in three monographic campaigns (Runcu, Șanț, Clopotiva). He coordinated the volume *Clopotiva, un sat din Hațeg [Clopotiva, a village in Hațeg]*, published in 1940. He was active in the group around the magazine *Rânduiala*¹²⁸. From 1941 to 1944 he was a member of the editorial board of the journal *Geopolitica and Geohistory. Romanian magazine for South-East Europe*, together with such prominent Romanian intellectuals as Gheorghe I. Brătianu, Sabin Manuilă, Mircea Vulcănescu, Anton Golopenția.

Between 1937 and 1939, Ion Conea was cultural delegate/attaché to the Romanian Embassy in Berlin. In 1944, together with Mircea Vulcănescu, Colonel Gabriel Gheorghiu and Anton Golopenția, he founded the “Initiative Committee for the excavation of the Dacian fortresses in the Sebeș Mountains”.

After 1948 he was dismissed from his post (blaming his past as King Michael's geography professor and the nationalist approaches of his published research) and his studies were indexed, geopolitics being considered a fascist science. Following the interventions of Vintilă M. Mihăilescu¹²⁹, in 1952 he was recalled as researcher until 1957, when he was again forced to leave the Institute of Geographical Research. He was reinstated a year later at the lowest step of a research post. In 1962 he founded the Toponymy Circle at the Institute. In 1969 he was head of the sector of Population and Settlement Geography, Toponymy and Historical Geography. He retired in 1972. In the spring of 1974, he died in Bucharest and was buried in his native village¹³⁰.

After years of oblivion, Ion Conea's legacy began to be revisited especially after 1989, although the scholar still lacks a published monograph¹³¹.

THE HISTORIAN

In the archive of the David Prodan Memorial Museum of the University Cultural Heritage Department of the Babeș-Bolyai University there are some letters from 1965–1971 addressed by Ion Conea to the historian David Prodan. The personal

¹²⁷ This unique teaching experience formed the basis of the volume Ion Conea, *Cum învăța a-și cunoaște țara Măria Sa Mihai [How His Royal Highness Michael Learned to Know His Country]*, Bucharest, Romanian Book, 1936.

¹²⁸ Cătălina Cârstea, „Ion Conea, reprezentant al intelectualității românești din secolul al XX-lea” [“Ion Conea, a Representative of the 20th Century Romanian Intelligentsia”], in *Milcovia*, IX, No. 17, 2013, p. 106.

¹²⁹ Vintilă M. Mihăilescu (1890–1978), cultural anthropologist, geographer, member of the Romanian Academy since 1974.

¹³⁰ Ion Conea's biographical excursus was recovered from Cătălina Cârstea's PhD thesis, *Semnificația operei lui Ion Conea pentru cercetarea geografică românească [The Significance of Ion Conea's Work for Romanian Geographical Research]*, attended at the Faculty of Geography of the University of Bucharest, 2012.

¹³¹ In this respect, Cătălina Cârstea's doctoral thesis, referred to above, is worthy of note.

documents belonging to the sender are extremely limited, as most of Conea's personal archive was irreparably damaged by the 1977 earthquake, and part of it (letters, unpublished books, studies, etc.) was deliberately destroyed by Ion Conea himself¹³². In these circumstances, these testimonies, despite their easy and friendly air, become valuable, constituting a small piece in an effort to recover the human and intellectual profile of the scholar Ion Conea.

Perhaps the existence of this epistolary exchange can be explained by Conea's constant interest in the dialogue between geography and history throughout his adventure of geopolitical knowledge of the Romanian space. The man who in 1942 was assistant to Gh. Brătianu¹³³, has always remained attached to the belief that without historical perspective there can be no comprehensive analysis of Romanian realities.

Considered the greatest Transylvanian historian of the 20th century, David Prodan was a name not to be missed by any researcher passionate about Romanian ethnogenesis, population shifts from north to south of the Carpathians and a number of other social history topics.

In fact, ever since the appearance of his first studies, David Prodan had been frequented by famous Romanian sociologists, interested in supporting their investigations with the historical framework he provided. In 1949 David Prodan was approached by Anton Golopenția¹³⁴ as follows:

“Dear Professor, Mr. Chinezu mentioned to me last winter your new work ‘Supplex Libellus Valachorum’. I looked for it in the bookshops, and not having found it repeatedly, I came to believe that I had misunderstood what I had heard and that it must have been a manuscript. From the review printed in the last issue of the Studies, I learned that the work has nevertheless appeared.

If it is possible, please send me a copy. I read with interest ‘The Theory of the Immigration of the Romanians in the 18th century’. I am working on a history of the evolution of the population of Romanian countries, and I would be pleased to read your description of Transylvania during the Josephine Conscriptio¹³⁵.”

¹³² Cătălina Cârstea's testimony.

¹³³ Cătălina Cârstea, „Ion Conea, reprezentant al intelectualității românești din secolul al XX-lea” [“Ion Conea, a Representative of the 20th Century Romanian Intelligentsia”], in *Milcovia*, IX, No. 17, 2013, p. 107.

¹³⁴ For the profile and the activity of this sociologist see: Radu Baltasiu, *Anton Golopenția. Crestomație [Anton Golopenția. Chrestomaty]*, Bucharest, Oscar Print Publishing, 2023.

¹³⁵ „Stimate Domnule Profesor, Dl. Chinezu mi-a pomenit iarna trecută lucrarea Dv nouă «Supplex Libellus Valachorum». Am căutat-o prin librării și negăsindu-o în repetate rânduri, am ajuns să cred că nu voi fi înțeles bine cele auzite și că va fi fiind vorba de un manuscris. Din recenzia tipărită în ultimul număr al Studiilor am aflat că lucrarea a apărut totuși.

Dacă lucrul e cu puțință, vă rog să-mi trimiteți un exemplar. Am cetit cu interes «Teoria imigrației Românilor în veacul al XVIII-lea». Lucrez la o istorie a evoluției populației țărilor românești și mi-ar face plăcere să citesc din descrierea Dv. a Transilvaniei din vremea conscripției josefine.”, From the archive of David Prodan Memorial Museum.

Traian Herseni, another representative of the sociological school in Bucharest, wrote to the historian from Cluj in 1978:

“Fortunately, I have most of your works of interest to me, and, in addition, I have read them with much benefit and used them whenever necessary. In my opinion, sociology is not possible without history, especially economic and social history, so your writings are of great value, not only for historians, but for sociologists. I have been working for several years on a book on ‘Romanian Folk Culture’ – which I hope to finish, in spite of my ‘relatively’ advanced age – and you can imagine how much I need historical data, a scientific clarification of the ‘historical framework’ in which and under whose influence the peasantry developed, and the ‘ethnographic’ and ‘folkloric’ phenomena related to it appeared. I am therefore looking forward with great interest to your new works”¹³⁶.

The same returned in 1979:

“I have received ‘Răscoala lui Horea’ [‘Horea’s Rebellion’] – an important work for all social-human sciences – and I thank you very much. It will be of great use to me in my work on the sociology of the peasantry and Romanian popular culture”¹³⁷.

Therefore, we are in a period when the openness of sociologists towards historical research was intense, categorically summed up by Traian Herseni “sociology is not possible without history”.

It is against this background that the rapprochement between Ion Conea and David Prodan is consummated. However, in order to better understand the background to this meeting, a brief biographical sketch of the historian from Cluj is necessary.

David Prodan was born on 13 March 1902 in the village of Cioara, today Săliște, Alba County, in a peasant family – an important biographical detail for the later historian’s thematic choices. After his first school classes in his native village, David Prodan attended the gymnasium in Sebeș and later the Kún College in Orăștie. In the autumn of 1921, the young scholar from a family with few material possibilities was admitted to the Faculty of Letters, Romanian-history department of the King Ferdinand I University. His teachers were the emblematic generation of the inter-war Cluj university: Sextil Pușcariu, Gheorghe Bogdan Duică, Vasile Bogrea, Alexandru Lapedatu, Ioan Lupaș, Silviu Dragomir, Ioan Ursu (the latter is mentioned as having been decisive in guiding him towards universal history), Virgil Bărbat. After graduating, David Prodan enrolled in doctoral courses under the supervision of Professor Ioan Lupaș.

¹³⁶ „Din fericire am mai toate lucrările dv. de interes pentru mine, și, în plus, le-am citit cu mult folos și le-am utilizat ori de câte ori a fost cazul. După mine, sociologia nu este posibilă fără istorie, în special, istoria economică și socială, așa încât scrierile dv. sunt de mare preț, nu numai pentru istorici, ci pentru sociologi. Eu lucrez de mai mulți ani la o carte despre «Cultura poporană românească» – pe care sper să o fac, cu toată vârsta mea «relativ» înaintată – și vă imaginați câtă nevoie am de datele istoriei, de o precizare științifică a «cadrelor istorice» în care și sub influența cărora s-a dezvoltat țărănimea și au apărut fenomenele «etnografice» și «folclorice» legate de ea. Aștept deci cu mare interes noile dv. lucrări.”, in *Ibidem*.

¹³⁷ Același revenea și în 1979: „Am primit «Răscoala lui Horea» – lucrare importantă pentru toate științele social-umane – și vă mulțumesc foarte mult. Îmi va fi de mare folos în lucrările mele de sociologie a țărânilor și a culturii poporane românești.”, in *Ibidem*.

In 1937 he obtained his doctorate in History with a thesis on *Răscoala lui Horea în comitatele Cluj și Turda [Horea's rebellion in Cluj and Turda counties]*, published a year later. Employed as archivist at the State Archives, Cluj branch, he moved in 1937 as librarian-archivist at the Central University Library in Cluj. In September 1940, after the Vienna dictatorship, he fled to Sibiu with most of the teaching and auxiliary staff of the Cluj university. He returned to Cluj in 1945. Only a year earlier, in 1944, appeared his book *Teoria imigrației românilor din Principatele române în Transilvania în secolul al XVII-lea [The Theory of the Immigration of Romanians from the Romanian Principalities to Transylvania in the 17th century]*. In 1948 he published *Supplex Libellus Valachorum*, a remarkable historical investigation, considered one of the most reprinted book by a Romanian historian (it has been published 6 times in Romanian, once in English and German). This book was a decisive factor in his admission to the Romanian Academy and, subsequently, in his appointment to the chair of Modern History at the Faculty of History and to head the Medieval History section of the George Barițiu Institute of History.

In a context of considerable political pressure on historians and historical writing in the 1950s, David Prodan was accused of reactionary, nationalistic attitudes, and it was suggested that he was no longer wanted either in the professoriate or in research. At first, he retired due to illness and then, not yet 60, he retired officially. From this period date the volumes: *Iobăgia în Transilvania [The Idleness in Transylvania]* (I–III), *Încă un Supplex Libellus Valachorum – 1804 [Another Supplex Libellus Valachorum – 1804]*, *Urbariile Țării Făgărașului [The Urbariile of Făgăraș County]* (I–II), *Problema iobăgiei în Transilvania 1700 – 1848 [The problem of serfdom in Transylvania 1700 – 1848]*, *Transilvania și iar Transilvania [Transylvania and Transylvania again]* and *Răscoala lui Horea [Horea's Rebellion]* (I–II). This last book is the masterpiece of Prodanian creation, a necessary reference point for any Transylvanian history of the 18th century. David Prodan was thus established as the historian of social life par excellence.

The value of David Prodan's contributions in the field of historical research has been confirmed not only on a national level (by the awards he received and by his admission to the Romanian Academy), but also internationally (in 1986 he was invited to become a member of the Association of American Historians, a prestigious forum that includes leading names in world historiography)¹³⁸.

Intertwining in the course of a lifetime with almost everything that meant the cultural infrastructure of the city of Cluj (University, Institute of History, University Library, State Archives, Romanian Academy), David Prodan has remained to this day a distinct personality of the Transylvanian cultural environment of the second half of the twentieth century, a destiny that, although forced to create in complicated times, managed to find refuges through which to survive morally and professionally.

¹³⁸ David Prodan's biographical excursus after the volume David Prodan, *Memorii [Memoirs]*, text edited and annotated by Aurel Răduțiu, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing, 1993.

THE ENCOUNTER

When viewed in the mirror, the two intellectual destinies contain certain commonalities, certain points of intersection. Born in the same year, they both come from a peasant background, not only keeping with them certain rural nostalgia, but also using the village as an object of research. Both Ion Conea and David Prodan grew up in the cultural environment of the interwar period and were formed around the elite of the field in which they would later work. For the two thinkers, 1940 was a watershed year, as their writing took on militant overtones and their works engaged in polemics with the Hungarian historiography that was jubilant about the new borders. For an intellectual like Ion Conea, who thus theorised the discipline to which he enthusiastically devoted himself, “Geopolitics is (...) the science of the pressures between states”¹³⁹, 1940 ushered in a landscape that could not have been more favourable to his research.

In 1944, from the refuge to which the Vienna Dictatorship had forced him, David Prodan published *Teoria imigrației românilor din Principatele române în Transilvania în veacul al XVIII-lea* [*The theory of the immigration of Romanians from the Romanian Principalities to Transylvania in the 18th century*], an answer to the Hungarian historians who used to explain the Romanian demographic superiority in Transylvania by the flow of population from south of the Carpathians. Between 1940 and 1944, Ion Conea also published a series of studies on Transylvania in the journal *Geopolitică și Geoistorie* [*Geopolitics and Geohistory*], which became a “focal point” of his geopolitical thinking, especially against the background of Hungarian revisionism¹⁴⁰.

In Conea’s view, Transylvania was predestined to be an organic land:

“Transylvania (you can find it out from the first geopolitical treatise that will fall before your eyes) is destined from the beginning of the world to be a country core, as we see it in Great-Romania and not a marginal, secondary piece, as it was – and would be! – in a Great-Hungary”¹⁴¹.

Conea goes on to describe the geopolitical profile of Transylvania:

“Transylvania (...) has been like a house of spring for the Romanian people in the course of history: it has been its (therefore permanent) bad weather home, while the highlands have offered such conditions only on certain restricted portions, especially those clothed in forest;

¹³⁹ Ion Conea, *Geopolitică, o știință nouă* [*Geopolitics, A New Science*], Bucharest, Romanian Social Institute, 1938, p. 29.

¹⁴⁰ Marius Neacșu, „Ideile lui Ion Conea asupra geopoliticii” [“Ion Conea’s Ideas on Geopolitics”], in *Terra*, L, No. 1–2, Bucharest, 2019, p. 56.

¹⁴¹ „Transilvania (o poți afla din cel dintâi tratat de geopolitică care-ți va cădea sub privire) e sortită de la începutul lumii să fie sâmbure de țară, cum o vedem că e în România-Mare – și nu piesă de margine, secundară, cum a fost – și ar fi! – într-o Ungarie-Mare”, in Ion Conea, „Transilvania, inimă a pământului românesc” [“Transylvania, the heart of Romanian land”], in *Journal of Geopolitics and Geohistory*, Year. I, No. 1, 1941, pp. 18–34.

There is, therefore, an obvious truth in the observation that, in general throughout Romanian history, the hive-country, the country of ethnic dew around, has been Transylvania together with its belt of mountains, hills, depressions¹⁴².

In the aforementioned study signed by David Prodan in 1944 he concluded as follows:

“The Romanians in Transylvania emigrate more than they immigrate. In any case, an inverse theory [than that of the Hungarian historiography, n. n.], with the known material, would be much easier to support and would have, by all signs, more chances of approaching the historical truth¹⁴³.

And in his historical testament, the same David Prodan wrote:

“Romanian people, we represent the Eastern Romanity, the Dacoromanism, which starts from Transylvania, the root of the Romanian people, which radiates from here by spreading out in both directions, gradually, historically, encompassing the whole extent of the Romanian space (...)”¹⁴⁴.

As can be seen, the conclusions of the two intellectuals on the question of the Romanian population in Transylvania and Transylvanian primordialism coincide perfectly.

For both Ion Conea and David Prodan, the establishment of communism meant the confrontation with an ideology that was contrary to historical, geographical, or geopolitical truth. Although an intellectual with left-wing sympathies since the interwar period, David Prodan also had a problem adapting to the demands of the new system, confessing in his memoirs:

“In 1953 I was declared ‘dangerous to the education of youth’ (incriminated especially by the way I addressed young researchers, urging them to always seek historical truth, the only lasting one, regardless of the conjuncture, of vicissitudes) and I was changed to a new chair, I had to start from the beginning. It was not long before I lost my new chair, and as a pensioner I was given neither the title of ‘consultant’ nor doctorates. I couldn’t even enjoy the benefits, they were

¹⁴² „Transilvania (...) a fost ca o casă de izbuc pentru poporul românesc în decursul istoriei: a fost casa de vreme rea (deci permanentă) a lui, în timp ce șesul i-a oferit astfel de condițiuni numai pe anumite porțiuni restrânse, mai ales cele îmbrăcate în pădure;

Este, prin urmare, un adevăr evident în constatarea că, în genere în tot cursul istoriei românești, țara-stup, țara de roire etnică în jur, a fost Transilvania împreună cu centura ei de munți, dealuri, depresiuni.”, in Ion Conea, “Tota Transilvania Ad Nos Venit”, in *Geopolitica și Geoistoria [Geopolitics and Geo-history]*, II, 1942, pp. 14–15.

¹⁴³ „Românii din Transilvania mai mult emigrează, decât imigrează. În tot cazul, o teorie inversă [decât cea a istoriografiei maghiare, n.n.], cu materialul cunoscut, ar fi mult mai ușor de susținut și ar avea, după toate semnele mai mulți sorți de a apropia adevărul istoric”, in David Prodan, *Teoria imigrației românilor din Principatele române în Transilvania în secolul al XVII-lea [The Theory of The Immigration of Romanians From the Romanian Principalities to Transylvania in the 17th century]*, Romanian Book, 1944, Sibiu, p. 165.

¹⁴⁴ „Popor român, reprezentăm romanitatea de Răsărit, dacoromânismul, care pornește din Transilvania, rădăcină a poporului român, care iradiază de aici prin descălecarea în ambele sensuri, cuprinzând treptat, istoric, toată întinderea spațiului românesc (...)”, in David Prodan, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 145.

jeopardizing their situation, they were bypassing me, and I didn't insist on it either. I resigned myself to my own two hands"¹⁴⁵.

Having escaped from political prison, Ion Conea will have to endure the torment of the new situation. His academic destiny, so promisingly outlined before 1948, the theoretical premises from which he set out to build a global and national geopolitical system, the effervescence of his published research, his publishing activity – all were to crumble during the years of the Red dictatorship¹⁴⁶. Ion Conea is also removed from the chair, like David Prodan, and accused of not being able to participate in the communist education of students¹⁴⁷.

In the period of the exchange between Ion Conea and David Prodan, both are marginalized intellectuals who continue to invest all their energy in their most consistent existential refuge, their work.

The tone of Ion Conea's letters to David Prodan is one of admiration and affection, suggested by the introductory phrases "beloved", "esteemed", "dear", and the concluding words "many warm wishes for the health of the historian who writes soberly and with dignity at such a high level".

The first preserved letter dates from 19 May 1965 and comes in response to the study written by *David Prodan* "Boieri și vecini în Țara Făgărașului în sec. XVI–XVII" ["Landlords and neighbours in Țara Făgărașului in the 16th century. XVI–XVII"], published in 1963 in the Yearbook of the Institute of History in Cluj. From the lines sent, the same interest of Conea, a real focal point of his research, is apparent, that of determining the matrix space of formation of the Romanian people:

"This country [of Olt, n.n.] – and with that of Hațeg and with Oltenia under the mountains and with the Arieș Basin and with – still – the Argeș – Muscel area – here is the original territorial basis of the Romanians (proto – and post – proto), say, north Danube"¹⁴⁸.

This idea of Olt County as the "original territorial foundation of the Romanians" will be repeated in the correspondence with the historian from Cluj:

"What do we do with Olt County? Don't we attach it to the Romanian Country, as it was originally an integral part of it?"; "This holy Olt Country – I am afraid that it

¹⁴⁵ „În 1953 am fost declarat „primejdios pentru educația tineretului” (incriminat mai ales de felul cum m-am adresat tinerilor cercetători, îndemnându-i să caute mereu adevărul istoric, singurul durabil, indiferent de conjunctură, de vicisitudini) și mi s-a schimbat catedra, a trebuit să o iau de la început. Nu peste mult timp am pierdut și noua catedră, iar ca pensionar nu mi s-au dat nici titlu de «consultant», nici doctorate. Ba nici de ajutoare nu m-am putut bucura, își primejduiau situația, mă ocoleau și în această situație nici eu n-am insistat. M-am resemnat la ale mele două mâini”, in *Ibidem*, p. 106.

¹⁴⁶ Marius Neacșu, „Ideile lui Ion Conea asupra geopoliticii” [“Ion Conea's Ideas on Geopolitics”], in *Terra*, L, No. 1–2, Bucharest, 2019, p. 42.

¹⁴⁷ Cătălina Cârstea, „Ion Conea, reprezentant al intelectualității românești din secolul al XX-lea” [“Ion Conea, a Representative of the 20th Century Romanian Intelligentsia”], in *Milcovia*, IX, No. 17, 2013, p. 97.

¹⁴⁸ „Țara aceasta [a Oltului, n.n.] – și cu cea a Hațegului și cu Oltenia de sub munte și cu Bazinul Arieșului și cu – încă – zona Argeș-Muscel – iată temeiul teritorial originar al românilor (proto – și postproto) al românilor, zic, nord-dunăreni”, in Ion Conea's letter to David Prodan, May 19, 1965. The Archive of David Prodan Memorial Museum.

carries, however, in its holy historical womb, the original germ of the holy Romanian Country beyond (the Carpathians)”¹⁴⁹.

In another letter, the same Conea confessed to the historian from Cluj that he was writing a study on “the Moțesc seed of the nation”¹⁵⁰. Again, the same idea of the Romanian omphalos which can be considered one of the central themes of investigation for Ion Conea.

As the letters sent show, David Prodan was a prestigious and reliable referent for the works written by Ion Conea

“(…) I would like to inform you that soon (in two weeks) I will hand over the manuscript of a work: The autochthonous population of Dacia during the migration period – with the request to give it to you and – I believe – to Professor Petrovici for reference. It is not necessary to be either a geographer or a toponymist specialist – to be able to give your opinion, by reading it, on the work”¹⁵¹.

In his relationship with David Prodan, despite the reverence that Ion Conea showed to the historian, he did not confine himself to the role of a passive admirer, on the contrary, he was always tempted to engage in a provocative dialogue with the master:

“I hear that in the issue that is expected (must) appear daily on the market of the so-called ‘Revue roumaine d’histoire’ is an article *Toponymie et histoire* by Prof. Emil Petrovici, which I can’t wait to read and to tell you (my) opinion”¹⁵².

The letters signed by Ion Conea also testify to the exigency of this scholar; they are always about a postponed work, about a research that needs to be redone, reworked. In spite of his illness, Ion Conea shows an enormous willingness to work on his own text to the high standards he sets for himself:

“I was a little late with the manuscript, but it’s coming. I’m working on cleaning it of impurities, after which I’ll type it up again, quickly, and send it off, by post (...); Please don’t take my tardiness personally and don’t ever imagine that (...) I’ll die without handing over the manuscript of my work to you for proofreading (that’s what happens to over – scrupulous people: they delay, delay (...) until they (...) get sick)”¹⁵³.

¹⁴⁹ „Ce facem cu Țara Oltului? Nu o atașăm la Țara Românească, ca fiind fost, inițial, parte integrantă a acesteia?”; „Această sfântă Țară a Oltului – tare mi-e teamă că poartă, totuși, în sfântul ei pânțec istoric, *germenele* inițial al sfintei Țări Românești de dincoace (de Carpați).”, in Ion Conea’s letter to David Prodan, May 13, 1971. The Archive of David Prodan Memorial Museum.

¹⁵⁰ „*sâmburele* moțesc al nației”, in Ion Conea’s letter to David Prodan, May 19, 1965. The Archive of David Prodan Memorial Museum.

¹⁵¹ „(...) vreau să vă anunț că pe curând (peste două săptămâni) voi preda manuscrisul unei lucrări: Populația autohtonă din Dacia în perioada migrațiilor – cu rugămintea să vi se dea, pentru referare, dumneavoastră, și – cred – profesorului Petrovici. Nu e nevoie ca cineva să fie nici geograf și nici toponimist specialist – ca să-și poată da părerea, citind-o, asupra lucrării.”, in *Ibidem*.

¹⁵² „Aud că în numărul care e așteptat (trebuie) să apară din zi în zi pe piață al numitei «Revue roumaine d’histoire» este un articol Toponimie et histoire al prof. Emil Petrovici, pe care abia aștept să-l citesc și să vă comunic, asupra-i, părerea (mea).”, in *Ibidem*.

¹⁵³ „Am cam întârziat cu manuscrisul, dar *vine*. Lucrez la curățirea lui de impurități, după care-l voi bate iar la mașină, repede, și-i voi da drumul, *pe poștă* [...]; Te rog să nu-mi iei întârzierea în nume de rău și nici să-ți închipui vreodată că ...voi muri fără să-ți predau manuscrisul lucrării pentru a refera asupra-i (așa pățesc prea-scrupuloșii: întârzie, întârzie...până se...îmbolnăvesc).”, in Ion Conea’s letter to David Prodan, March 14, 1968. The Historical National Archives, Cluj, Fund David Prodan, 415.

Not least, Ion Conea shows so much attention to his signed texts and pays so much attention to them also because he is aware of the value of his own work:

“I hope, however, that if the gods give me days, I will be able to adjust them – improve them – at least from the form they are now – and (...) may go to the holy press, for of one thing let us be (forgive my lack of modesty) sure: even as they are now, they would please those who would bend over them”¹⁵⁴.

In reconstructing this dialogue between the geographer and the historian, of course, a rounded interpretation could only be given if the other voice, that of David Prodan, could be recovered. As I said at the beginning, unfortunately, the fate of the Ion Conea archive does not allow such an outcome.

Although based on some epistolary fragments, twilights of an intellectual friendship, our text is a necessary point of reflection on two destinies of Romanian scholars twisted by a complicated political and cultural context. As a subsidiary, it is also a plea for investigating the legacy left by the two thinkers.

*

“Dear and esteemed (and, once again:) beloved (that is, again, dear!) Mr. Prodan,

I am writing this, *i.e.*, by confusing the texture of the title, to express my heavy (at heart) regret that I could not see you, in Cluj. The causes are many (that is, actually, two) and I won’t go into them here. Sincerely, from my heart, I repeat I am very sorry, and I ask for forgiveness. I will come to Cluj again, hopefully soon, and then we will surely see each other, and you will hear, exposed, the causes for which I still could not finish my historical ‘writing’. But I hope that, if the gods give me days, I will be able to adjust – improve – at least from the form it is in now – and (...) they can go to the holy press, because of one thing let us be (forgive my lack of modesty) sure: even as they are now, they would please those who would bend over them.

By the way: this holy Olt Country – I am afraid that it carries, however, in its holy historical womb, the original germ of the holy Romanian Country beyond (the Carpathians). I’ll tell you what I mean (by that).

I ask Mrs. Gina Tib. Morariu to receive my warm thanks for having handed this letter to her, and I greet you, dear academicus, with love,
Ion Conea”¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵⁴ „Sper însă că, dacă zeii îmi vor da zile, le voi putea ajusta – îmbunătăți – măcar din forma în care se află acum – și ... să poată merge la sfânta tiparniță, pentru că de un lucru să fim (iartă-mi lipsa de modestie) siguri: chiar așa cum sunt acum, ar plăcea celor ce s-ar apleca asupra-le.”, in Ion Conea’s letter to David Prodan, May 13, 1971. The Archive of David Prodan Memorial Museum.

¹⁵⁵ „Scumpe și stimată (și, încă o dată:) iubite (adică, iar scumpe!)

Domnule Prodan,

Scriu așa, adică încercând textura titlului, ca să-mi exprim greaua mea (la inimă) părere de rău că nu te-am putut vedea, la Cluj. Cauzele sunt mai multe (adică, de fapt, două) și nu mă apuc să le expun aici. Sincer, din inimă adică, repet: regret enorm și cer iertare. Lasă că o să mai vin odată la Cluj, *sper că în curând**, și atunci sigur ne vom vedea și vei asculta, expuse, cauzele pentru care încă n-am putut «găta» «scrierea» mea istorică. Sper însă că, dacă zeii îmi vor da zile, le voi putea ajusta – îmbunătăți – măcar din forma în care se află acum – și ... să poată merge la sfânta tiparniță, pentru că de un lucru să fim (iartă-mi lipsa de modestie) siguri: chiar așa cum sunt acum, ar plăcea celor ce s-ar apleca asupra-le.

*

“You must have forgotten me, dear Professor D. Prodan!

But nothing has happened other than the sad fact that, for objective reasons, I have not been able to finish the work so far. But that will be done this autumn – and I will be happy when I send the manuscript from the post office (or hand it directly to the bin) to the person to whom I am grateful for his promise to read it.

Yours, with the most special sentiments,

Ion Conea

Constanta, 31/VIII/966”¹⁵⁶.

*

“Dear Comrade, Prodan,

I’m a little late with the manuscript, but here it comes. I’m working on cleaning it of impurities, then I’ll type it up again, quickly, and send it off, by post, to 41 Republicii Street (unless you happen to be in Bucharest). So: my geographical penetration into the history of our great people – is coming.

I wish you good health,

Ion Conea

Buc. 9.IX.65”¹⁵⁷.

A propos: Această sfântă Țară a Oltului – tare mi-e teamă că poartă, totuși, în sfântul ei pânțec istoric, *germenele* inițial al sfintei Țări Românești de dincoace (de Carpați). O să-ți spun ce vreau să înțeleg (prin asta).

O rog pe Doamna Gina Tib. Morariu să primească mulțumiri calde pentru a-și fi înmânat această scrisoare, iar pe dumneata, scumpule academicus, te salut cu dragoste,

Ion Conea

13.V. 71

Buc.

Ion Conea,

Str. Alex Sahia 1

Sectorul 2, București.”, in David Prodan Archive, David Prodan Memorial Museum.

¹⁵⁶ „Probabil că ați uitat de mine, scumpe profesor D. Prodan!

Nu s-a întâmplat însă nimic altceva decât tristul fapt că, din cauze obiective, n-am putut finisa, până acum, lucrarea. Lucru care, însă, se va face în toamna asta – și voi fi fericit când voi expedia de la poștă (sau voi înmâna direct, la coș) manuscrisul, către cel căruia-i sunt recunoscător că mi-a promis să-l citească.

Al dumneavoastră, cu sentimentele cele mai deosebite,

Ion Conea

Constanța, 31/VIII/966.”, in *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁷ „Stimate și scumpe tovarășe Prodan,

Am cam întârziat cu manuscrisul, dar *vine*. Lucrez la curățirea lui de impurități, după care-l voi bate iar la mașină, repede, și-i voi da drumul, *pe poștă*, spre str. Republicii 41 (afară numai dacă nu vă veți nimeri atunci prin București). Așa dar: geografica mea *penetrație* în istoria marelui nostru popor – *vine*.

Vă doresc multă sănătate,

*

“Dear and beloved Professor Prodan,

I had hoped to come to Cluj myself and therefore thought it was not necessary to reply in writing to the letter for which (the content of which) I would like to thank you warmly and sincerely (albeit late, as I said). I will come back only towards the end of September, after I have revised – and reworked – my manuscript once again. Until then I’ll do a month’s fieldwork for my Institute – and a month’s rest for myself (for I am exhausted: not from this work, but from others – and older – and I want, if I can, to replenish my resources). Very good – and very good – what you say: that’s how I want the report to be, even if I have to redo (or almost redo) the work afterwards.

With warm sympathy and special appreciation – from before we met (and talked) at the (...).

Ion Conea,

Buc. 1965 Jul. 7

PS. I hear that in the issue that is expected (must) appear every day on the market of the so-called ‘Revue roumaine d’histoire’ there is an article *Toponymie et histoire* by Prof. Emil Petrovici, which I am looking forward to read and to tell you (my) opinion about it.

I.C.”¹⁵⁸.

*

“Dear Professor D. Prodan,

I said ‘highly esteemed’ having in mind the way the last paper is written about the Olt Country boyars. This country – and with that of Hațeg and with Oltenia under the mountains and with the Arieș Basin and with – still – the Argeș – Muscle area – here is the original territorial basis of the Romanians (proto – and post – proto) of the Romanians, I say, north of the Danube.

Ion Conea

Buc. 9.IX.65”, in *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁸ „Stimate și iubite profesor Prodan,

Am sperat să vin eu pe la Cluj și de aceea am crezut că nu e cazul să mai răspund în scris la scrisoarea pentru care (conținutul căreia) țin să vă mulțumesc călduros și sincer (deși târziu, cum spusei). Voi veni abea pe la sfârșitul lui septembrie, după ce-mi voi fi revizuit încă o dată – și refăcut, pe alocuri – manuscrisul. Până atunci voi face o lună de teren pentru Institutul meu – și una lună de odihnă pentru mine (că sunt extenuat: nu din cauza lucrării acestea, ci din altele – și mai de demult – și vreau, dacă pot, să-mi refac re-sursele). Foarte bine – și foarte bun – ce spuneți: așa vreau și eu să fie referatul, chiar dacă va mai trebui, după aceea, să refac *iar* (sau aproape refac), – lucrarea.

Cu simpatie caldă și prețuirea deosebită – de dinainte de a ne fi cunoscut (și vorbit) la COȘ.

Ion Conea,

Buc. 1965 iul. 7

PS. Aud că în numărul care e așteptat (trebuie) să apară din zi în zi pe piață al numitei «Revue roumaine d’histoire» este un articol *Toponymie et histoire* al prof. Emil Petrovici, pe care abia aștept să-l citesc și să vă comunic, asupra-i, părerea (mea).

I.C.”, in *Ibidem*.

It's been a long time since you did me the honour of sending me your paper and I feel guilty for not having written to you until now. But I believe that you are primarily to blame for not replying at all to the telegraphed 'Happy Birthday' that I sent you from Bucharest for the 'first year' of 1960. I wondered why you didn't reply. But that's all in the past.

Now, I would like to inform you that soon (in two weeks) I will hand in the manuscript of a work: The autochthonous population of Dacia in the period of migrations – with the request to give it to you and – I believe – to Professor Petrovici for reference. It is not necessary to be either a geographer or a toponymist specialist – to be able to give your opinion, by reading it, on the work. In it, I also deal with the Moțesc¹⁵⁹ core of the nation.

What more can I say? If, when you come to Buc[harest], you find the time to call me on the phone to exchange a few words – I would be particularly happy.

I end, with many warm wishes of health to the historian who writes soberly and with dignity at such a high level.

Ion Conea,

Buc. 19.5.965¹⁶⁰.

*

“The delay is explained, firstly, by the fact that I kept wanting to come to Cluj myself for some business – and, secondly, by the (other) fact that I've been a bit ill (and still am). Please don't take my delay as a bad thing and don't ever imagine that (...) I will die without handing over the manuscript of the work to you for proofreading (that's what happens to the too-scrupulous: delay, delay.... until they... get sick).

¹⁵⁹ A community living in the region of Apuseni Mountains.

¹⁶⁰ „Mult stimat profesor D. Prodan,

Am spus «Mult stimat» din gândul sau și pentru cum e scrisă ultima lucrare despre boierii cei din Țara Oltului. Țara aceasta – și cu cea a Hațegului și cu Oltenia de sub munte și cu Bazinul Arieșului și cu – încă – zona Argeș-Muscel – iată temeiul teritorial original al românilor (proto – și postproto) al românilor, zic, nord-dunăreni.

E mult de când mi-ați făcut cinstea de a-mi trimite lucrarea și *vinovat mă simt* de a nu vă fi scris până acum. De vină, însă, aș crede că sunteți, în primul rând, dumneavoastră, care nu mi-ați răspuns deloc la cei «Mulți ani» telegrafiați, pe care vi-i expediai eu din București pentru «întâiul an» 1960. M-am mirat de ce nu mi-ați fi răspuns. Dar astea au trecut.

Acum, vreau să vă anunț că pe curând (peste două săptămâni) voi preda manuscrisul unei lucrări: Populația autohtonă din Dacia în perioada migrațiilor – cu rugămintea să vi se dea, pentru referare, dumneavoastră, și – cred – profesorului Petrovici. Nu e nevoie ca cineva să fie nici geograf și nici toponimist specialist – ca să-și poată da părerea, citind-o, asupra lucrării. Mă ocup, în ea, și despre *sâmburele* moțesc al nației.

Ce să mai spun? Dacă, venind prin Buc., veți găsi timp să mă chemați și pe mine prin telefon să schimbăm vreo două vorbe, – eu aș fi deosebit de bucuros.

Termin, cu multe și calde urări de sănătate pentru istoricul care scrie sobru și demn la un nivel atât de înalt.

Ion Conea,

Buc. 19.5.965.”, in *Ibidem*.

What do we do with the Olt Country? Don't we attach it to Wallachia, as it was originally an integral part of it?
May the gods help us both.
With love,
Ion Conea.
14. III.68, Bucharest¹⁶¹.

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¹⁶¹ „Întârzierea se explică, în primul rând, prin faptul că am tot vrut să vin însumi la Cluj pentru niște treburi – și, în al doilea rând, prin faptul (altul) că am tot fost nițel bolnav (și încă mai sunt). Te rog să nu-mi iei întârzierea în nume de rău și nici să-ți închipui vreodată că... voi muri fără să-ți predau manuscrisul lucrării pentru a refera asupra-i (așa pățesc prea-scrupuloșii: întârzie, întârzie... până se... îmbolnăvesc).

Ce facem cu Țara Oltului? Nu o atașăm la Țara Românească, ca fiind fost, inițial, parte integrantă a acesteia?

Să ne ajute zeii la amândoi.

Cu dragoste,

Ion Conea”.

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THE TECHNOCRATIC DEFORMATION OF SOCIETY

Mihail Ungheanu¹⁶²

ABSTRACT

In L'illusion politique, the French sociologist Jacques Ellul describes the way the real of politics had been transformed. Politics has become pervasive in society whereby everything becomes politicized. On the other hand, politics in its proper function and sense disappears. It seems a paradox, but in reality, politics – like much everything else had been overtaken by the technical system, by the Technique, instead of real political decisions, politicians make are technical ones. They seek only efficiency. By the same token, something else is lost freedom and humanity. The perspective of a fully technocratic governance has been already described by Bertrand Russell – who was convinced that only a global one-world technocracy can save the world – a description that is terrifying and that shows the direction in which humanity is going these days.

Keywords: politics, technocracy, tyranny, freedom, totalitarianism.

THE DECEPTIVE NATURE OF PRESENT-DAY POLITICS

Are the days of real political life and democracy gone? According to the French sociologist Jacques Ellul's work, yes. The time of politics as such – and of democracy – is waning away. What is real politics? The activity to govern society, to make decisions that help society to maintain its coherence, to debate and implement values, to establish some ideals that should be followed; politics is not the administration of things, although it becomes so through technocracy. This dim view of things can be expressed using the title of one of his works – *L'illusion politique*. The vanishing of democracy (and freedom) and transformation of politics can be read from series of phenomena that may seem paradoxical at first glance: the vanishing of politics and the politicization of everything. One main fund of his is that everything has become politicized, meaning that the state has expanded its reach in all areas of life and that the people have abandoned their responsibility and left the state to bear it. Nevertheless, despite this, politics ceases to be what it was. What is this general politicization? As already explained, it is the expansion of the state in all domains of life, of regulations in each area. It is also the fact that people expect the state to do almost everything and the abandonment of people's responsibility to the state. Another feature of this predicament is the wrong impression that by taking part in political activities people are sovereign and they freely choose how to live their life and that by exercising different functions on different levels, the citizen

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assumes and exerts responsibility. Politics takes the form of a religion. Nothing can exist outside it¹⁶³.

This can be called a religion of statism, too. There are no more criteria or external instances that can evaluate politics. Only politics can judge politics. But politics is disappearing because the decisions that are made in the political life are no longer true political decisions. They are decisions of efficiency; they are technical decisions. And the state as such, in his essence is a technical enterprise. Bureaucracy in its omnipotence reveals the true essence of the State¹⁶⁴ – is a realm of technique, of the *système technicien*, no longer a realm of true and free decisions. The other domain which is also a technical one is, of course, the economic one. That the state has become the prisoner of the technical system and that it cannot impose values upon it, is exemplified by the case of China, which tried to develop itself following its own path, but failed, giving in to the demands of the technocratic development.

THE TECHNICAL SYSTEM – THE TECHNIQUE

What is le *système technicien*? Why is this important? The technique or the technical systems is the most important spiritual fact that confronts humankind in the present. It has invaded the way humankind thinks and feels and understanding it is the key to understanding the present predicament of mankind¹⁶⁵. It not only mediates between mankind and nature, but it also mediates between man and the technological environment he lives in, and between individuals; individuals are increasingly getting in touch using technical means – phone, computer – and they are using increasingly psychological technical means. The contact between the individual and humanity as such, with the wide world takes place also by employing technical means, thus establishing long-distance relationships, which are the opposite of the short-distance relationship of the traditional kind. Man lives entirely engulfed in an artificial environment. Even the behaviour changed, becomes mechanical, technicized.

The technical system or la Technique is the totality of means/ power instruments, power structure, procedures, power phenomena, and recipes of efficiency that build up a new intermediary between man and reality, an intermediary that replaces the old symbolic mediations such as religion, art, etc. Technique is not something strictly tethered to a material thing or mechanism. A short definition of it is that technique is the ensemble of the most efficacious means in a society at a certain date¹⁶⁶. Whenever there is a quest for efficient means or the most efficient means, there is technique. This very same process leads to the expansion and

¹⁶³ Jacques Ellul, *L'illusion politique [The political illusion]*, Paris, Le Table Ronde, 2004, p. 48.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 217.

¹⁶⁵ Jacques Ellul, *Sistemul tehnicist [Technical system]*, Bucharest, Sens, 2022, p. 68.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

dominance of the means over society, of reintegration and subordination of purposes, aims, and means to the means. The means determine what aims can be selected and achieved, not the other way around. When free to act, modern technique leads to decentralization, abolishing of hierarchy, and division of labour – eliminates the division between the work of execution and management work, it spares work time. It replaces human work as the main source of value. Scientific and technological innovation is producing value, replacing human work in this area. It is an open reality and develops in a non-repetitive, non-linear, polyvalent way. Technique is power, it consists of instruments of power, of phenomena and structures of power, which are structures, instruments, and phenomena of dominance¹⁶⁷.

This translates in society by the apparition and dominance of *Dienstleistungen*, the predominance of the class of technicians and experts. The source of inspiration for policies and political innovations are now technical domains and intellectual techniques spread in society. Technique is a system, meaning it is an organized whole, which subsumes and integrates all human activities in a new assemblage that is not the same thing as society. In earlier stages of human history, human activities were distinct and were loosely bonded in society. In a sense, the technique is a foreign body to society, nevertheless, a foreign body that cannot be given up. In this new aggregate, every part is under the dominance of different techniques and bound to the other techniques. It is ruled by the law of substitution of homogenous elements. One of the effects of the Technique is the process of abstractization, creating a virtual society. Every activity and phenomenon are transformed into abstractions, thereby erasing the principle of (social) reality. The map replaces reality, the non-real (consumer goods, political life) takes the place of the real through the process of broadcasting, offering some pleasant images that hide the underlying reality. The object that represents and embeds the technical system, the new quality that the Technique attained is the computer, a creation that affects the totality of human life, a creation that cuts across all domains. The computer is the junction of diverse techniques and is an embodiment of the organizational science.

The Technique is a medium, a mediation between man and everything else – even when it is an instrument or a way of organizing things. It is a complete and continuous mediation that has completely replaced older symbolic mediations. There are no other relations between man and nature save the ones Technique offers. Its mediation is total and complete. The Technique is a universe of means. It is total and exclusive, and it manifests in this way even in the relationships between individuals or groups. Here, everything becomes technicized, too. Human relationships cannot be allowed to grow naturally and spontaneously, they are no longer of experiences, tradition, symbolism, and so on. No, everything must be researched, and everything must be brought to light (psychoanalysis, group dynamics), made intelligible, and transformed into schemes that can be applied to obtain certain results¹⁶⁸.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

Everyone comes with his or her own construction of the self and is integrated with the system by a technical communion. Since it is the only mediating system between man and reality, the Technique accepts no value system. No value is imposed upon it from outside. What values one chooses, and even what wishes are predetermined by what is possible, that is by the technical system. If something is doable, let's say a car that reaches 300 km/h, then it will be done (it had been done). The public will require it. Another effect it creates in people and society is the demand for equality. The pressure of public opinion is not as decisive as people usually think. It is a preformed, pre-determined opinion, adapted, and obedient to every possibility that the Technique possesses. Another feature of the technical mediation is the fact that is sterile and sterilizes whatever it touches. It is superficial, univocal, though stable. It imposes order and clarity but without deepness. The richness of the older symbolic systems is gone, evacuated. The way people think, and feel is affected and changed in a profoundly. The relationship between Technique and man is not mediated. In the present-day world, man's consciousness and feelings are formed under the influence of the Technique, by the simple fact that man is born in this medium. Consciousness had become a mere reflex of it¹⁶⁹.

Another feature of the technicized society is the predominance of the means over the ends. The technique is, besides being an artificial environment, a search, and accumulation of means and instruments of power. A great deal of activity is dedicated to the multiplication of means, which, is another name for the quest for power, maybe the will to power for the sake of power. And if the production of objects in every domain proliferates, this is just an expression of the dominance of the Technique.

THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE SAME

Chairman Mao had the intuition that the way the former USSR went on, was not a success. If China was to go the way of massive industrialization, would have been the same. A proletariat social class would have been born out of the necessity of creating capital. The Chinese leader tried to avoid this fall. The whole concept was to accede to a stage of high technological development and industrialization without creating a proletarian class. The new Chinese way was supposed to get all the good results of Western industry and science without the unplanned negative side effects, without all the negative aspects surrounding them.

“It is about the complete and total shaping of man, of the state, of society with the help of radical new principles and methodologies. Genuine new. And this action is

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

truly a new origin. The world was starting anew. Let's make from the past a blank state. China was the first to accomplish this feat"¹⁷⁰.

Thus, China tried to introduce a new way of developing itself, different from the URSS and Western model, a third way. Two principles lay at its core. Giving up the economism, and the quest for efficiency. The thought of Mao is in this sense un "anti-economisme". In other words, the economy is neither the explanation of everything nor the target of every action (revolutionary or otherwise) of mankind. According to the view of the Chinese statesman, economic rationality is not the most important thing in the revolution. The economic imperative must be overcome in the minds and souls of mankind. The same can be said about the imperative of efficiency. The obsession focused on economics and technical efficiency had to be vanquished. The revolution should not entertain the cult of the Machine. Western technique was not to be seen as a prerequisite for attaining a communist society, happiness, and equality. China was supposed to become a great power by the sheer virtue of will, and energy. Devotion, sacrifice, etc. were deemed more important than machines, than Technique – in the form of bureaucracy or otherwise. This line of thought amounts to the deification of Mao's thought, thought that moves and changes things. Mao's thought was deemed to be creative – just like God's¹⁷¹, it moved and created things. It is efficacy in itself! All of this is because of the attempt to circumvent the whole Western history of development and expansion of the technical system.

This new faith had other requirements: the fusion of social classes, no more separation between manual labor and intellectual activity – the Western work division is thus denied: no more specialization. All the sectors of society had to go in one direction, they had to develop in balance with each other – no overproduction in agriculture and underproduction in industry, etc. The revolutionary process had to take place simultaneously in all domains of society and had to transform all the structure be it in economy or administration. Therefore, due to the refusal of the Western way, there were no concentrated industry sites, and no industry plants in cities. Instead, there were plants built on rural land, scattered all over the territory of China, using local workforce. At the same time, there was the initiative of local ingenuity, which was supposed to supplant the lack of technicians, engineers, machines, etc. Everything was decentralized and whatever successes were reported in building a machine, or something different, there was no administration at work. The initiative started from the base, a base inspired and educated according to Mao's thought. It was supposed to be a new mode of production¹⁷². A large number of people, united by an iron will were deemed to accomplish the same work as a

¹⁷⁰ "Il s'agissait d'un remodelage total de l'homme, de l'État, de la société, avec des principes et des méthodes radicalement nouveaux. Originiaux. Et c'était en vérité une origine. Une naissance nouvelle. Le monde prenait un nouveau départ. Du passé faisons table rase. La première, la Chine le réalisait", in Jacques Ellul, *Changer de révolution [Changing the revolution]*, Paris, La Table Ronde, 2015, p. 163.

¹⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 165.

¹⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 169.

machine. This view ignored that machines are not only more productive than human beings but that they accomplish another type of work that man does not.

Another invention was that of moral stimulus that had to replace the quest for gain. The hard work had to be done without getting or searching for gain or profit and without seeing it as a personal success. The money the worker gets, is just a sum of money that allows the worker to live and, thus, to work. There was no consideration of the differences between different kinds of work, they were all equally important, no hierarchy of salaries, and so on. A true socialist/communist would take the most difficult work without hoping for kind of improvement for his or her situation. From this vantage point, the intellectual work was not superior to the manual one or vice versa, no difference between peasants and workers from urban areas. Everything must become one. All this required a big mobility of the workforce, the availability of each worker to go wherever he or she was needed. Because of this, there was an attack on the family and attachment to the family. A psycho-cultural mutation (a Great Reset) had to be accomplished. Eradicating the past was a necessary step toward attaining this new psycho-cultural renovation of man. No mobility without uprooting the people. Eradication of the past is also something that a fully technocratic governance of the world would want, too¹⁷³. As Bertrand Russell stated, in the new world order run by a one-world government, one could study Shakespeare only with a special permit from the government¹⁷⁴, and most of the cultures of the past, would not be translated and made accessible in the unique tongue that would be the common language of humanity.

The Maoist attempt at a revolution inside a revolution failed. With Chou Enlai came the return of the Western way of doing things, to the dominance of economy and technocracy¹⁷⁵. The irony is that everything that was done to achieve the Chinese new way, was still a process that took place in Western Europe at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and set up the base for the textile industry! It was an unconscious repetition of something that had already taken place in Europe. The Chinese way is not new and was not a model for the future of the West. It was an image of Western Europe's past. Despite all efforts, the road led to the birth of a new proletarian class and to a technological society. After Mao's death, all the pieces necessary for this fell into place, with great success. Henceforth the main preoccupation of the Chinese leadership began to center exclusively around the topics of economic and technical development, that is efficiency. Automatization, specialization, heavy industrialization, and concertation of the workforce were now on the table. The stimulus for productive work in extra monetary gain is again approved policy. Though intellectuals were still sent into rural areas or industrial plants to work, the conviction that good work is specialized work began to gain ground again. The division of work starts to be felt again, the plants from the rural

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

¹⁷⁴ Bertrand Russell, *The Scientific Outlook*, London and New York, Routledge, 2009, p. 157.

¹⁷⁵ Jacques Ellul, *op. cit.*, 2015, p. 176.

areas are given up, just as the improvisation without tools and plan is abandoned. Complete industrial plants – plants wherein whole objects were produced – were also abandoned, and specialized plants took over. Heavy industry appears and works are beginning to be replaced by machines. Even if not explicitly stated, the principle of “only through ourselves” is given up and China starts to buy entire plants and knowledge from the capitalist countries; new commercial treaties with the USA are signed, and many industrial missions are sent around the globe to visit technical expositions, etc. Technical development is now seen as essential¹⁷⁶.

After 1979, the enterprise become the central actor of the new Chinese society, and technical development becomes the number one task, even over class struggle. There was no liberalization or freedom. The law was just an instrument of the state, used to manage the country. Agriculture ceases to be a field for social experimentation, becoming again a domain of efficiency, of producing what is necessary to sustain the Chinese people and the new technical development. And the peasants are coopted in the process of increasing the production. The days of moral stimulus are gone. The steel cage of efficiency imposes itself everywhere, even against the ideology of class struggle. Pragmatism is the rule and everything that hinders production – technique and efficiency must be fought off. Abstract egalitarianism is set aside because of diverse competencies and the difference or even opposition between intellectual and manual labour is asserted and even considered to be an objective one. The division of labour is good since it increases production and helps, thus, the progress of society¹⁷⁷.

The Maoism is gone but the planification stays. Even private property makes a comeback. This is no surprise since it was found that the private moneyed interest is the main motivation for the individual to work. This new regime is, of course, completely under the aegis of the accumulation of capital. This is a clear sign that the Chinese solution to modernization has failed. The Western ideal of increased consumption, of making less and less effort had spread throughout China. The technological system had vanquished China and conquered the hearts and minds of the Chinese people¹⁷⁸.

This third way was built upon the supremacy of thought and will. The cultural revolution was part of this new model¹⁷⁹; it expressed the will to transform human existence, habits, ways of thinking and feeling, etc. Albeit it had to transform from the ground up the society and the soul of the Chinese people, it had to end and leave place for what came afterward: bureaucracy, conformity, the primacy of economics over other aspects of society, etc. This is unavoidable when someone tries to become a modern, competitive nation.

The Chinese leadership saw what happened to the USSR which became Westernized through conformity and technicization – Marx after all is a Westerner.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 182.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 189.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 225.

¹⁷⁹ Jacques Ellul, *De la révolution aux révoltes*, Paris, La Table Ronde, 2011, p. 206.

There is no other way to build a modern army, to entertain advanced scientific research. The Cultural Revolution was partially a revolt, not a true revolution. It was a revolt against the complete and total technicization, of total rationalization and total over-organization of all sectors of life that the first stages of the Communist revolution had produced. The whole movement was planned though and one of its intents was to produce a kind of man that does not fall into the trap posed by the extension of the technical system, by the expansion of technical progress. It was a kind of askesis, an enterprise of destroying the egoism in people, of destroying a mindset of privilege, and of destroying the habitude of comfort. Therefore, intellectuals had to go and do manual work in the fields, etc. It was an attempt to recreate the human personality in the figure of the hero which is always working in the service of the community and to destroy private interest. The main drive behind it was to rekindle the dynamism of revolution, an attempt to give new life to it, to stop the process that leads to bureaucratization and stiff organization. The establishment of permanent contradiction was supposed to achieve exactly that. The basic principles of this enterprise, born from Mao's thought, were twofold: fighting off the economism and the quest for efficiency¹⁸⁰. The technique had to be put under the dominance of politics/ideology. Human thought and will should prevail, not technical/economic necessity. The saying "It doesn't matter what color the cat has, as long as it eats mice" is an expression of the quest for efficiency inherent in the technical system that governs the hearts and the minds of mankind. As already seen, the attempt failed.

CONCLUSION

The decisions that are being made by politicians are increasingly technical in nature, based on the ephemeral and on necessity. The digitalization of everything is a good example. Services, payments, etc. are going to be digitalized even if some of this will lead to the denial of personal freedom and liberties. Political parties did not say no to such a decision. But the realm of technique is not just the economic or money reals. It is also the domain of psychological and propaganda techniques. Advertisers employ specific techniques in order to get a certain result from consumers, to elicit a response in them that incites them to buy certain products, to do certain actions. How to do things with words (J. L. Austin) is something that the ancient discipline of rhetoric taught, even if it is about provoking a certain mental or emotive state in a person or in crowd. In this sense, the psychological techniques applied to stressed people are meant to bring them back into the fold, into the technical system, not to be free and express themselves as they are. They are meant to make them able to adapt to the system and work as parts of the machine that society has become.

¹⁸⁰ Jacques Ellul, *op. cit.*, 2015, p. 163.

A technical decision is focused on the moment at hand, with pure actuality whilst a real political one has other salient features; it implies real reflection, and it pertains to long-time interests of the community. If there is a necessity haunting these decisions, it differs from the technical necessity. True political decision requires time and reflection, the role of such a decision is to leave an imprint on society, to help it to maintain its existence, not to extend the technical system to the whole of existence. Politics has to introduce elements of continuity in the flux of becoming. Politics must create and maintain the coherence of human groups¹⁸¹. Since the takeover of society by the technical system and the transformation of government in governance, this is no longer the case. Efficiency is the supreme norm:

“Efficiency is the law governing politics. The winner is not the one who is the best, but the one who is the most powerful. The meaning of the words is reducible to only one: the most efficient”¹⁸².

Because of the technical progress in the past two centuries, the space for political decisions has been diminished since all the hopes have been invested in the development of technology. But technology, or the technical system, is not something bound to material technique, industry, etc. It is foremost a spiritual phenomenon, a search for efficiency, and a medium that mediates between man and nature, man and himself, man, and God. There are now techniques of organization inspired by cybernetics, which see man in terms of an algorithm or as just an information-processing machine that must respond to the stimuli of the environment. Most of the political decisions are made by so-called experts and are not based on values. The measure that politicians propose must be efficient, otherwise they must go and leave the place to people who make sound efficient decisions. Once a decision has been made, let us say, to connect a sector of public life to the internet, then other decisions will go in the same direction, etc. Ellul’s contention is something that found its expression in one of the fundamental texts of modern and contemporary geopolitics:

“The post-industrial society is becoming a ‘technotronic’ society: a society that is shaped culturally, socially, and economically by the impact of technology and electronics – particularly in the area of computers and communications”¹⁸³.

A technocratic governance will never care for what matters to real politics and people. What matters is efficiency, and, until now, the technocracy and the progress of the technical system engulfing the whole of society was not complete; sometimes the most efficient solutions or techniques will not be applied because they would provoke a diminution of the profit on an enterprise, etc. The technical system will become truly dangerous, apud Ellul, in the moment when it will orient itself after an external

¹⁸¹ Jacques Ellul, *op. cit.*, 2004, pp. 60–61.

¹⁸² “La loi de la politique c’est l’efficacité. Ce n’est pas le meilleur qui gagne, c’est le plus puissant, et tous les termes se ramènent à un seul: les plus efficace”, in *Ibidem*, p. 69.

¹⁸³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages. America’s Role in the Technotronic Era*, Westbrook, Greenwood Press, 1970, p. 9.

purpose, which, in this case, is mankind. The appeal of the technical society is great. Technique – which is the end of science – offers results. They can be seen and felt. They are not disputed. The extension of the technique in society has produced another effect. It has negatively affected the capacity to symbolize. Instead of entertaining symbolic relationships to reality, mankind entertains a technical one. Another consequence of the instauration of this kind of being-in-the-world is the fact that it solves the problem that itself generates thereby moving forward by this very process.

On the former political level, the form that this development takes the quest for a unique, world government made up from technocrats. The example of scientific government that Bertran Russell gives is the USRR¹⁸⁴. A brief description of how such a system would look can be found in the work of Bertrand Russell along with some warning about it and science/technology in general. Will scientific government curtail the freedom of the individual? The answer is yes. Such interferences will be carried in practice, based on some scientific justification, and based upon the fact that, being a scientific form of government, there will be no extra criteria acknowledged to guide the act of governing. Technique and science will make the government so strong that the governments will not need to hear outside opinions¹⁸⁵. The technocratic rule of the world will be based on the governmental view of truth, that is the idea that a belief about something is true in so far as it permits the manipulation of that thing – pure pragmatism¹⁸⁶. Science has become more sadistic, he writes¹⁸⁷. It eliminates all other sources that give meaning and value to life such as love. It is a negative development of modernity, a quest for power for power's sake. The development of science and technology has produced and, hence, will continue to produce uniformity and loss of individuality:

“Modern inventions and modern technique have had a powerful influence on promoting uniformity of opinion and making men less individual than they used to be”¹⁸⁸.

Among the chief agents of this uniformization process, one can count the press, the cinema, and the radio. To this list, television, video games, and the Internet must be added. Through science and technique, man has acquired power over the external world and now, over human beings, too. Advertising and education are two ways to exert power over mankind, for example. Education follows two purposes: to develop the individual and teach him knowledge and to form him according to the aims of the state (or whatever organization). This kind of power hides harbors the most powerful threats to human life¹⁸⁹. Power in itself is not evil, affirms Russell, but the quest for power as such it is, and an entire system based on it – on the search of efficiency – is evil, inhumane, cruel, and devoid of any meaning of existence.

¹⁸⁴ Bertrand Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 165.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 198.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 140.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 135.

The paradox is that the necessity of the erection of such a scientific/technological dictatorship is affirmed by Bertrand Russell since it is seen as the only way to avoid annihilation and to confront problems such as overpopulation, diminishing resources, etc. Without such a government, there would be no peace. Such a government cannot be set up without considering the modern development of science. Science and technology possess more influence in the modern world than art or other human pursuits and since their influence will grow, the movement toward such a scientific government would be unavoidable. At the beginning only some small groups of persons will understand the necessity thereof, as H.G. Wells, so clearly puts it. The rationale, the justification for this lies in science and technology, which constitute a body of knowledge accessible only to a select few. In due time, this justification, in one form or another, will be poured out to the masses. Nevertheless, the true well of technological development is the will to power¹⁹⁰.

The completion or the progress of science and technology requires an ever-growing centralization of society, a remodeling of it and of mankind. It is not science and technology that will be adapted to man, *but the other way around*. The development of science and technology has important consequences for human life that will affect it even in its more obscure and intimate corners:

“But scientific technique has so enormously increased the power of governments that it has now become possible to produce much more profound and intimate changes in social structure than any that were contemplated by Jefferson or Robespierre”¹⁹¹.

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¹⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 151.

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 150.

SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Anania-Andreea Iordache¹⁹²

ABSTRACT

The social changes that have occurred in recent decades on the technological level have radically changed the way we communicate and relate to those around us. In recent years, more and more articles and research have come out about the influence of technology on our relationship capabilities. From this point of view, this article is an exposition of the main theories regarding the digital influence on the social capital evolution, as well as a combination of arguments that support the fact that the social power we have suffers as a result of the development and spread of technology: social networks and applications that occupy our time today. Also, in this discussion, it will be reminded of the negative link between time spent in the virtual environment and social intelligence.

Keywords: social capital, social intelligence, social relations, technology.

WHAT IS SOCIAL CAPITAL?

Social capital is one of the most studied concepts in sociology, especially because it refers to the very thread that connects a society, namely the relationship between individuals. First defined by Hanifan in 1916, the concept of social capital refers to the totality of an individual's relationships, as well as their quality. Although there have been many perspectives that have approached this concept, only a few have captured the essence of the term, especially with reference to how it is found in society, what are the differences from other types of capital and the changes of manifestation it has had over time.

One of the most important authors who approached the concept of social capital was Bourdieu (1986) who addressed it as a resource that the individual benefits from when he is part of a group:

“Social capital is the aggregation of resources possessed or potential, which are linked to the possession of a lasting network of several ties, more or less institutionalized, of acquaintances and persons we recognize – or in other words, participation in a group – which provides each member with the social capital of the collective itself, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to benefit from capital, in several senses of the word”¹⁹³.

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¹⁹³ Pierre Bourdieu, “The forms of capital”, in John Richardson (coord.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1986, p. 246.

In Bourdieu's conception, the concept of social capital is not something individual, but a resource that the person collectively benefits from when he is part of a group. Pierre Bourdieu also, starting from the theory of economic capital, describes the concept of cultural capital as being in the image of that of social capital, describing it as that resource that refers once to the accumulation of cultural material goods (which we can call physical dimension) and knowledge or skills that help him climb the social ladder (which we can name as mental dimension). Cultural capital is strongly linked to social capital in that although an individual may have cultural capital, you cannot evolve up the hierarchy of society without social capital. This idea was expressed by Coleman (1988) in his study: *Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital*¹⁹⁴, where he shows that you can be an erudite person from a family with a fairly high culture (used in the sense of accumulated knowledge, a concept described by Roger Scruton), but not have any role or function in society, because you do not benefit from a sufficiently extensive social capital. In addition to social capital, another term should be mentioned that actually represents how social capital manifests itself, namely social network:

“A social network is represented by members linked by a node who have different relationships – close or distant”¹⁹⁵.

The social capital conceptualized by Bourdieu (1986) is born in a social structure that allows the individual to use the resources of the group (*i.e.*, social capital itself) to achieve his goals. These resources, in turn, are based on reciprocal relations. Reciprocity means recognition and recognition perpetuates the group:

“Social capital in a group implies an effort of sociability and reciprocity through which various acts of recognition are confirmed and reconfirmed”¹⁹⁶.

Robert Putnam wrote about reciprocity as a primary dimension of social capital at the turn of the century in his book *Bowling Alone: Thinking about social change in America*¹⁹⁷. He described how the feeling of reciprocity decreased among the population, especially after the 60's (*i.e.*, among the baby boom generation) by analysing several dimensions of society: first and foremost, he observed the level of participation in political life, community life (meetings with neighbors and friends, going to church, membership in an organization, volunteer work). From his analysis of these dimensions, he concluded that Americans relate less and are less involved in community life.

¹⁹⁴ See James Coleman, “Social capital in the creation of human capital”, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 94, 1988, pp. 95–120.

¹⁹⁵ Wasserman Stanley and Katherine Faust, *Social network analysis: Methods and applications*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994 quoted by Alexandra Marin and Wellman Barry, “Social network analysis: An introduction”, in John Scott, *The SAGE handbook of social network analysis*, London, Sage Publications, 2011, pp. 11–25.

¹⁹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

¹⁹⁷ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Rebirth of the American Community*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 2000.

Robert Putnam also divides the share capital into two main dimensions: bonding and bridging. Bonding capital refers to the capital of close relationships, with people from the groups we belong to, basically the group of close individuals with whom we communicate often and with whom we are invested more than just for a certain external purpose. Granovetter (1973) called this type of social capital *strong ties* to express closeness between people:

“The strength of a bond is likely a linear combination of the amount of time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and mutual service that characterizes the bond”¹⁹⁸.

In contrast, bridging capital is important for obtaining information and other benefits that we would not need on a daily basis. Today, we would translate this type of capital as “superficial relationships” or ties to help us fulfil a purpose (Example given by Robert Putnam in his book for bridge-type social capital is a group of people who are part of the American civil rights movement). Also, Granovetter, in 1973 called this type of social capital weak ties and argued that they are much more beneficial in the long run for the individual, since it is these relationships that provide other social frameworks of which the individual is not a part:

“The more indirect ties a person has, the more encapsulated he will be in terms of acquaintances that go beyond his circle of friends”¹⁹⁹.

This type of social capital is especially observed in the economic relationships that individuals have through a positive correlation: the larger your social network, the more chances you have to get a more advantageous job or a possibility of developing other types of capital, such as human capital.

“Social capital is goodwill available to individuals or groups. It lies in the structure and content of the actor’s social relationships. Its effects derive from the information, influence, and solidarity it provides to the actor”²⁰⁰.

DIGITAL AGE AND DECLINING SOCIAL CAPITAL RESOURCES

One of the most interesting features of modern society is the relation to the rapid technological development taking place today. The most present digital forms present in our lives are social networks and applications that can be accessed with the mobile phone. In his book, *The Superficial* (2020), as well as other articles, Nicholas Carr described how technological development brought a change in the way we perceive the world today, especially in relation to the amount of information we are served today:

“The smartphone has become a repository for itself, recording and distributing the words, images and sounds that define what we think, what we experience and who

¹⁹⁸ Mark Granovetter, “The strength of weak ties”, in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 78, No. 6/1973, p. 1361.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 1371.

²⁰⁰ Paul Adler and Seok-Woo Kwon, “Social capital: prospects for a new concept”, in *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 27, No. 1/2002, p. 19.

we are. In a 2015 Gallup poll, more than half of iPhone owners said they couldn't imagine their lives without the device"²⁰¹.

As in literature it has been pointed out, social networks are websites or applications that facilitate the creation of content and although it is predominantly an abstract term, the social network differentiates itself according to the possibility of offering a profile in a linked system, the possibility of describing the people with whom individuals are connected and seeing the list of people with whom others are friends, to transmit information in video, audio or written form²⁰². According to a report called Digital 2023 Global Overview Report²⁰³ created by Meltwater and We Are Social, the most used social networks among young people today are: Facebook (with almost 3 billion users globally), YouTube (with 2.5 billion accounts globally), WhatsApp and Instagram (each with 2 billion users) and TikTok (with over 1 billion profiles). Also, according to the same report, young people spend significantly more time on average on social networks than other older categories: young people between 16 and 24 spend about 3 hours of a day on social networks, those between 25 and 34 spend 2 hours and 45 minutes on average, and the older they get, the time spent on social networks decreases: People between 55 and 64 spend on average only 1 and 35 minutes on such applications.

The reason why social networks are used today is equally important to analyze: Currently, with the help of social networks, there is an opportunity to obtain social capital. According to the report analyzed above, 48% of people who use social media said they do it to keep in touch with friends and family. Other important reasons cited include filling free time (36%), reading news (35%), finding articles, references, etc. (29%), finding out what's new (28%), sharing knowledge or other opinions with others (27%).

Why would it be important to look at social media in the discussion about social capital online? When social networks appeared, the first being present since the end of the last²⁰⁴ century, studies appeared that talked about the negative effects of their use, especially for the social health of users. Norman Nie (2001) talked about how time spent on social media can harm social relationships, especially because the

²⁰¹ Nicholas Carr, "How the Phones Hijack Our Minds", October 27, 2017, in *Wall Street Journal*, Available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-smartphones-hijack-our-minds-1507307811>, Accessed on October 7, 2023.

²⁰² See: Emily O'Day and Richard Heimberg, "Social media use, social anxiety, and loneliness: A systematic review", in *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, Vol. 3, 2021, Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S245195882100018X>, Accessed on October 7, 2023.

²⁰³ Simon Kemp, "Digital 2023 – Global Overview Report", January 26, 2023, in *Data Reportal*, Available at: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-global-overview-report>, Accessed on April 26, 2023.

²⁰⁴ A very good description of how social networks have developed can be found in David Kirkpatrick, *The Facebook Effect: The Inside Story of the Company That Is Connecting the World*, New York, Simon & Schuster Publishing, 2011.

internet and time spent online rob individuals of the time individuals should use to socialize in the offline world²⁰⁵.

The study that is still referenced, especially for researchers analysing the link between digital media use and social capital, was led by Robert Kraut (1998). He conducted very important research for the field of “social media” and social networks. Although his article “The Internet Paradox” does not refer to social capital as a basic concept, Kraut demonstrated that the advent of the Internet decreased the yield of social skills (to relate and communicate with close ones) and that a multitude of areas of personal life suffered. He conducted a longitudinal experiment (over a period of three years) that consisted of giving Pittsburgh families access to the internet and monitoring online activity. After a long period of time, it was observed that families who were offered internet went out less, kept in touch less often with their loved ones and community, and even reported symptoms of social isolation (measured by the UCLA Solitude Scale). Thus, it is considered a basic study of criticism about the influence of the online environment on social capital.

SOCIAL CAPITAL IN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT TODAY

Unlike Putnam’s writings on television, which basically described the reduction of social capital due to the loss of time in front of TV, the reference to the Internet is much more complicated – this is because in the online environment the interaction is two-way, and individuals can respond to the messages that appear on their screens:

“Even though it has worldwide coverage through satellite transmission stations, the television network is an unequivocal communication: the receiver cannot modify or respond to the transmitter’s message”²⁰⁶.

The mobile phone, invented in 1973 by Martin Cooper, brought about the first revolution in remote verbal communication. A second, more complex occurred with the phone’s ability to access the internet and the virtual reality it brings with it. Thus, compared to television, the Internet allows the individual to be part of reality, to respond to the message sent to him, forming interactions – there is a possibility of accumulating social capital. The Internet represents a form of connection, first for the data, then for the users, which come to relate over the barrier of space and time. In this sense, *cyberspace* must be defined – a reality made up of data matrices, in which the individual can participate and create forms of cultural content – although not totally similar to those within reality, including human social relationships:

²⁰⁵ The same conclusion was reached by Robert Putnam, but he pointed out in particular the negative effects that television had on social relations.

²⁰⁶ „Chiar dacă are acoperire mondială prin stațiile de transmisie prin satelit, rețeaua de televiziune este o comunicare univocă: receptorul nu poate modifica sau răspunde la mesajul emițătorului.”, in Radu Baltasiu, *Antropologia globalizării [The Anthropology of Globalization]*, Bucharest, Little Wallachia Publishing, 2009, p. 109.

“Cyberspace represents a possible world, but real– virtual reality. A world without necessarily corresponding in physical reality, but which produces effects on us, and whose support is binary reasoning (built only from combinations of 0 and 1), totally different from the natural one, processed by the computer. This reality built through a new (binary) logic rest on computing power and the transmission of information through computer networks”²⁰⁷.

In order to see exactly how social capital manifests itself in the online environment, Dmitri Williams (2006) created a capital measurement scale using his knowledge of the main online activities and the inspirations that came from the analysis of social capital in the offline environment. Thus, he measured bridge-type social capital by looking outward (looking outward), contact with several categories of people, looking at oneself as part of a larger group, diffuse reciprocity with a wider community²⁰⁸. For the social capital type similarity, he looked at:

“emotional support, access to limited resources, ability to mobilize solidarity, out-group antagonism”²⁰⁹.

Another important thing Dmitri Williams mentions about the benefits of social capital online is that it generates less risk:

“One speculation is that social capital generation by online communities is moderated by the relatively low cost of entry and exit (from a pool) compared to offline”²¹⁰.

Other ways to quantify social activity online can be the number of likes, comments, and hours spent on a conversation. Xane Faucher (2018) defines the concept of online social capital as sums of relationships that can be quantified by the number of likes, comments, etc. to serve to increase the profits of large media companies:

“Online social capital becomes a substance that can be measured by the number of friends, followers, approvals from others, such as likes or tweets”²¹¹.

It is also recalled that besides the individual as a direct beneficiary of online social capital, there is another amount of important actors that exploit online interaction between individuals:

“The more we are encouraged to ‘like’ online content, the more our data is collected and used to sell similar content, and the more appropriate our data can be for advertising”²¹².

²⁰⁷ „Ciberspațiul reprezintă o lume posibilă, dar reală – realitatea virtuală. O lume fără corespondent neapărat în realitatea fizică, dar care produce efecte asupra noastră, și al cărei suport este raționamentul binar (construit doar din combinații de 0 și 1), total diferit de cel natural, procesat de către computer. Această realitate construită printr-o nouă logică (binară) se sprijină pe puterea de calcul și de transmitere a informației prin rețele de calculatoare.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 107.

²⁰⁸ Dmitri Williams, “On and Off the Net: Scales for Social Capital in an Online Era”, in *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, Vol. 11, No. 2/2006, p. 600.

²⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 601.

²¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 611.

²¹¹ Kane Faucher, *Social Capital Online*, London, University of Westminster Press, 2018, p. 15.

²¹² *Ibidem*, p. 22.

Facilitating social capital online has been a research topic in numerous studies, especially for those who wanted to understand how social networks influence users' lives. The main points touched upon by most studies have been related to how social networks bring an improvement in social relationships overall, by switching the barriers encountered until then in interaction, although there have also been quite relevant studies that have denied the benefits of online interactions for the social capital of the individual. Ellison *et al.* (2010) divided the literature regarding the influence of online on social capital into three directions: Primary perspective: Social capital is facilitated by the Internet, negative perspective: Internet causes social capital to decrease, positive outlook: Internet can supplement offline interactions and increase social capital²¹³.

The benefits for the similarity type of capital are described by Nicole Ellison *et al.* (2007) through the example of students who move to another city for studies but manage to keep in touch with former colleagues or acquaintances back home, which is observable if we analyse the information made available by students to be found on Facebook²¹⁴. In addition to the similarity and bridge capital types, the study authors also looked at how Facebook's platform is beneficial for activating latent relationships (*i.e.*, that could take place between two people, but initiative is expected), sometimes pointing out the purpose behind using these platforms. There are benefits for those who do not have social relationships but want to make their own – the hypothesis called “the poor get rich”, but also for those who already have social relationships and can capitalize on them – “the rich get richer”²¹⁵.

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ONLINE SOCIAL CAPITAL

Although the desire to make our lives easier is what urges us to continue investing in the technological sphere, lately several studies have emerged addressing the negative effects of cyberspace on social relationships. One of the major authors who wrote about the biggest problems with the effects of technology on individuals, especially children and young people, was neuropsychiatrist Manfred Spitzer. What we need to focus on is the social side of the effects of technology – Manfred has shown how addiction to online media causes depression, insomnia, and serious health consequences:

“Even the phenomenon of addiction (...) It has to do with depressive disorder: Numerous studies have shown that depression occurs more frequently with

²¹³ Charles Steinfield *et al.*, “Online social network sites and the concept of social capital”, in Francis Lee (coord.) *et al.*, *Frontiers in New Media Research*, New York, Routledge, 2012, pp. 115–131.

²¹⁴ Nicole Ellison *et al.*, “The benefits of Facebook ‘friends’. Social capital and college students’ use of online social network sites”, in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol. 12, No. 4/2007, p. 1162.

²¹⁵ See Robert Kraut *et al.*, “Internet Paradox Revisited”, in *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 58, No. 1/2002, pp. 49–74.

computer and internet addiction compared to people who behave normally with digital media use”²¹⁶.

The mechanism by which the Internet and the virtual world affect social life is as simple as possible: individuals become so engrossed in the world behind the screen that the real world no longer matters, and virtuality replaces family or friends:

“It’s hard to deny that students who network a lot are reducing their activities in the real world and so are increasingly socially isolated. The known vicious circle in the treatment of anxiety disorders, which consists of isolation, anxiety about social ties and again isolation, is reinforced by the possibilities offered by the Internet”²¹⁷.

Manfred Spitzer (2012) also discussed the decrease in communication capacity and social skills of young people who spend a significant number of hours online:

“Digital media have a detrimental effect on empathic capacity and social competences. Talking about the effects of Facebook, we have seen that it is precisely young users (between 8 and 12 years old) who suffer the most in terms of social relationships and affectivity because of digital media”²¹⁸.

Hence the connection with another important sociological concept, namely: social intelligence.

Social intelligence is a concept that has been studied psychologically over time alongside other concepts such as: emotional intelligence or adaptive intelligence. The concept of social intelligence has been defined as intelligence that deals with the ability to communicate and relate to others, to read or understand the emotions and moods of others, as well as by adapting to various social situations²¹⁹. Herbert Marlowe, in 1986, described social intelligence using the following dimensions: interest and care for others, empathic abilities, emotional expressiveness, and sensitivity to the emotions of others²²⁰.

The concept of social intelligence is closely related to the accumulation of social capital in that in order to integrate into a group you need certain skills to adopt or improve so that you are accepted by those around you. In order to retain

²¹⁶ „Până și fenomenul dependenței (...) are legătură cu tulburarea depresivă: numeroase studii au arătat că depresia apare mai frecvent concomitent cu dependența de calculator și de internet, comparativ cu oamenii care au un comportament normal în privința folosirii mediilor digitale.”, in Spitzer Manfred, *Demența Digitală [Digital Dementia]*, translated by Dana Verescu, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing, 2012, p. 230.

²¹⁷ „Este greu de negat că studenții care stau foarte mult în rețea își reduc activitățile în lumea reală și astfel sunt din ce în ce mai izolați social. Cercul vicios cunoscut din tratamentul tulburărilor anxioase, care constă în izolare, anxietate față de legăturile sociale și din nou izolare, este întărită de posibilitățile oferite de internet.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 232.

²¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 171.

²¹⁹ Silman Fatos and Dogan Tayfun, “Social intelligence as a predictor of loneliness in the workplace”, in *The Spanish journal of psychology*, Vol. 16, 2013, p. 2.

²²⁰ See Herbert Marlowe, “Social intelligence: Evidence for multidimensionality and construct independence”, in *Journal of educational psychology*, Vol. 78, No. 1/1986, pp. 52–58.

and accumulate as much social capital as possible, individuals need communication and integration skills so that they can create a reciprocal relationship with those in their environment. Social intelligence consists, as mentioned before, of social skills that are mainly limited to understanding the people and social situations around them. These skills are positively correlated with self-esteem and negatively correlated with anxiety or social isolation. An individual with a social media profile who does not have an “acceptable” level of social intelligence may experience similar problems as in real life. In this sense, a connection can be made between those who have many relationships in the online environment (active users) and those who do not (passive users)²²¹.

The way we accumulate social capital online is different from the offline environment. More specifically, in the offline environment we need certain social qualities to be able to integrate into a group (social intelligence), while in the online environment almost all the knowledge we need adapts for an interaction that is mediated by a screen (although we need a degree of social intelligence also online, most of the time, the effort from this point of view is much lower). The lack of physical interaction, if replaced only by online, can lead to forgetting the most basic social skills. In *The Century of Solitude* (2020), Noreena Hertz, talks about a case that seemed unusual to her. Having a discussion with a professor from a leading university in the United States, she described how she started a “reading the human face” course, after noticing that more and more students coming to college were unable to read expressions during a conversation²²². Nicholas Carr (2012) explains the process by which repetition helps consolidate long-term memory and how, in general, through this process we can acquire more qualities and knowledge. Social intelligence can only develop through exercise: through communication, discussion, involvement in all kinds of social activities, especially face-to-face. Another study demonstrating how interaction between individuals has changed due to online media describes how people who tend to use digital media more have become unaccustomed to smiling or having a functional relationship with strangers (potential actors in their own social network).

The mechanism by which this idea of alienation from the social around us works leads us to the idea that we are so caught up in the online world that we are afraid to interact with our peers, especially because it gives us a familiar and comfortable place from which we hardly want to get out²²³.

²²¹ Ronald Riggio *et al.*, “Social skills and self-esteem”, in *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol. 11, No. 8/1990, pp. 799–804.

²²² Noreena Hertz, *The century of loneliness. A call to reconnect*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 2021, p. 122.

²²³ John Hunter *et al.*, “The use of smart-phones as a digital security blanket: The influence of phone use and availability on psychological and physiological responses to social exclusion”, in *Psychosom Med*, Vol. 80, No. 4/2018, p. 346.

Sociologist Sherry Turkle gives a very clear example in her book by creating a contradictory phrase: “together alone”. She uses the phrase to describe how online connections are quite weak:

“The links we form through the internet are not, in the end, the links that really connect”²²⁴.

In addition to individuals becoming accustomed to staying in their virtual bubble where relationships are not close and withdrawing from reality, the online environment robs them of the time they could use for actual interactions, of a closer nature and longer duration.

THE DIGITAL WORLD AND CONVERSATION

Sociologist Sherry Turkle has laid out in her career of over 20 years the reasons why everyday conversations are important for relationships between individuals. Today, in the normal rhythm of discussions with those around individuals, certain disruptions have occurred due to the mobile phone. Sherry Turkle, in her book, *Rediscovering Conversation*, gives countless examples of cases where relationships in family, friends and loved ones have moved online, reality, or face-to-face discussions being just a remnant of dialogue between individuals. It describes how the mobile phone and technology in general has reduced man’s self-reflection:

“Our image on Facebook is completely different from how we use avatars in games. I have long studied how digital objects inform how we perceive ourselves and have dedicated many years to researching the psychological influence of role-playing games in the digital environment. The avatars we create in online games (to which we often choose body constitution, physiognomy or even behavioural peculiarities) were not designed to stimulate self-reflection. Or they perform exactly this function. When we build an avatar, you often give it traits that allow us to externalize parts of ourselves that we would like to probe better”²²⁵.

The author also points out that every time we have a free moment of reflection and self-analysis, we flee to the online environment where we look for all kinds of stimulation to hide the fact that we do not know how to communicate with ourselves. The second thing that has been radically changed by the entry of technological spheres into the lives of individuals is the relationship with the family:

²²⁴ See Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together*, New York, Basic Books, 2011.

²²⁵ „Imaginea noastră de pe Facebook este complet diferită de felul în care recurgem la avatarurile din jocuri. Studiez de multă vreme modul în care obiectele digitale ne informează în ce fel ne percepem pe noi înșine și am dedicat numeroși ani cercetării privind influența psihologică a jocurilor de rol din mediul digital. Avatarurile pe care le creăm în cadrul jocurilor online (cărora de cele mai multe ori le alegem constituția corpului, fizionomia sau chiar particularitățile comportamentale) nu au fost gândite cu scopul de a stimula autorefecția. Ori ele îndeplinesc exact această funcție. Atunci când ne construim un avatar, îi conferim adesea trăsături care să ne permită să exteriorizăm anumite părți din noi pe care ne-am dori să le sondăm mai bine.”, in Sherry Turkle, *Redescoperirea Conversației [Rediscovering Conversation]*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing, 2023, p. 102.

“At a closer look, we seem to live a superlative family life: we can share so many things with the other family members (videos, photos, games, everything in the world). We can be ‘together’ with the family on new levels: in some ways, we are never separated (...) Looking at it differently, however, the role of technology in family life is much more complex than that. As with many aspects of life, we are tempted to stay together, but also apart. At dinner or in the park, parents and children turn their attention to phones and tablets. Conversations that used to be face-to-face are now moving online”²²⁶.

The way we relate to others has become dependent on our online activity. Each virtual touch is wasted time that could have been used to build lasting relationships that benefit one’s own social capital and increase social intelligence.

CONCLUSIONS

This article tried to analyse the phenomenon of social capital accumulation in the online environment. Social capital, an important resource for any individual in society, had to adapt to the new inventions of technology that moved the individual from the physical environment to the virtual one. We emphasize the definition and importance of the concept of social capital, its uses in sociology and its evolvement since the digital revolution. We summarized the major writing on the subject of social capital online, including important theories such as: Internet paradox of Kraut, the directions of Nicole Ellison’s articles and Faucher’s opinion about the influence of major corporations on our social capital. We explored more of the pessimistic side of the effect of the digital world on social capital by highlighting authors like Manfred Spitzer, Noreena Hertz and the big ideas on how much damage the technology has brought into our social lives through authors such as Nicholas Carr and Sherry Turkle.

In this presentation, several points of view were analysed regarding the negative aspects of time spent in the online environment, both by trying to describe the side effects (the “together alone” theory being just one of the most relevant examples), but also the way in which one’s own social capacities are questioned. Starting from the great theories regarding social capital and its importance for the individual, to the analysis of how this concept has evolved with the emergence of new digital media, what I tried to highlight in this article is that in postmodernity we are dealing with major changes in the way we communicate and accumulate social

²²⁶ „La o privire mai amănunțită, părem să trăim o viață de familie la superlativ: putem împărtăși atât de multe, alte lucruri cu membrii familiei (filmulețe, fotografii, jocuri, tot ce este pe lume). Putem fi ‚alături’ de familie pe noi planuri: din anumite puncte de vedere, nu suntem niciodată despărțiți (...) Privind totuși cu alți ochi, rolul tehnologiei în viața de familie este mult mai complex de atât. La fel ca-n alte multe aspecte ale vieții, suntem tentați să stăm împreună, dar și separați. La cină ori în parc, părinții și copiii își îndreaptă atenția spre telefoane și tablete. Conversațiile care înainte se purtau față-n față se mută acum online”, in *Ibidem*, p. 127.

capital. From the analysis of the articles and theories collected, for future endeavours, questions can be exposed such as: Do we still know how to relate today as before? Does social intelligence suffer from excessive use of online media? Is the relationship of social relationships (family, friends or even society) changing with digital development?

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DISCOURSE AND COUNTER-DISCOURSE ON THE “SNOWFLAKE-MILLENNIAL”/ “ME GENERATION”/ “EGOCENTRIC GENERATION”

Samira Cîrlig²²⁷

ABSTRACT

This material deals with the topic of the “millennial snowflake” generation, whose corollary in Romanian is “egocentric generation”. Specialized studies characterize them as lonely, hypersensitive, and fearful. In this article, I trace the lines of discourse and counter-discourse, highlighting both positive and negative aspects. The aim is to establish whether and to what extent the traits of this generation, are closer to the area of advantages or disadvantages.

Keywords: generation, millennial, snowflake, snowflake generation, snowflake millennial.

INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes a complementary approach to the discourse on “snowflake generation”. The term “snowflake generation” was originally used to refer to “millennials” or “generation y”, *i.e.*, those born between 1980–2000²²⁸, but later included “generation z”, or those born after 2000. Thus, we note that this paper refers to the category of young people born between 1980 and 2000, which we will understand at the conceptual end of “snowflake millennial” or “egocentric generation” (“snowflake” from Claire Fox, 2016 and 2018, and “millennials” from Neil Howe and William Strauss, 2000). In the recent literature, which appeared around 2010, this category of young people is also encountered as “GenMe” or “generation me”²²⁹. To temporally separate the generational categories I will be working with, I have used the most common division: Baby Boomers (circa 1943–1960), Generation X (1961–1981) and Millennials (1982–1999), who we also refer

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²²⁸ Caitlin Fisher, *The Gaslighting of the Millennial Generation. How to Succeed in a Society That Blames You for Everything Gone Wrong*, Mango Publishing, p. 15, 2019, e-book, Available at: <https://ro.scribd.com/book/489771198/The-Gaslighting-of-the-Millennial-Generation-How-to-Succeed-in-a-Society-That-Blames-You-for-Everything-Gone-Wrong>, Accessed on June 20, 2023.

²²⁹ Marie J. Twenge, *Generation Me – Revised and Updated: Why Today’s Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled and More Miserable Than Ever Before*, Atria Book, 2006, p. 22, e-book, Available at: <https://ro.scribd.com/book/225091623/Generation-Me-Revised-and-Updated-Why-Today-s-Young-Americans-Are-More-Confident-Assertive-Entitled-and-More-Miserable-Than-Ever-Before>, Accessed on February 11, 2023.

to as “Generation Me”²³⁰. The corollary of this term in Romanian is the “egocentric” or “self-centred” generation.

In this paper, we address both the positive and critical aspects of these young people to obtain a more complete picture of how the public discourse around this generation is shaping up. It is well known that the most frequent remarks made about them refer to their individualism, which is exacerbated to the point of selfishness, and to their hypersensitive nature. These traits can be explained by the breakdown of community that has occurred in modern societies. At that time, the focus shifted from the collective to the individual. Thus, the individual becomes the centre of his own existence, giving up the idea of the other and even more the idea of sacrifice for the other.

Military service is a good example of self-sacrifice, duty, and collectivism. Pew Center data shows that this generation’s young people are 3 to 7 times less likely to join the military than previous generations: 2% of GenMe served in the military, compared to 6% of Gen X and 13% of Boomers. Department of Defence surveys of 16-to 24-year-olds show that the number of those considering joining the military has dropped considerably: 18% expressed interest in 2010, down from 26% in 1986. In a nationally representative sample of high school students, 2 of 3 (67%) said they “definitely will not join the military” in 2012, compared with 57% in 1976²³¹. So, what we have here is a generation that has focused almost exclusively on itself. What we aim to do with this material is to identify the positive aspects of this reality. These aspects will be identified by drawing on the discourse and, where appropriate, the counter-discourse that has emerged around this generation.

DISCOURSE AND COUNTER-DISCOURSE ON THE “SNOWFLAKE-MILLENNIAL”

Generalisations about “snowflake millennials” suffer the same fate as any generalisation: as soon as one is made, an exception appears. Therefore, conclusions about this group will not necessarily apply to every individual in the group. Young people born between 1980 and 2000 have mixed strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, in response to Joel Stein’s famous 2013 Time magazine article “Millennials are the ‘ME ME ME GENERATION’” which has generated much debate in the US and beyond about “millennials”, Elspeth Reeve makes a point that we agree with, namely that each generation has been the “me generation” in its own time²³².

²³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

²³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

²³² Elspeth Reeve, “Every Every Every Generation Has Been the Me Me Me Generation”, May 9, 2013, in *The Atlantic*, Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/05/me-generation-time/315151/>, Accessed on May 15, 2023.

1. Trust versus vulnerability. From “safe spaces” to “brave spaces” and “community of dialog”

Young people who fall into the category we call the “millennial snowflake” are, unlike previous generations, much more confident, which is beneficial as this is correlated by experts with the idea of success. “GenMe” high school students anticipate being great employees in the future: 68% of 2012 high school students said they will be “very good” as an employee (the highest percentage), compared to only 57% of high school students in the “Boomer” generation in 1976; 58% of 2012 students think they will be a “very good” spouse, compared to 41% in 1976; 59% are sure they will be a “very good” parent, compared to only 38% who were so sure in 1976. Twice as many high school students said in 2012, compared to their 1976 counterparts, that they are “completely” satisfied with themselves²³³. According to a study comparing over 11,000 teenagers aged 14 to 16 who completed a questionnaire in 1951 or 1989, out of over 400 items, the one that showed the greatest change over time was “I am a big person”. Only 12% of teenagers agreed with this statement in the 1950s, but by the late 1980s, more than 80% of girls and 77% of boys said they were important²³⁴.

The self-confidence of this generation is also evident when they compare themselves with those around them. Both high school and college students are more likely to believe that they are superior to their peers. When asked to compare themselves to others of their own age, 61% of 2012 GenMe college students said they were above average in terms of their ability to lead, compared to 41% of college students in 1966 (“Boomer generation”), and 76% considered themselves superior in terms of their desire to succeed in life, compared to 60% in 1966. 58% considered themselves above average in terms of intellectual ability, compared to only 39% in 1966, even though students in the 1960s scored higher on SAT intelligence tests²³⁵.

After 1980, with the last wave of Gen Xers, children’s self-esteem began to rise. Increasingly in the 1980s and 1990s, children said they were satisfied with themselves. They agreed that they “are easy to like” and “always do the right thing”²³⁶. In an analysis of the self-esteem self-assessments of 10,119 middle school students, 80% of “GenMe” students (in 2007) scored higher on self-esteem than their “Gen X” counterparts in 1988 (Ibid, p. 99). In a CBS News survey, high school graduates in 2000 (the first wave of “GenMe”) were asked: “What makes your generation feel positive about yourself?” The most popular response, at 33%, was the answer “self-esteem”²³⁷.

²³³ Marie J. Twenge, *op. cit.*, 2006, p. 96.

²³⁴ Marie J. Twenge and Keith W. Campbell, *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement*, Atria Books, 2009, p. 48, e-book, Available at: <https://ro.scribd.com/book/224283075/The-Narcissism-Epidemic-Living-in-the-Age-of-Entitlement>, Accessed on February 18, 2023.

²³⁵ Marie J. Twenge, *op. cit.*, 2006, pp. 96–97.

²³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 97.

²³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

Increased self-confidence is an advantage validated by several researchers. Jean M. Twenge points out that it must be connected to reality, lest we end up in a situation where our expectations are unattainable. In a 2008 survey, 66% of university students agreed that “if I explained to my professor that I was trying hard, I think he or she should take my grade into account”. A third agreed that “if I have attended most of the classes for a course, I deserve at least a B grade”, 30% said that “professors who don’t let me take an exam at a different time because of my personal plans (e.g., a vacation or other trip that is important to me) are too strict”, and 32% complained that “professors often give me lower grades than I deserve on paperwork”. A LexisNexis search of the print media shows a six-fold increase from 1996 to 2006 in terms connected to a sense of entitlement²³⁸. There were some early indications that narcissism might be on the rise. The risk of turning from a confident person into a narcissistic one (narcissism, which Twenge considers the dark side of self-esteem) stems from not anchoring one’s desires in reality. In the early 1950s, only 12% of adolescents aged 14 to 16 agreed with the statement “I am an important person”. By the late 1980s, the percentage had risen to approximately 80%, which was almost seven times higher²³⁹.

When young people’s self-confidence is contradicted by the reality around them, they perceive the situation as aggressive toward them. Therefore, they feel the need to be protected from what they call “hate speech”, thus being the initiators of what has become, at least in the US, a real “safe spaces” movement. The exact origins of safe space movement are not known²⁴⁰. However, there is a view that it dates back to the 1940s, when corporations began requiring “awareness training” for their executives. Psychologist Vaughan Bell says it was psychosociologist Kurt Lewin who helped theorise the concept of safe spaces. According to Bell, Lewin’s workshops are based on the fundamental belief that honesty and change can only occur if people are honest and challenge others in a psychologically safe environment²⁴¹.

A more widely held view is that the “safe spaces” movement is rooted in three other earlier activist movements: the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the black student activist movement on campuses around the same time²⁴², and the LGBT movement of the early 1990s²⁴³. These movements have arisen because students have sought places where they feel “safe” when expressing views that are not in line with

²³⁸ *Ibidem*, 118.

²³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 126.

²⁴⁰ Vinay Harpalani, “‘Safe Spaces’ and the Educational Benefits of Diversity”, in *DUKE J. CONST. L. & PUB. POL’Y* 117, 2017, pp. 126–127.

²⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

²⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 125.

²⁴³ Michael Gold, “The ABCs of L.G.B.T.Q.I.A.+”, June 7, 2019, in *N.Y. TIMES*, Available at: <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/2018%20/06/21/style/lgbtq-gender-language.html>, Accessed on May 3, 2023.

the officially accepted discourse of the universities they study at²⁴⁴. In response to this growing demand, many high schools and universities have created centers dedicated to specific racial and ethnic minority groups, women, and, later, LGBTQIA+ students²⁴⁵. Eventually, these centers became known as “safe spaces”²⁴⁶.

In recent years, the term has been used mainly in higher education, after “safe space policies” were adopted in many universities to prevent discrimination, harassment, hate, and threats. The historical context of the concept is to protect marginalised groups from violations, threats and hatred and to provide them with a safe space. When the concept was transferred to school classrooms, its meaning partially changed because the framework and goals of cohabitation were different. In short, “safe space” in this educational setting refers to classrooms where students can speak freely without fear of their peers or teachers. On the one hand, “safe spaces” must be open enough to include all kinds of perspectives and positions from students. However, this “openness” must be structured with rules that everyone can agree to, so that the exchange of ideas is “safe” for both pupils and teachers²⁴⁷.

The emergence of “safe spaces” although initially well-intentioned, has subsequently created a climate of censorship. Intended as an inclusive space, they eventually become a means of promoting ideas that are perceived as correct. What is noticeable from this point of view is that although they militate against censorship, they end up becoming a means of propagating it. In other words, individuals end up offending the so-called protectors of freedom of expression simply because they express their opinions. In the book *Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and non-religious world views in Intercultural Education*, published in 2014, “safe spaces” are defined as places where “students can express their views and positions openly, even if they differ from those of the teacher or their peers”²⁴⁸. This type of space becomes an essential precondition for exploring diversity. This ensures that students have the right to participate in open discussion and dialog. Developing and maintaining a “safe space” in educational environments depends on a few basic rules that all participants must accept²⁴⁹. These basic rules include using appropriate language, condemning “hate speech”, taking turns expressing points of view, respecting others’ right to hold different positions, the right to challenge the ideas expressed by others, and encouraging students to give reasons for their arguments²⁵⁰.

²⁴⁴ Vinay Harpalani, “‘Safe Spaces’ and the Educational Benefits of Diversity”, in *DUKE J. CONST. L. & PUB. POL’Y* 117, 2017, p. 126.

²⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 125–126.

²⁴⁶ Leah Shafer, “More Than Safe. Creating a school where LGBTQ students thrive”, October 25, 2016, Available at: <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/16/10/more-safe>, Accessed on May 15, 2023.

²⁴⁷ Karin K. Flensner and Marie Von der Lippe, “Being safe from what and safe for whom? A critical discussion of the conceptual metaphor of ‘safe space’”, in *Intercultural Education*, 2019, 30:3, p. 276.

²⁴⁸ Robert Jackson, *Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing, 2014, p. 48.

²⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 56.

In higher education, mainly in the United States and the United Kingdom, the emergence of “safe spaces” is a challenge for the educational space, as professors find themselves having to inform students in advance what topics they are going to tackle in class to avoid triggering traumas from the past. In other words, teachers must ensure a comfortable climate during their lessons. Boostrom argued in 1998 that education should not be safe and comfortable. On the contrary, students must be criticised and challenged to strengthen their own convictions but above all to prepare them for real life²⁵¹. To develop critical thinking, imagination, and the ability to make individual decisions, Boostrom says students need to be exposed to viewpoints and positions that differ from their initial beliefs because this is how they will hone their skills in handling the stressful situations they encounter in life. Teachers play a crucial role in this equation because they are there to manage conflict and not to prohibit it. Boostrom sees the idea of a “safe space” as an obstacle to education in this respect²⁵².

Barrett also argues that student and teacher interactions should be civil, but unobstructed by unnecessary conditions aimed at providing a “safe space”. She argues that students need to be challenged to develop critical thinking and that safe spaces are counterproductive because they provide students with expectations of safety and comfort that otherwise cannot be met²⁵³. She argues that providing safe spaces for students, especially minority groups and marginalised students, is not recommended because it over-sensitises young people. This sensitization can even be a danger for them because expectations cannot be met objectively speaking²⁵⁴. According to Barrett, there is an inherent ambiguity in the concept of safety, and it is not possible for teachers to be sure that what they perceive as a safe classroom is felt to be safe for all students. Instead, she suggests that common sense and seven years at home should be the foundation of classroom interactions. Therefore, the author distinguishes very clearly between the “safe classroom” and the “civilized classroom”, pointing out that a civilized classroom maintains a balance of discussion without restricting it in any way²⁵⁵.

Callan argues that the “intellectual safety” that “safe spaces” create is at odds with the purpose of education. According to him, quality education requires teaching that makes students intellectually insecure. The author points out that challenging young people to think outside their own convictions in no way jeopardises the intellectual quality of discussions, nor does it damage the act of education²⁵⁶. In this

²⁵¹ Robert Boostrom, “‘Safe Spaces’: Reflections on an Educational Metaphor”, in *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1998, 30 (4), p. 405.

²⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 407.

²⁵³ Betty J. Barrett, “Is ‘Safety’ Dangerous? A Critical Examination of the Classroom as Safe Space.”, in *Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 2010, 1 (1), p. 5.

²⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

²⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

²⁵⁶ Eamonn Callan, “Education in Safe and Unsafe Spaces”, in *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, 2016, 24 (1), p. 65.

sense, education, based on the principles of free expression of opinion, cannot harm any participant. Education is thus an active factor in eliminating stereotypes and prejudices and not a vector for their propagation. Ensuring dignity does not mean never encountering facts, ideas, or opinions that students consider wrong or offensive. Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right in a democratic society, and within the institutional framework of public education, both students and teachers are entitled to benefit from these premises²⁵⁷.

Building on Boostrom's idea that it takes courage to let go of old ideas and inspired by the concept of "courageous conversations", Arao and Clemens developed the notion of "courageous space". Instead of giving students false ideas about safety, they argue that authentic learning about diversity and social justice requires students and teachers to be willing to take risks²⁵⁸. To prepare students to engage in challenging discussions and participate in their own learning processes, the conceptual shift from "safe space" to "brave space" may prove useful. Establishing "brave spaces" requires participants to be willing to go beyond their comfort zones to explore the issues at stake²⁵⁹.

Iversen proposes replacing "safe space" with the concept of "communities of dissent". A community of disagreement is defined as "a group with identity claims, made up of people with different opinions, who find themselves engaged in a common process in order to solve common problems or challenges"²⁶⁰. According to Iversen, a classroom defined as a "community of disagreement" can direct both teachers' and students' attention "to how these disagreements can be addressed, or even developed and transformed into learning"²⁶¹. Iversen's "community of disagreement" has much in common with Bost Room's concepts of "classroom as agora" and "classroom as congress". Consistent with the concept of "brave space", these concepts share the idea that the classroom should be a place where students are intellectually challenged, where they try different perspectives and positions, where they dare to see things in new ways, and where they can eventually be transformed by learning processes. The concepts of "brave space" and "classroom of disagreement" allude to courage, boldness, and controversy, factors that are elementary in the teaching-learning process²⁶².

²⁵⁷ Karin K. Flensner and Marie Von der Lippe, "Being safe from what and safe for whom? A critical discussion of the conceptual metaphor of 'safe space'", in *Intercultural Education*, 2019, 30:3, p. 279.

²⁵⁸ Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens, "From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: A New Way to Frame Dialogue around Diversity and Social Justice", in *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators*, edited by Lisa M. Landreman, 2013, p. 139.

²⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 143.

²⁶⁰ Lars L. Iversen, "From Safe Spaces to Communities of Disagreement", in *British Journal of Religious Education*, 2018, p. 10.

²⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

²⁶² Karin K. Flensner and Marie Von der Lippe, "Being safe from what and safe for whom? A critical discussion of the conceptual metaphor of 'safe space'", in *Intercultural Education*, 2019, 30:3, p. 284.

2. Tolerance as a form of social inclusion *versus* disregard as evidence of distancing from the community

Another aspect that differentiates the “snowflake millennials” from previous generations is that they are much more open to what they do not know and are more tolerant of issues that their “forefathers” used to consider “sensitive”. A survey by the Pew Research Center found that 47% of young people who are part of the “millennial generation” believe that allowing same-sex marriage is a good thing for our society. By comparison, only a third of “generation x” and about a quarter of “generation boomers” (27%) say that this is a good thing²⁶³.

In 2012, 93% of Americans who made up the “me generation” agreed with the statement, “I think it’s okay for blacks and whites to date each other”. The percentage of those who believed this in 1987 was 48%, or nearly half. Moreover, 60% of 20-year-olds said they had dated someone of a different race or ethnicity. On the other hand, in 2009, only 36% of “Generation Boomers” said that having more people of different races marry each other was a change for the better, compared to 60% of “GenMe”. Asked if they would accept someone in their family marrying someone of a different ethnicity/race, 55% of Boomers said yes, compared to 85% of “GenMe”²⁶⁴. In another survey, only 10% of young whites said marrying someone from their ethnic group was important. However, 45% said it was important to their parents, a more than four-fold increase²⁶⁵.

These figures show that the young “me generation” has significantly reduced cultural barriers that used to be insurmountable. By caring almost exclusively about themselves, external dynamics do not affect them as much as did their peers when they were the same age. The sense of community has diminished, which is why the power of the norm has diminished. Therefore, by moving away from the community, they also move away from its normative force. On the other hand, regarding direct references to their own person, those references that can easily fall into the realm of constructive criticism, young people react almost organically to those remarks. Criticism, which we have seen this generation perceive as “hate speech”, generates somatic reactions in their regard. For this reason, there are many cases in which this generation tends to develop predilections toward censoring others. This tendency is therefore the result of their criticism phobia that they have developed. The safest and most comfortable strategy is to limit the freedom of expression of others. According to a Pew Research Center poll, 40% of American millennials support censoring a governor’s speech on minorities, whether ethnic or sexual²⁶⁶.

²⁶³ Jasmine Andrea, “Are we the most tolerant or intolerant generation in history?”, November 19, 2020, Available at: <https://www.amadorvalleytoday.org/9884/news/are-we-the-most-tolerant-or-intolerant-generation-in-history/>, Accessed on May 3, 2023.

²⁶⁴ Marie J. Twenge, *op. cit.*, 2006, p. 61.

²⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 63.

²⁶⁶ Jacob Poushter, “40% of Millennials OK with limiting speech offensive to minorities”, November 20, 2015, in *Pew Research Center*, Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2015/11/20/40-of-millennial-s-ok-with-limiting-speech-offensive-to-minorities/>, Accessed on May 12, 2023.

Young people who fall into the category we have agreed to call “millennial snowflakes” are tolerant of others as long as they do not perceive them as potential critics of themselves. From this perspective, these young people may be open to the new and willing to break down cultural barriers once considered unbeatable. The condition for this openness to last is the permanent assurance of the need for security and comfort in relation to oneself.

3. Virtuosity *versus* slow maturation

A range of data on several issues shows that young millennial snowflakes have higher rates of socially desirable behaviors than previous generations. David Finkelhor, professor of sociology and director of the Family Research Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire, says crime among these young people has declined. For example, arrests for serious crimes committed by young people fell by approximately 60% from 1994 to 2011. Juvenile arrests have declined faster over the past decade than adult arrests. Youth property crime is also at its lowest level in 30 years. Youth rape and other sexual offences have fallen. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, the number of sexual assaults against 12-to 17-year-olds has more than halved since the mid-1990s. The number of arrests for sex crimes has also declined. Three national and statewide surveys have confirmed these declines. Teen violence at school dropped 60% from 1992 to 2012, according to Justice Department data. School homicides, which rarely exceed a few dozen a year, were fewer in the 2000s than in the 1990s²⁶⁷.

Moreover, teen pregnancy has reached record lows in the United States, and the percentage of ninth graders who say they have had sex has dropped from 54% in 1991 to 47% in 2013. The percentage of high school students who say they have had four or more sexual partners has also dropped²⁶⁸. According to a study of a sample of 33,000 people published in the Archives of Sexual Behavior, “millennials” have less sex than their parents when they were the same age. In fact, they are twice as likely to be virgins compared with “Gen Xers” when they were their age²⁶⁹. Furthermore, the same study shows that almost half of twenty-somethings have not had sex at all in the past year²⁷⁰. Young people also show much more self-control regarding substances. Binge drinking by 12th graders is lower than at any time since surveys began in 1976. The number of teens who have been drinking in the past year is at a record low, and the drop for eighth-graders is remarkable. According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, the

²⁶⁷ David Finkelhor, “Are kids getting more virtuous?”, November 26, 2014, in *Washington Post*, Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-kids-are-all-right-after-all/2014/11/26/63b9e494-70fe-11e4-8808-afaa1e3a33ef_story.html, Accessed on May 3, 2023.

²⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁶⁹ Mandy Oaklander, “Millennials Are Having Way Less Sex Than Their Parents”, August 3, 2016, in *Time*, Available at: <https://time.com/4435058/millennials-virgins-sex/>, Accessed on June 30, 2023.

²⁷⁰ Charlotte Alter, “Why Millennials Might Be Having Less Sex Than Their Parents”, May 8, 2015, in *Time*, Available at: <https://time.com/3852117/millennials-sex-parents-boomers/?iid=sr-link6>, Accessed on June 18, 2023.

number of high school students who reported driving a car after consuming alcohol in 2011 was reduced by half compared with 1991²⁷¹.

Children are also much less likely to run away from home and are much more conscientious about finishing school. Compared with 1995, the number of young people who ran away from home fell by 56% in 2012. Dropout rates among 16-24-year-olds are at their lowest level ever, falling from 17% in 1968 to 6,6% in 2013. This performance may be due to more prevention and intervention programmes for parents, families and children using more effective strategies. In addition, more psychiatric medications have been offered to children and their parents. Although controversial, such drugs reduce aggression, depression, and hyperactivity, all of which contribute to conflict and risk-taking. Then there is the internet, electronic games, and related technology that have combined to alleviate boredom, one of the main drivers of teenage mischief. Mobile phones keep kids in touch with their parents and friends, making it easier to call for help or get advice when they get into trouble. Moreover, perhaps risk-taking has migrated, like everything else, into the electronic world²⁷².

According to a federal survey conducted in the US, drug and alcohol use among teenagers has dropped considerably. The Monitoring the Future survey, conducted on a sample of approximately 50,000 high school students, found that far fewer teens reported using any illicit drug other than marijuana in the past 12 months – 5%, 10%, and 14% in grades 8, 10, and recording the lowest percentages since 1991. Alcohol and cigarette use among teens is also at historic lows. Of all students surveyed in 2016, just over 36% had consumed alcohol in the previous year. This figure is down by almost half from the peak in 1991, when 67% of high school students consumed alcohol. Similarly, in 1991, 63% of the 12th graders had smoked cigarettes at some point in their lives. As of this year, that number has dropped to 28%. Marijuana use declined among eighth – and 10th – graders and remained unchanged among 12th-graders, according to the survey. In 2016, 9.4% of eighth graders, 24% of 10th graders, and 36% of 12th graders used marijuana in the past year. In all three grades combined, marijuana use declined for the third consecutive year in 2016²⁷³.

According to another study, teenagers are increasingly putting off activities that have long been seen as “rituals” of transition to adulthood. The study, published in the journal *Child Development*, found that the percentage of U.S. teens who have a driver’s license, have tried alcohol, date, and work for pay has declined since 1976, with the steepest decline in a decade. Declines have occurred in all racial,

²⁷¹ David Finkelhor, “Are kids getting more virtuous?”, November 26, 2014, in *Washington Post*, Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-kids-are-all-right-after-all/2014/11/26/63b9e494-70fe-11e4-8808-afaa1e3a33ef_story.html, Accessed on May 3, 2023.

²⁷² *Ibidem*.

²⁷³ Christopher Ingraham, “Today’s teens are way better behaved than you were”, December 13, 2016, in *Washington Post*, Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/12/13/todays-teens-are-way-better-behaved-than-you-were/>, Accessed on May 3, 2023.

geographic, and socioeconomic categories and in rural, urban, and suburban areas. More than half of the teens still engage in these activities, but the majority have shrunk considerably. Between 1976 and 1979, 86% of high school seniors dated; between 2010 and 2015, only 63% did, the study found. Over the same period, the proportion who had tried alcohol plummeted from 93% between 1976 and 1979 to 67% between 2010 and 2016²⁷⁴.

Psychologist Jean M. Twenge warns us that the maturation of young people is characterized by a process of slowing down, arising from the need for comfort and safety created both by schools through the “safe spaces” movement and by parents through overprotective policies (illustrated by “helicopter parents”). In other words, young people delay making decisions or experiencing experiences previously associated with maturation²⁷⁵.

4. Digital natives versus digital addiction

In 2001, Prensky²⁷⁶, building on the concepts of “net generation” and “millennials” advocated by Tapscott (1998)²⁷⁷, and Howe and Strauss (2000)²⁷⁸, wrote about and popularised the idea of a “digital generation”, talking about “digital natives”. “Digital generation”, “digital natives”, “net generation”, “millennials” are experienced users of technology. Although the ideas of Prensky, Tapscott, Howe, and Strauss were picked up by the media fairly quickly and widely, it was not until 2005, with the publication of Oblinger’s paper *Educating the Net Generation*, that they began to gain ground in the academic communities²⁷⁹. Millennials are the generation reaping the benefits of technology the most. They are much more inclined to use technology than previous generations, such as baby boomers or Generation X,

²⁷⁴ Tara Bahrapour, “Not drinking or driving, teens increasingly put off traditional markers of adulthood”, September 19, 2017, in *Washington Post*, Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/ neither- drinking- nor- driving- more- teens- are- putting- off- traditional- markers- of- adulthood/2017/09/18/b46027a0-93f1-11e7-8754-d478688d23b4_story.html, Accessed on May 3, 2023.

²⁷⁵ Marie J. Twenge, *Generația internetului, sau iGen: de ce copiii, adolescenții și tinerii din zilele noastre sunt mai puțini rebeli, ceva mai toleranți, categoric mai rar fericiți și aproape deloc pregătiți pentru maturitate* [*The internet generation, or iGen: why today’s children, teenagers and young people are less rebellious, slightly more tolerant, definitely less happy and hardly ready for adulthood at all*], translated by Loredana Bucuroaia, Bucharest, Baroque & Arts Publishing, 2020, p. 36.

²⁷⁶ See:

1. Marc Prensky, “Digital natives, digital immigrants: Part 1”, in *On the Horizon*, 2001a, 9(5), pp. 1–6.

2. Marc Prensky, “Digital natives, digital immigrants: Part 2. Do they really think differently?”, in *On the Horizon*, 2001b, 9(6), pp. 1–6.

²⁷⁷ Don Tapscott, *Growing up digital: The rise of the net generation*, New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 1998.

²⁷⁸ Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, New York, NY Vintage, 2000.

²⁷⁹ Diana G. Oblinger and James L. Oblinger (editors), *Educating the net generation*, Boulder, CO EDUCAUSE, 2005.

and are becoming good technology professionals²⁸⁰. Hershatte and Epstein stated that for “millennials” technology is like a “sixth sense”²⁸¹.

Ones and Hosein define “digital natives” as people who have been immersed in technology since birth²⁸². Because they were born with technology, “millennials” naturally operate with it. The other generations, compared to them, referring of course to the ability to use technology, can be considered “immigrants” in this field²⁸³. The affinity for technology has led Eastman *et al.* to consider their portable devices and gadgets as body parts. However, as a generation that uses computers a lot, millennials are becoming afflicted by what experts call “computer overload”²⁸⁴. From this viewpoint, technology is risky because it is addictive. In other words, by being constantly connected to the virtual world, young people risk forgetting how to behave in the real world.

Prensky said that students, as a result of using technology, were not only acting but also thinking differently²⁸⁵. This means that due to the frequent and repeated use of technology, the brain develops the ability to adapt to repeated stimuli. In other words, neural plasticity undergoes significant transformations. From Prensky’s perspective, these adaptations are largely positive, allowing digital natives to excel at online multitasking, information gathering, and corroboration. On the positive side, online multitasking improves multitasking performance on simple, repetitive tasks and in everyday life²⁸⁶.

However, multitasking has a negative impact on memory because the attention level decreases²⁸⁷, which is why students are advised to limit the use of PCs during study²⁸⁸. Similarly, brain imaging studies suggest that the use of and reliance on

²⁸⁰ Joseph C. Velasco and Jeremy De Chavez, “Millennial work ethic: A preliminary investigation of the work ethic profile of Filipino university students”, in *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 2018, 9(6), pp. 121–130.

²⁸¹ Andrea Hershatte and Molly Epstein, “Millennials and the world of work: An organization and management perspective”, in *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 2010, 25(2), pp. 211–223.

²⁸² Chris Jones and Anesa Hosein, “Profiling university students’ use of technology: Where is the net generation divide?”, in *The International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society*, 2010, 6(3), pp. 43–58.

²⁸³ Christopher S. Alexander and James M. Sysko, “I’m Gen Y, I love feeling entitled, and it shows”, in *Academy of Educational Leadership*, 2013, 17(4), pp. 127–131.

²⁸⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁸⁵ Marc Prensky, “Digital natives, digital immigrants: Part 2. Do they really think differently?”, in *On the Horizon*, 2001b, 9(6), pp. 1–6.

²⁸⁶ Paul E. Dux *et al.*, “Training improves multitasking performance by increasing the speed of information processing in human prefrontal cortex”, in *Neuron*, 2009, 16(1), pp. 127–138.

²⁸⁷ See:

1. Kep K. Loh and Ryota Kanai, “How has the Internet reshaped human cognition?”, in *The Neuroscientist*, 2015, 22(5), pp. 506–520.

2. M. Moisa *et al.*, “Media multitasking is associated with distractibility and increased prefrontal activity in adolescents and young adults”, in *NeuroImage*, 2016, 134, pp. 113–121.

²⁸⁸ See:

1. Terry Judd, “Task selection, task switching and multitasking during computer-based independent study”, in *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 2015, 31(2), pp. 193–207.

2. Larry D. Rosen *et al.*, “Facebook and texting made me do it: Media-induced task-switching while studying”, in *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2013, 29(3), pp. 1243–1254.

online information can lead to poor retention and shallowness in information processing²⁸⁹. Social media use is often linked to positive outcomes, such as helping users develop and maintain social capital and self-esteem²⁹⁰. However, it has also been associated with negative effects among younger users, such as poorer academic results²⁹¹, and depression and anxiety among some users²⁹². Therefore, such a deep penetration of technology into young people's lives has both positive and negative aspects. However, it is important to avoid over-abundance in the use of technology as a lack of measurement creates imbalances.

CONCLUSIONS

The “millennial snowflake” generation, those young people born between 1980 and 2000, has generated much discussion on their behavior. Born and living in a society characterized by a culture of affluence, they no longer feel the pressure experienced by their predecessors. The discourse and counter-discourse that has emerged around this generation is paradoxical. Studies have shown that young people have the highest level of self-confidence among all generations. However, we can also speak of an exacerbated vulnerability, which brings us to the subject of “safe spaces”. Reflecting economic, social, and historical changes, the “snowflake millennials” want to extend their comfortable home environment into high school or even university environments out of a need for safety. However, the idea of a “safe space”, so as not to hinder the teaching–learning process by censoring ideas, can be replaced by the notion of “communities of dialogue”. In this way, both the free expression of ideas and the debate about them, with arguments for and against, are encouraged, which only strengthens the mental and intellectual resilience of young people.

On the other hand, this generation is proving to be the most tolerant yet on issues such as race and sexual orientation, etc., overcoming cultural barriers that their predecessors found intolerable. This is another paradoxical aspect of their situation as they are sensitive to criticism, which they label as “hate speech” against themselves, but at the same time they are particularly open to the idea of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and sexual diversity. This tolerance can be explained by an individual's distancing from the community. In other words, they are predominantly affected only by the social dynamics that directly affect them.

Statistics and studies show that young people born between 1980 and 2000 show more prosocial behaviour than their peers (fewer people drink alcohol, fewer

²⁸⁹ Kep K. Loh and Ryota Kanai, “How has the Internet reshaped human cognition?”, in *The Neuroscientist*, 2015, 22(5), pp. 506–520.

²⁹⁰ Nicole B. Ellison *et al.*, “Social capital, self-esteem, and use of online social network sites: A longitudinal analysis”, in *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 29(6), pp. 434–445.

²⁹¹ Aryn C. Karpinski *et al.*, “An exploration of social networking site user, multitasking, and academic performance among United States and European university students”, in *Computers in Human Behavior*, 2013, 29(3), pp. 1182–1192.

²⁹² Mark W. Becker *et al.*, “Media multitasking is associated with symptoms of depression and social anxiety”, in *Cyberpsychology, Behaviour and Social Networking*, 2013, 16(2), pp. 132–135.

sex offenders, fewer homicides, fewer drug users, etc.). From this viewpoint, the remark about the virtuousness of young people among the “millennial snowflake” is legitimate. On the other hand, actions that we used to classify as typical of adulthood are being postponed because the maturing of young people is characterised by a slowing down process, arising from the need for comfort and safety created both by schools through the “safe spaces” movement and by parents through overprotective policies (illustrated by “helicopter parents”).

Moreover, being born and living in a digital age has turned young millennial snowflakes into what experts in the field call “digital natives”. They naturally operate with technology, are good at it, and have developed specific, multitasking skills. In other words, they can successfully manage multiple tasks if they do not involve complex tasks. However, this can also be a disadvantage in that it weakens the ability to concentrate, memorise, and think things through. Young people’s presence online can also contribute positively to “feeding” self-esteem by maintaining or developing social capital. However, exclusive online presence is addictive and leads to anxiety and depression in the long term because the foundation of social capital is face-to-face interaction.

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THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE “SNOWFLAKE- MILLENNIAL” / “ME GENERATION” / “EGOCENTRIC GENERATION”

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ABSTRACT

This material discusses some sociological and other theories that can explain the snowflake generation phenomenon. In this article, we focus only on the “millennial snowflake”, i.e., those young people born between 1980 and 2000 whose main problematic traits are: loneliness, hypersensitivity, and fear. Therefore, we address these issues by providing a theoretical explanation of the problem. The approach will be complementary and will consider both classical and modern/contemporary theories.

Keywords: generation, millennial, snowflake, snowflake generation, snowflake millennial.

SHORT INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes a complementary approach to the discourse on the “snowflake generation”. The term “snowflake generation” was originally used to refer to “millennials” or “generation y”, i.e., those born between 1980 and 2000, but later included “generation z”, or those born after 2000. Thus, it should be noted that this paper refers to the category of young people born between 1980 and 2000, which we will understand by the conceptual term “snowflake millennial” or “self-generated generation” (“snowflake” from Claire Fox²⁹⁴, and “millennials” from Neil Howe and William Strauss²⁹⁵). In the recent literature, which appeared around 2010, this category of young people is also referred to as “GenMe” or “generation me”. To delimit in time the generational categories with which I will work, I have used the most common division: Baby Boomers (around 1943–1960), Generation X (1961–1981) and Millennials (1982–1999), who we also meet under the name of

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²⁹⁴ See:

1. Claire Fox, *I find that offensive*, Great Britain, Biteback Publishing Ltd, 2016.
2. Claire Fox, *I still find that offensive*, Great Britain, Biteback Publishing Ltd, 2018.

²⁹⁵ Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, New York, NY Vintage, 2000.

“Generation Me”. The corollary of this term in Romanian is “egocentric generation” or “self-centred”.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES

1. Classic

1.1. Cooley and Mead – Symbolic interactionism: mirror self and generalized self. From complete personality to disaggregated personality

Symbolic interactionism is a theory of sociology that addresses how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions between individuals. This perspective emerged in the mid-20th century from various influences, including Scottish moralist theory and American pragmatist philosophers. The greatest influence was the American philosopher George Herbert Mead (1932)²⁹⁶, and his theories of the relationship between the self and society. The emergence of symbolic interactionism was a response to the perspectives on society that dominated sociology at the time. These dominant, positivist approaches tend to examine society from the top down, focusing on the impact of institutions and social structures at the macro level and how they impose themselves on and constrain individuals²⁹⁷.

Symbolic interactionism also has its origins in Weberian sociology in that it attaches great importance to the meanings that actors attribute to the actions they perform. In symbolic interactionism, the self is the foundation of social phenomena, and society is a network of intersubjectivities, where each individual “projects his or herself in relation to a symbol and a significant Other”. The self is “causa movens” when it is the product of significant, *i.e.*, internalised, interactions with a significant Other, with the community and with the group²⁹⁸.

The great merit of symbolic interactionism lies in the idea that the self, or more precisely the self, is the result of interaction between people. In fact, social space is the result of mental interaction between individuals. These interactions are managed using symbols. Two major contributions of this field are the mirror self (Cooley) and the generalised self (Mead)²⁹⁹. The self is an insects image of the self and is made up of

“the image of our appearance at the level of the other; our perception of the others opinion of our image, feelings related to self-perception such as self-esteem (...)”³⁰⁰.

²⁹⁶ George Herbert Mead, *Mind Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, Edited by Charles W. Morris, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1932.

²⁹⁷ Michael J. Carter and Celene Fuller, “Symbolic interactionism”, in *Sociopedia*, 2015, pp. 1–17.

²⁹⁸ Radu Baltasiu, *Introducere în sociologie. Spiritualitate, națiune și capitalism. Considerații de sociologie românească și weberiană [Introduction to Sociology. Spirituality, nation and capitalism. Considerations of Romanian and Weberian sociology]*, Craiova, Beladi Publishing, 2007, p. 80.

²⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 81.

³⁰⁰ Charles Horton Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order (Revised edition)*, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922, p. 184.

The social self is on the one hand ideation and on the other hand social:

“The social self is simply any idea, or ideational system, drawn from everyday interdependence which the mind cherishes as its own”³⁰¹.

Charles Cooley³⁰² described the idea of the mirror self, which is now an accepted part of modern social psychology and symbolic interaction. This idea contains two fundamental points. Self-awareness involves continuous monitoring of the self from the viewpoint of others. As Cooley put it we “live in the minds of others without knowing it”. Second, living in the minds of others imaginatively causes real and powerful emotions, such as pride or shame³⁰³.

For Mead, social reality is both a mental product and the result of interactions between people, which are managed with symbols. Therefore, man (the mind) is the result of symbolic interactions. Society is the place where we receive responses from others, responses that are organized according to symbols and that include the perceived attitude of the other towards the social actor³⁰⁴. Bearing in mind the interactive nature of the genesis of the self, Mead points out that

“the level of development of the self depends as much on the native sensitivity of the insect as on its ability to perceive its reflections in the Other – the reflective intelligence”³⁰⁵.

From this point of view

“the self is simply the organization by the individual organism of the set of attitudes towards its social environment and those directed towards itself as a functional element in the broad framework of the social experience of which it is a part”³⁰⁶.

Intelligence, on the other hand, is the ability to solve problems, judging the situation mainly in terms of the possible consequences of adopting a certain behavior. Assessing the situation and determining solutions are based mainly on past experiences. From this perspective, an intelligent person draws on the past, on tradition, which we understand here as “social memory and foresight”³⁰⁷. In this sense, reflective intelligence is the foundation of rational thought. For Mead, rationality starts not only from imagination and internalization but also from interaction with the other³⁰⁸.

Man is concerned with unity and wholeness. This concern can be seen even at the level of the processes by which the self is constituted. Man is a social and sociable being only because of the social relationship he has with those around him: “The organized community or social group that provides the insect with the unity of the

³⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 179.

³⁰² *Ibidem*.

³⁰³ Thomas J. Scheff, “Looking-Glass Self: Goffman as Symbolic Interactionist”, in *Symbolic Interaction*, 2005, Vol. 28, Issue 2, p. 147.

³⁰⁴ George Herbert Mead, *op. cit.*, p. 189, quoted by Radu Baltasiu, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

³⁰⁵ Radu Baltasiu, *op. cit.*, pp. 83–84.

³⁰⁶ George Herbert Mead, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

³⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 100, quoted by Radu Baltasiu, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

³⁰⁸ Radu Baltasiu, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

self is called the Generalized Other”³⁰⁹. In other words, the self is constructed by “taking the attitudes of others and crystallizing them into a single attitude or reference point that we call the generalized Other”³¹⁰. Therefore, the self emerges through internalization and reflection of the attitudes of those around you. Notions once internalized become “meanings – symbols – realities with unitary meanings for all members of the community”³¹¹. The ability to operate with essentials is the ability to symbolize. This capacity is an essential process of consciousness and a premise of social interaction³¹².

Given that the self is the result of several social processes, there is a risk that it is an agglomeration of meanings. When these meanings are not unified and internalised, we may face a crisis of personality³¹³. Thus

“to have a harmoniously developed personality, the self must be unified. The unification of the self is possible if the personal experiences are unified or is helped to perceive them as such”³¹⁴.

The unified self of Meads’ sociology is

“perhaps the most significant acquisition of interactionism (...) because it warns us, among other things, of the fragility of this noological reality, which is the self and which, Mead observes, can be ‘unravelling’ (...) The unified self is the ‘complete self’, so that we can imagine persons not only with disaggregated selves but also with incomplete selves. This is a disturbing question that was not examined by Mead. However, it has been extensively and profoundly researched by C. Rădulescu Motru in his theory of two types of noological reality: the ‘incomplete’ one (semi-culture) and the ‘clear’ one (pseudo-culture). Semi-culture and pseudo-culture are great problems and dangers of modern societies. Their manifestation can amplify and indefinitely maintain the ills of the social body (‘young societies’)”³¹⁵.

Therefore, the need for the other is a fundamental necessity for the harmonious development of the human personality. In the digital environment, this need is superficially satisfied because you never know exactly who or how the other person is (for example, the photos they post are happy, while their real state is sad). Interaction online is artificial as genuine relationships cannot be created very often. Young people’s disconnection from reality and their predominant, if not exclusive, socialisation online leads to a poorly developed ability to make connections, to memorise information and operate with it, but also to operate with symbols or to think in context, because these are all attributes of face-to-face human interaction. In

³⁰⁹ George Herbert Mead, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

³¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

³¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 47, quoted by Radu Baltasiu, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³¹² Radu Baltasiu, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³¹³ George Herbert Mead, *op. cit.*, p. 144, quoted by *Ibidem*, pp. 85–86.

³¹⁴ Radu Baltasiu, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

³¹⁵ Ilie Bădescu, *Noologia. Cunoașterea ordinii spirituale a lumii. Sistem de sociologie noologică [Noology. Knowledge of the spiritual order of the world. System of sociological noology]*, Bucharest, Little Wallachia Publishing, 2002, p. 47.

this vein, the risk of those who sail a good part of the day of having an incomplete self is much higher.

In the online environment Mead's "generalised other" is artificial, which is why interaction between people can degrade. Moreover, the "unified self", which we have seen as the foundation of a harmonious personality, is distorted because in the virtual environment, it is much harder to unify experiences or to perceive them in this way. It can be said from a certain point of view that a certain illusion of unifying experiences is created that disappears the moment you are no longer online, hence the need to always be "connected". Moreover, the "mirror of the self" is not real and checking the veracity and distinguishing what is real from what is not can often be impossible, as the idea of control does not exist. Thus, the appearance and perception of the "mirror" is seriously altered. In the virtual environment, the conditions for the development of a disaggregated self are conducive as you only have access to fragments of experiences, only "pieces" of the other, and unification is very difficult, even impossible, to achieve.

1.2. Vilfredo Pareto: the residues of sociability – the nostratic feeling

Humans are social and sociable beings, which is why we cannot think of human society outside its members, just as man cannot exist outside society. Like the brain, society is a form of social interaction and inter-existence³¹⁶. The human quality of being a social being and the property of society to constitute itself as a form of human interaction is called by Ion Ungureanu sociality³¹⁷. Sociability, on the other hand, can be defined as the ability of a person or group of people to integrate into society³¹⁸. The paradigm of residues of sociability has two major concepts at its core: residue and derivation. Derivation is a pseudological form of feelings, instincts, etc. that cannot be experimentally verified³¹⁹. The residue, on the other hand, is a constant part of the derivations/roots of sociability, which is not seen³²⁰.

In Pareto's view, disciplined people are sociable beings, as he analyses sociability as a residual form of discipline³²¹. Discipline is the source of social order, and order is a need of human collectivities. This is also made possible by nostratic feeling, which is a residue of sociability. This residue faces many challenges in contemporary society because of exacerbated individualism. For Vilfredo Pareto, nostratic feelings are

“(...) the residue that allows individuals to legitimise themselves collectively and thus maximise their personal power. ‘The utility’ for society of this feeling lies in the ‘horizontal’ discipline it imposes on individuals (...)”³²².

³¹⁶ Ion Ungureanu, *Paradigme ale cunoașterii societății [Paradigms of Knowledge of Society]*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing, 1990, p. 22.

³¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

³¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

³¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

³²⁰ *Ibidem*.

³²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

³²² *Ibidem*, pp. 30–31.

In other words, the source of individual power is collective. Therefore, in order not to be excluded from the collective, the individual obeys the rules of the group, disciplining himself.

Beyond the fact that the sense of us disciplines us, it stores memory, and there is an interdependent relationship between the sense of us, faith, and memory. For example, the “millennial snowflake” generation, with diminished faith and reduced nostalgic feeling, is strongly individualised, forgetting that the world did not begin with them precisely because they have no memory of their ancestors. But because man is a social and sociable being, and therefore cannot live outside the community except in precarious “forms”, as a victim of his own selfishness he “savages” himself, in the sense of aggressiveness. A curious hypostasis: victim and aggressor at the same time.

2. Modern

2.1. Howard Becker, labeling theory, and William I. Thomas' theorem

Social labeling theory was developed in 1960 by the sociologist Howard Becker. Several authors contributed to its development, including Emil Durkheim and George Herbert Mead, and later Frank Tannenbaum, Edwin Lemert, Albert Memmi, Erving Goffman, and David Matza. Becker's perspective explains the behavior of the deviant. In short, behaviors are considered deviant by those in charge who have the power to define what is and is not deviant. Applying this principle to young people it can be said that they are deviant because they have been labelled. However, this only denotes the weakness of today's young people who lack the strength to prove that what others argue about them is false.

On the other hand, Thomas' Theorem shows us that “if people define a situation as real, that situation is real by the consequences of defining it as real”³²³. With this idea, the American sociologist opposed the idea that the individual is only a social product and stated that he is also a creation of society, in the sense that man is the result of human interaction³²⁴. Thomas' theory shows that social structures exist because they are subjectively defined by the people who compose them. In this vein, the “millennial snowflake” generation would exist because we relate to them in this way. However, the fragility of the generation is again clear because it lacks the strength to resist labelling. The decrease in individual strength is directly related to the decrease in the sense of the nostratic because, as we have seen, the community is the source of individual strength.

However, studies show that young people believe that labelling themselves as “snowflakes” is damaging to their mental health. According to a survey of 2,022 Britons aged 16 to 24, almost three-quarters of young people in the sample think the label (snowflake) is unfair. The controversial term “snowflake” is also sometimes

³²³ William I. Thomas, *The unadjusted girl*, Boston, Little Brown, 1923, p. 41.

³²⁴ Ion Ungureanu, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

used to describe young adults. They are often seen as prone to offending and emotionally vulnerable³²⁵. These thoughts were shared by adults of all ages, with 58% saying the label was unfairly applied, according to the survey. Another 57% felt that the term “snowflake generation” could also be damaging to the mental health of young people. Another survey, published by Aviva, found that young people aged 16–24 years were the most affected by mental health problems. Approximately three in five have suffered from a mental health condition, compared with just under half of adults aged over 24. Approximately 46% of young adults say they have suffered from anxiety in the past 12 months, which is significantly higher than the 35% of adults³²⁶.

To reduce anxiety and mental disorders, high schools and universities have introduced measures that have created much debate. For example, one study revealed that first-year students are given Paddington Bear-style “safety bracelets” with their address and contact details in case of an emergency. The controversial scheme, implemented in Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Exeter, has sparked backlash and been branded “immature” by academics. Oxford University’s principal criticised the “snowflake generation” and urged young students to be stronger. Professor Louise Richardson urged them to challenge views with which they disagree rather than take offense at petty comments³²⁷.

At a business initiative event called the “European Leaders Roundtable” held in 2018 as part of European Advertising Week, Karen Stacey, Executive Director of DCM, argued that the very term “millennial” prevents leaders from understanding young people entering their businesses. Stacey challenged the “snowflake” stereotype of 18–34-year-olds and said such labels can become self-fulfilling if not challenged early on. “I hate labels because I think they make young people end up becoming those labels”, Stacey said. Stuart Flint, vice president of EMEA at Oath, said many young people conform to the stereotype of having “low motivation and self-esteem” and needing “instant gratification”³²⁸.

According to labelling theory, the stigma of being labelled mentally ill will make a person mentally ill because of the effects described, functioning as a self-fulfilling prophecy. According to a modified version of the theory, assumptions about causality are omitted and only the negative impact on self-concept is

³²⁵ Stephen Matthews, “Labelling millennials ‘snowflakes’ damages their mental health, reveals survey of 16–24 year olds”, December 6, 2017, in *Daily Mail*, Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-5151733/Calling-youngsters-snowflakes-damages-mental-health.html>, Accessed on May 3, 2023.

³²⁶ *Ibidem*.

³²⁷ *Ibidem*.

³²⁸ Alex Brownsell, “Forget ‘generation snowflake’, such labels are an excuse for poor leadership, says DCM chief”, March 19, 2018, in *Campaign Live*, Available at: <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/forget-generation-snowflake-labels-excuse-poor-leadership-says-dcm-chief/1459788>, Accessed on May 3, 2023.

addressed. This impact is described in later research on stigma and self-stigma. Stigma can have negative consequences on self-concept by decreasing self-efficacy, which fosters dysfunctional coping styles and ultimately reduces quality of life³²⁹.

The literature argues that labelling has a negative impact on self-concept. Self-concept is defined as everything a person knows and believes about themselves³³⁰. Two components of self-concept are particularly important: self-esteem (which is the evaluative aspect of self-concept)³³¹, and self-efficacy (which is a person's subjective sense of competence – it is the idea that a person can exert control over their environment)³³². In short, labelling theory describes the negative impact of labelling on self-esteem and self-efficacy³³³.

Sociologist T. J. Scheff says that people internalize stereotypes. For example, if a person is labelled mentally ill, the information once internalised becomes relevant because it dominates the person's self-concept. In other words, you behave as others expect you to behave. According to Scheff, the person has no choice but to act according to these role expectations: he mentally becomes ill³³⁴.

Two decades later, Link and his collaborators developed a modified version of the labelling theory. The most important difference between the updated version and Scheff's theory was the removal of causality connotations. Thus, the new theory makes no claim that labelling caused mental illness. Link modified Scheff's model and tested it. In Link's model, the negative consequences of labelling are mediated by maladaptive coping responses. People's self-efficacy is affected by the label that has been placed on them. Because people diagnosed with a mental illness expect rejection, Link and his colleagues have argued that they act in a way that fosters rejection, and this rejection affects self-esteem³³⁵.

In the modified labelling theory, diagnosis is assumed to have a negative influence on self-concept through stigma and stigma expectations. Recently, research has focused more on how these factors affect self-concept. A common expression in the Netherlands is that "it's better to have a broken leg than a depression". People have a hard time understanding mental disorders and do not openly talk about them. Those

³²⁹ Joëlle Pasman, "The Consequences of Labeling Mental Illnesses on the Self-concept: A Review of the Literature and Future Directions", in *Social Cosmos Journal*, s.a., p. 122.

³³⁰ Michael Gazzaniga *et al.*, *Psychological Science*, (3rd Ed.), New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2010, Available at: <https://mog.dog/files/Psychological%20Science%20%282015%29%20-%20Michael%20Gazzaniga%20et%20Al.pdf>, Accessed on June 20, 2023.

³³¹ Richard J. Shavelson and Roger Bolus, "Self-concept: The Interplay of Theory and Methods", in *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1982, 74, pp. 3–17.

³³² Albert Bandura, *Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, New York, W. H. Freeman, 1997.

³³³ Joëlle Pasman, "The Consequences of Labelling Mental Illnesses on the Self-concept: A Review of the Literature and Future Directions", in *Social Cosmos Journal*, s.a., p. 122.

³³⁴ Thomas J. Scheff, *Being Mentally Ill: A Sociological Theory*, Chicago, Aldine, 1966.

³³⁵ Bruce G. Link *et al.*, "A Modified Labelling Theory Perspective to Mental Disorders: An Empirical Assessment", in *American Sociological Review*, 1989, 54, pp. 400–423.

who are diagnosed with a mental disorder often feel ashamed because of it³³⁶. According to Corrigan, labelling leads to a sense of “grouping” and “difference”³³⁷, creates a sense of “us” normal people and “them” mentally ill people³³⁸.

However, Jean M. Twenge points out that these findings do not “stereotype” generations, because the studies compare empirical data on generational differences, not the perceptions of others. However, these comparisons are based on averages. Not all members of a generation fit the average. However, generational studies are far from unique in this regard: every scientific study that examines differences between groups uses age averages. Sex differences are a good example. Some men cry more than some women, but these exceptions do not undermine the finding that, on average, women cry more often than men. Some GenMe people are extraordinarily humble, but this does not negate the finding that the average GenMe, compared to previous generations of the same age, is less humble. These findings do not seek to label all those of this generation; instead, they seek to uncover how, on average, cultural change has affected young people³³⁹.

3. Contemporary

3.1. Social brain theory

Memory is stored collectively, or a highly individualised human will face cognitive challenges from this point of view (of memory and social intelligence). A national survey by Trending Machine contradicts the generally accepted notion that forgetting comes with age and shows that millennials aged 18–34 forget twice or even three times as much as those 55 and older: they forget what day it is (15% vs. 7%), where they put their keys (14% vs. 8%), to get their lunch (9% vs. 3%) or even to take a bath or shower (6% vs. 2%). Patricia Gutentag, a family and occupational therapist, said forgetfulness is an effect of the high levels of stress experienced by young people³⁴⁰. According to a new survey by the American Psychological Association “millennials” are more stressed than any previous generation³⁴¹. The Deloitte Millennial Survey 2020 shows that 44% of millennials worldwide say they

³³⁶ Joëlle Pasman, “The Consequences of Labeling Mental Illnesses on the Self-concept: A Review of the Literature and Future Directions”, in *Social Cosmos Journal*, s.a., p. 124.

³³⁷ Patrick W. Corrigan *et al.*, “The Self-stigma of Mental Illness: Implications for Self-esteem and Self-efficacy”, in *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 2006, 25, pp. 875–884.

³³⁸ Sue R. Noe, “Discrimination Against Individuals With Mental Illness”, in *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 1997, 63, pp. 20–27.

³³⁹ Jean M. Twenge, *op. cit.*, 2006, p. 14.

³⁴⁰ Shelley Emling, “Study Shows Millennials Are More Forgetful Than Seniors”, August 2, 2013, in *The Huffington Post*, Available at: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/millennialforgetfulness_n_3695512, Accessed on August 8, 2023.

³⁴¹ Michelle Castillo, “Millennials are the most stressed generation, survey finds”, February 11, 2013, in *CBS News*, Available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/millennialsare-the-most-stressed-generation-survey-finds/>, Accessed on August 13, 2023.

are stressed all the time³⁴². Incidentally, UK premium car and courier service Addison Lee surveyed a sample of over 7,000 people and found that “millennials”, not seniors, are the most forgetful generation in the UK: 62% of millennials describe themselves as forgetful, compared to just 43% of over-65s³⁴³.

Scientists at the US National Institute of Mental Health say that the maturation of the human brain continues until the age of 25, but when it is constantly assaulted by bright screens, the development process is impaired. Brain development varies depending on how it is used. Given that texting and surfing the internet use different parts of the brain than reading or talking, neuroscientists have hypothesized that those parts of the brain not used tend to lose functionality. To this end, researchers at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing have shown that there are changes in the way the prefrontal cortex, cerebellum, and parietal lobe mature, in that their activity is slowed down³⁴⁴. In this case, it is no surprise that young people start forgetting things. Moreover, if we add to this the fact that this category of young people gets little sleep and most of the time it is not quality sleep, we can get a more accurate picture of the factors that influence memory.

Robin Dunbar established as long ago as 1998 that regarding cognitive activity, the part of the brain called the neocortex should be closely studied. The neocortex is generally regarded as the seat of cognitive processes associated with reasoning and consciousness. Therefore, careful selection of the activities that this part of the brain performs is needed to improve its activity³⁴⁵. This part of the brain correlates positively with the size of the group to which we belong³⁴⁶. In other words, the more sociable you are, the more developed your neocortex and the more intense your cognitive activity. The flip side is that the lonelier you are, the lower the activity of the neocortex. A study by the company YouGov, which surveyed more than 1.200 Americans, found that millennials are most likely to report having no close friends (27%), no friends in general (22%), and no acquaintances (25%)³⁴⁷. Another study

³⁴² Kelsey Johnson and Nicole Dienst, “Young people are stressed out all over the world, but don’t blame the pandemic”, June 25, 2020, in *CNBC*, Available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/25/young-people-stressed-all-over-world-but-dont-blame-coronavirus.html>, Accessed on May 3, 2023.

³⁴³ Lisa Baker, “Tech-Savvy Millennials are ‘the most forgetful generation in the UK’”, August 8, 2018, in *Well Being News*, Available at: <https://wellbeingnews.co.uk/unusual-news/tech-savvy-millennials-are-the-most-forgetful-generation-in-the-uk/>, Accessed on May 3, 2023.

³⁴⁴ Elaina Zachos, “Technology is changing the Millennial brain”, November 14, 2015, in *Public Sources*, Available at: <https://www.publicsource.org/technology-is-changing-the-millennial-brain/>, Accessed on August 13, 2023.

³⁴⁵ Robin I. M. Dunbar, “The Social Brain Hypothesis”, in *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews*, Vol. 6, Issue 5, 1998, p. 180.

³⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 181.

³⁴⁷ Minda Zetlin, “Millennials Are the Loneliest Generation, a Survey Shows 22 percent say they have no friends at all”, in *Inc*, September 20, 2019, Available at: <https://www.inc.com/minda-zetlin/millennials-loneliness-no-friends-friendships-baby-boomers-yougov.html>, Accessed on August 3, 2023.

conducted in 2019 by one of the leading market research companies, Ipsos (at the request of Cigna – one of the largest health insurance companies in the world), on a sample of 10,400 subjects in America concluded that at that time, three out of five Americans (*i.e.*, 61%) indicated that they were single. In fact, while 50% of baby boomers said they were lonely, 71% of millennials said they were lonely³⁴⁸.

The social brain hypothesis shows that group size depends on information processing capacity, a function for which the neocortex is responsible. Group size is influenced by at least five factors: the ability to recognise and interpret visual cues, limited face recognition memory, the ability to remember who is related to whom, the ability to manipulate information about a set of relationships and the ability to emotionally process affective information. These aspects are essential in the processing of information by the cognitive mechanism³⁴⁹. Memory imposes a kind of upper limit on the number of relations a being can have for at least three reasons. First, at least in humans, the memory of faces is larger than that of the predicted cognitive group. Humans are said to be able to attach names to approximately 000 faces, but they have a cognitive group size of only about 150. Second, it is not memory per se that is the problem, but the ability to operate with the information you have memorized, since the social brain hypothesis is about the ability to manipulate information, not simply to remember it. Third, and perhaps most significantly, memories seem to be stored primarily in the temporal lobes, whereas recent memories are stored in the prefrontal neocortex, which is responsible for social skills³⁵⁰.

The size of the neocortex or social brain is directly determined by the socialization process:

“This suggests that what is most important in the development of a large neocortex in primates is not the embryological development of brain tissue per se, which is mainly associated with gestation duration, but rather the ‘software programming’ that occurs during socialization, of social learning between weaning and adulthood”³⁵¹.

Therefore, the social brain is conditioned by the maximum number of relationships we have with others. From this perspective, communication is the source of our social intelligence. Dunbar mentioned in his paper that the maximum number of people we can interact with on a constant basis is approximately. This number is related to the idea of intentionality, a term used in the philosophy of mind to distinguish between communication as information and conscious communication with meaning and depth. Computers, for example, communicate without being aware

³⁴⁸ Cigna Report, “Loneliness and the workplace”, 2020, Available at: <https://www.cigna.com/static/www-cigna-com/docs/about-us/newsroom/studies-and-reports/combating-loneliness/cigna-2020-loneliness-report.pdf>. Accessed on August 1, 2023.

³⁴⁹ Robin I. M. Dunbar, “The Social Brain Hypothesis”, in *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews*, Volume 6, Issue 5, 1998, p. 184.

³⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

³⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 185.

that they are doing so, which is why their level of intensionality is non-existent, whereas humans reach level IV of intensionality³⁵².

Social brain theory shows that the size of the neocortex is influenced by the ability to make connections. In this endeavour, interpersonal relationships are vital because the more intense they are, the stronger the cognitive capacities of this part of the brain. In this sense, the tendency to be insular decreases mental capacity because mental connections mirror social connections. A Forbs analysis showed that more than 70% of 16–24-year-olds feel lonely³⁵³. In Romania, in mirror with these figures of insingestion, we can put the percentages of what specialists have called functional illiteracy, which are estimated at over 50%, where functional illiteracy means the inability to retain information or to make connections between the data you have memorized³⁵⁴. Therefore, we see that an inability to interact socially leads to an inability to make neural connections.

Therefore, the “millennial snowflake” generation is a category of young people who become victims of their own loneliness. Loneliness has particularly serious effects as it is directly linked to both the soul, the most important of which is faith, and cognitive aspects, the most important being intelligence and memory. The lonely young person behaves like a victim because he feels vulnerable; hence, his almost permanent need for protection is expressed in the appearance of “safe spaces”. Vulnerability is a result of being removed from the community. Victimization is all the greater the more developed the ego because the distance from the collective increases and the sense of ourselves decreases, or we have seen that the source of individual power is collective.

3.2. Life history theory and slow maturation theory

Jean M. Twenge draws from life history theory in the book *The Internet Generation, or iGen: why today’s children, teenagers, and young people are less rebellious, somewhat more tolerant, definitely less happy, and hardly ready for adulthood, a new perspective on young people (both “millennials” – those born between 1980–2000, and “iGen” – those born after 2000)* by stating that teenagers have adopted a slow life strategy³⁵⁵.

³⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 188.

³⁵³ Diana Zlătescu, „73% dintre tinerii generației Z suferă de singurătate. Ce spun experții” [“73% of Generation Z youth suffer from loneliness. What experts say”], August 4, 2023, in *Aleph News*, Available at: <https://alephnews.ro/lifestyle/73-dintre-tinerii-generatiei-z-sufera-de-singuratate-ce-spun-expertii/>, Accessed on August 3, 2023.

³⁵⁴ Dacian Dolean, „Analfabetismul funcțional din România depășește 50% și aceasta nu este cea mai mare problemă a sistemului educațional din România”, [“Functional illiteracy in Romania exceeds 50% and this is not the biggest problem of the Romanian education system”], October 23, 2021, in *Edu Pedu*, Available at: <https://www.edupedu.ro/analfabetismul-funcional-din-romania-depaseste-50-si-aceasta-nu-este-cea-mai-mare-problema-a-sistemului-educational-din-romania-cercetatorul-dacian-dolean/>, Accessed on August 22, 2023.

³⁵⁵ Jean M. Twenge, *Generația internetului, sau iGen: de ce copiii, adolescenții și tinerii din zilele noastre sunt mai puțini rebeli, ceva mai toleranți, categoric mai rar fericiți și aproape deloc pregătiți pentru maturitate*, [*The Internet Generation, or iGen: why today’s children, teenagers and*

Life history theory tells us that individuals mature according to where and when they live. Thus, the speed of maturation depends on the socio-historical context through which the person is passing. Academically speaking, “speed of development is a process of adaptation to cultural context”³⁵⁶. The second maturation strategy that this theory encompasses refers to the fast life strategy, which involves large families and biological survival over quality of life. In other words, this strategy emphasizes the idea of subsistence rather than preparing for the future³⁵⁷.

As a proof of the above, some statistics show that young people are postponing activities that used to be typical for adults: young people of the “iGen” generation hardly go out without their parents. However, this trend started with the “millennials” and has become more pronounced among young people born after 2000. For example, students who were in grade 12 in high school in 2015 were less likely to go out than were grade 8 students just six years earlier, in 2009. In other words, 18-year-olds were exiting less in 2015 than 14-year-olds³⁵⁸. Moreover, the young people of the two above-mentioned generations go out less often than their predecessors. Only half of high school seniors go out on dates. By comparison, in the early 1990s, 3 out of 4 Year 10 students sometimes went out on dates; in 2010, however, only half of them still did³⁵⁹. Moreover, in 2015, compared with 1991, the number of teenagers in grade 12 who had sexual intercourse was 15% lower³⁶⁰. Having a driving licence is another indication of the trend towards “maturing”. Statistics show that while almost all baby boomers had a driving licence in their last year of high school, in 2015, only about 70% had obtained a driving licence³⁶¹.

This generation tends to wait longer to marry and start a family than previous generations, which can have both positive and negative effects. In fact, they wait until later to take out home mortgages and other loans. Living longer with parents and being reluctant to marry may be an economically wise choice, but it may also reflect a fear of obligations and responsibilities or a desire to keep all options open. Many “millennials” exhibit dependence on their parents, which can delay the maturation milestones associated with financial independence³⁶².

Therefore, the chances of snowflake millennials going out without parents, having a driver’s license, dating or having sex, and consuming alcohol are lower than those of previous generations. These activities are associated with the idea of

young people are less rebellious, somewhat more tolerant, definitely less happy and hardly ready for adulthood], translation by Loredana Bucuroaia, Bucharest, Baroque & Arts Publishing, 2020, p. 59.

³⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

³⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

³⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

³⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

³⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

³⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

³⁶² Jim Raymo and Judy Raymo, *Millennials and Mission: A Generation Faces a Global Challenge*, William Carey Library, 2014, p. 126, e-book, Available at: <https://ro.scribd.com/read/566434256/Millennials-and-Mission-A-Generation-Faces-a-Global-Challenge>, Accessed on June 12, 2023.

maturity, which is postponed as long as possible by these young people. In this case, 18-year-olds behave like 14-year-olds and 14-year-olds behave like 12-year-olds³⁶³. Starting with the “millennial generation” and continuing with the “iGen” the teenage period has shrunk considerably. Thus, childhood has taken on new dimensions. Because they are treated like children, teenagers behave like children, losing their independence and almost permanently orbiting their parents. The whole journey from childhood to adolescence and then to adulthood has slowed down. Eighteen-year-olds no longer want to spend their time as adults, but are inclined to be treated like children, not because they are immature and put off adult activities. This behavior shows that adolescence is no longer the beginning of adulthood³⁶⁴.

CONCLUSIONS

From a theoretical point of view, the classical sociological perspective, constituted in our case by two of the leading representatives of symbolic interactionism, Mead through the idea of the generalized other and Cooley through the concept of the mirror self, explains that the self is the result of social interaction. Construction and monitoring of the self is achieved through meaningful interactions with the other. The appropriately socialized self is a unified self. In the absence of interaction with the other, the self can remain disaggregated and incomplete. In other words, the need for the other is fundamental to the harmonious development of the human personality, and this need is satisfied through meaningful interaction, which often occurs face-to-face. From this perspective, interaction in the online environment does not adequately satisfy this need, which is why the development of the self is disrupted. Vilfredo Pareto reinforces this idea through the residue of sociability called the nostratic feeling, which shows us that an incomplete self arises in the absence of integration in society because the source of individual power is collective. Thus, young people of the “millennial snowflake” generation also need in-person interactions to develop harmoniously.

The modern perspective on this generation questions the influence that labelling has on the individual and their ability to fight stereotypes and prejudices. More than half of the young people in this generation claim that the label “snowflake”, which denotes their overdeveloped sensitivity, affects their mental health. However, these figures may also show the weakness of this generation in fighting stereotypes. There are several reasons for this weakness, including the fact that the process of unifying the self is not yet complete and is also disrupted by the long time spent in the virtual environment. Moreover, labelling directly influences self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy as people internalise stereotypes. This brings us back to the exercise of argument and counter-argument that the emergence of

³⁶³ Jean M. Twenge, *op. cit.*, 2020, p. 56.

³⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 57–58.

“safe spaces” jeopardises. A person who does not exercise this ability to constructively discuss in adversarial debate will be seriously affected by the stereotypes and prejudices that have arisen around the generation to which they belong, whereas one who possesses this ability will find the strength to fight against them and, if not, to prove the contrary.

Last but not least, the contemporary perspective on this generation reiterates the importance of social interaction in the development of cognitive abilities. Dunbar demonstrated that the size of the neocortex, or social brain, is directly determined by the socialization process. Interpersonal relationships are vital because the more intense they are, the more the cognitive capacities of this part of the brain develop. In this sense, the tendency to be insular decreases mental capacity because mental connections mirror social connections. Slow maturation theory, on the other hand, explains the strategy adopted by young people of this generation because of the culture of abundance that is typical of a consumerist society. They delay the idea of maturity, gradually abandoning what was once considered the affirmation of freedom and the acquisition of independence.

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BOOK REVIEW

THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE NORTH-WESTERN ROMANIAN BORDER 100 YEARS AFTER THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES. RESEARCH REPORT – RADU BALTASIU

Narcis-Claudiu Rupe³⁶⁵

ABSTRACT

Following the First World War, Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia, territories with a predominantly Romanian population, were united with the “Mother Country”. The union, sealed by the Treaties of Versailles, made it possible to advance the Romanian frontier in the west of “Greater Romania”, a frontier very different from the old ethnocratic one under Austro-Hungarian dualism. Professor R. Baltasiu, director of the European Centre for Ethnic Studies (Romanian Academy), coordinated research that examined the current status of Romania’s western border, which underwent transformations a century ago. The results of this study have been published in the book “The current status of the north-western Romanian border 100 years after the Treaty of Versailles”. The author demonstrates how Romania’s western neighbor’s border is advancing while Romania’s border is retreating, even if the administrative border remains unchanged. The consequences of this geopolitical movement are felt by both the dominated minority (Romanian) and the dominant minority (Hungarian). The Carei-Satu Mare area, where the study was conducted, is becoming pauperized, and the Romanian identity is suffering. The Romanian community is discriminated both objectively (the emergence of a new infrastatality) and subjectively (“being Romanian” has become discreditable).

Keywords: frontier, discrimination, stigmatization, local minorities, Romania, Hungary.

INTRODUCTION

“The current status of the north-western Romanian border 100 years after the Treaty of Versailles. Research report” represents the outcome of research efforts undertaken by the European Centre for Studies in Ethnic Issues of the Romanian Academy (C.E.S.P.E.) on the state of ethnic communities in Romania and abroad. Under the coordination of PhD Radu Baltasiu, a university professor at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work in Bucharest and director of C.E.S.P.E., has conducted several studies on the problems of Romanian communities. In a paper, “The weakening of the Romanian community in Harghita – Covasna. Research Report” (2013), C.E.S.P.E.’s researchers have developed their own theoretical apparatus for

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understanding multi-ethnic social realities. The 2022 book develops the theoretical apparatus discovered in 2013 using concepts such as local minority, dominant local minority, and neo-interpretive methodology.

A team from the C.E.S.P.E. investigated in the summer of 2020 in the Carei-Satu Mare area the current state of Romania's north-western border. This research is the first of its kind carried out a century after the "Great Union" (1918), when a new border was drawn between Romania and Hungary.

The reviewed book contains the results of the 2020 study. Published by the Ethnological Publishing in Bucharest in 2022, the book totals around two hundred pages and is translated into English. So far, the researchers have presented their work in Carei³⁶⁶ and Targu Mures³⁶⁷.

STUDY QUESTIONS

The frontier issue has been a topic of interest for Romanian geopoliticians since the fall of the communist regime in Romania (1989). During the interwar period, the elites strengthened the Romanian ethnic element on the country's western frontier through the 1921 agrarian reform, when Romanian peasants received land in the villages along Romania's new border with Hungary. The descendants of these peasants continue to remember that they are an element of the consolidation of the Romanian border³⁶⁸.

After the fall of the communist regime, intellectual elites in Romania, as in the interwar period, became interested in the country's contact with the outside world. This book, published under the aegis of the C.E.S.P.E., has the merit of empirically testing the assumptions made by Romanian geopoliticians after 1989:

"In short, we will try to verify whether the weakness of the border described in 1995, in one of the first Romanian sociology treaties after the fall of communism, is still a verified reality nowadays"³⁶⁹.

³⁶⁶ Daniela Ciută, „Lansări de carte la Carei sub egida Academiei Române. Despre situația românilor de pe granița de nord-vest” [“Book launches in Carei under the auspices of the Romanian Academy. About the situation of the Romanians on the North-West border”], September 3, 2022, in *Buletin de Carei*, Available at: <https://www.buletindecarei.ro/2022/09/lansari-de-carte-la-carei-sub-egida-academiei-romane-despre-situatia-romanilor-de-pe-granita-de-nord-vest.html>, Accessed on October 7, 2023.

³⁶⁷ Ana Trușă, „Lansare itinerantă de carte, la Casa Iancului” [“Itinerant book launch at Casa Iancului”], November 30, 2022, in *Zi de Zi*, Available at: <https://www.zi-de-zi.ro/2022/11/30/lansare-itineranta-de-carte-la-casa-iancului/>, Accessed on October 7, 2023.

³⁶⁸ Radu Baltasiu (coord.), *Situația actuală a frontierei de nord-vest a României la 100 de ani de la Tratatul de la Versailles – raport de cercetare* [The current status of the north-western Romanian border 100 years after the Treaty of Versailles. Research report], Bucharest, Ethnologic Publishing, Sociologic Studies Collection, 2022, p. 126.

³⁶⁹ „Pe scurt, vom căuta să verificăm dacă slăbiciunea frontierei descrisă în 1995, într-unul din primele tratate de sociologie românești de după 1990, se mai verifică sau nu în prezent.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 107.

The author points out from the beginning the connection between the geopolitical and sociological aspects of the study. Border management is a function of the state and is part of the complex of powers called national sovereignty. The extent to which the state manages its borders can be seen on the ground through the state of the border communities and their coherence. A more accurate indicator of the state's ability to manage its borders is the vitality of the communities that it is constitutionally required to protect³⁷⁰.

The border is a social body, much more than an administrative border between two countries. This social body includes communities whose lives change because of contact with elements outside their own borders. If the state leadership does not take responsibility for managing its own border, the communities it is constitutionally obliged to protect suffer.

At the geopolitical level, the research sought to answer two questions related to the state of Romanian statehood on the western border:

1. A century after the Great Union, has the common border with Hungary become ethnocratic again, like the one during the Austro-Hungarian dualism?
2. Is the sovereignty of the Romanian state altered by contact with the Hungarian border?

From a sociological point of view, the state of the Romanian community on the border and the quality of co-existence between it and the "other ethnic group", especially the Hungarian community, was verified:

- "1. The vitality – (intra)community potential (intraculturality).
 - a. It is connected with the degree of community coherence and with
 - b. The perceived quality of the community's relationship with the government
2. Self-identification and related issues. Who is a minority and who is discriminated against?
3. The degree of internal coherence of the community and the 'distance' between the communities (intra-community vitality) and
- c. Latent and manifest conflict"³⁷¹.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH

University Professor Radu Baltasiu, together with his PhD students, discovered and theorized a neo-interpretive sociological research methodology during his 2013 studies on the Romanian community in Covasna and Harghita.

³⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 105.

³⁷¹ „1. Vitalitatea – potențialul comunitar și intracomunitar (intraculturalitatea).

- a. [Care] Este conexată cu gradul de coerență comunitară și cu
- b. Calitatea percepută a relației comunității cu statul
2. Autoidentificarea și conexe. Cine este minoritar și cine este discriminat?
3. Gradul de coerență internă a comunității și «distanța» dintre comunități (vitalitatea intracomunitară) și
- c. Conflictualitatea latentă și manifestă.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 108.

The methodology has its roots in Weberian comprehensive sociology, gustian sociology, and Thomas' Theorem. Neo-interpretive methodology seeks to capture the "storytelling" of a place – "the whole discourse, of the mental projections on the place, approximately explained"³⁷² – necessary for the organisation and survival of a human community. By acting in accordance with these mental projections, social actors create and recreate their reality because, as Thomas's paradigm demonstrates "a social phenomenon (an object, a state, a situation, etc.) is largely the result of individual, subjective, collectively accumulated definitions"³⁷³.

The social researcher has a duty to consider the collective subjectivity of the studied community as it represents "a facet of objectivity, in addition to the statistical one"³⁷⁴. The results of the neo-interpretive study are, to a significant extent, expressions of collective subjectivity decoded by the body of scientific theories used by the researcher. To obtain such results, data must be collected on three levels:

1. The level of local truth – the object is also the subject: it has autonomy; its perspective on reality is justified and must be taken as such. (...)
2. The local normative level. Derived from the level of local truth, the normative level refers to the set of practices that make possible the coherence of the community. (...)
3. 'The world seen from Bucharest' – how do the first two levels appear in relation to the theories used in data collection?"³⁷⁵.

The innovation and originality of neo-interpretive methodology is that it turns common knowledge, often neglected, into scientific knowledge. The theoretical perspective takes precedence, but it is of no value unless it is brought into line with the narrative, based on which social actors create and recreate social reality.

Another advantage of the neo-interpretive methodology is that it can combine several research techniques. In the Carei-Satu Mare area, field data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and the mental maps technique³⁷⁶. To measure the inter-ethnic quality of life in the area, the researchers applied the Bogardus scale, which was adapted to local realities, and a stigma scale designed by the research team. These two scales considered the

³⁷² „(...) ansamblul discursului, al proiecțiilor mentale mai mult sau mai puțin explicate asupra locului.”, in *Ibidem*.

³⁷³ „(...) un fenomen social (un obiect, o stare, o situație etc.) este în bună măsură rezultatul definițiilor individuale, subiective, acumulate colectiv.”, in *Ibidem*.

³⁷⁴ „(...) o fațetă a obiectivității, pe lângă cea cifrică.”, in *Ibidem*.

³⁷⁵ „1. Planul adevărului local – obiectul este și subiect: are autonomie iar perspectiva lui asupra realității este îndreptățită și trebuie luată ca atare (...);

2. Planul normativ local. Derivat din planul adevărului local, planul normativ se referă la ansamblul de practici care fac posibilă coerența comunității (...);

3. «Lumea văzută de la București» – cum apar primele două etaje în raport cu teoriile întrebuintate în culegerea datelor?”, in *Ibidem*, p. 109.

³⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

“degree of acceptance of one community by the other, the new scale of stigmatization refers to the contraction of the collective sense of self that the community experiences because of the interaction with the other’s community”³⁷⁷.

ADVANCE OF THE ETHNOCRATIC FRONTIER

The study found that the Romanian border is contracting, and the Hungarian border is taking its place. Romania’s sovereignty is violated, and both communities suffer.

“After 1989, geopolitical tension at the Western frontier returned to the same terms of the exclusive and ethnocratic minority that begun in 1867, only that, at the time, the Romanian state had no authority in the area”³⁷⁸.

The advancing Hungarian border has administrative, economic, and interethnic consequences, especially for the local Romanian minority. The Carei-Satu Mare area is being suburbanised and becoming poorer. The book proves that the reactivation of the ethnocratic frontier in western Romania had economic effects on Transylvania, which, between 1867 and 1918, became an economic periphery of Budapest. Peripheralization then meant that the province was reduced to the status of a supplier of raw materials to the city of Budapest³⁷⁹. In these circumstances, the State should have improved the poor condition of the area. However, this did not happen because instead of a local administration responsible for the problems of the place, a new infrastatality emerged, led by the dominant Hungarian minority:

“While infrastatality refers to the subtle mechanisms of operation of the state apparatus, the new infrastatality refers to its diversion and emergence of an institutional network that replaces state authority, often by re-vectorizing existing institutions for purposes other than those legitimate and constitutional. Infrastatality is part of a non-Romanian geopolitical project, but one that uses the network of competence of legitimate public institutions, the weaknesses, especially their politicization, policies of nepotism and cross-party affairs, vanities, and personal rivalries”³⁸⁰.

³⁷⁷ „(...) gradul de acceptare a unei comunități de către cealaltă (...) [cât și] (...) contracția sentimentului de sine colectiv pe care îl trăiește comunitatea ca urmare a interacțiunii cu cealaltă comunitate.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 110.

³⁷⁸ „După 1989, tensiunea geopolitică la frontiera de vest a revenit la aceiași termeni ai minorității exclusive și etnocratice, de după 1867, numai că, atunci, statul român nu avea nicio autoritate în zonă.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 206.

³⁷⁹ Ilie Bădescu *et al.*, *Sociologia și geopolitica frontierei [Sociology and Geopolitics of the Border]*, Vol. I, Bucharest, Blue Flower Publishing, 1995, p. 284, quoted by *Ibidem*, p. 198.

³⁸⁰ „Dacă infrastatalitate se referă la mecanismele subtile de funcționare ale aparatului de stat, noua infrastatalitate se referă la deturnarea acesteia și la apariția unei rețele instituționale care substituie autoritatea de stat, adesea prin revectorizarea instituțiilor existente spre alte scopuri decât cele legitime și constituționale. Infrastatalitatea este parte a unui proiect geopolitic neromânesc, dar care se folosește de rețeaua de competență a instituțiilor publice legitime, de slăbiciunile, mai cu seamă de politizarea

The substitution of Romanian authority at the local government level makes it possible to discriminate against Romanians through public policies, which are no longer implemented based on democracy but on ethnicity, race or language³⁸¹. In addition, the Romanian community feels the abandonment of the Romanian state and the increasing presence of the Hungarian state, although the latter's investments in Satu Mare county are more than 2.5 times lower than those made through the programs of the central authorities in Bucharest, such as the National Investment Program³⁸².

At the community level, the researchers confirmed that in the Carei-Satu Mare area, Romanians have become a local minority and the Hungarian community acts as a dominant local minority, as in Covasna and Harghita counties.

- the dominant minority: “the national minority that has a monopoly on local power”³⁸³;
- the local minority:
“the national majority population who are in a political minority and are more or less discriminated/stigmatised locally”³⁸⁴.

By advancing the ethnocentric border in the Carei-Satu Mare area, the dominant minority is ideologized, stimulating among ethnic Hungarians a feeling of superiority over the other communities in the area:

“The ethnocentric state is ‘governed’ by the ideology according to which it would represent the will of a notion bearing an ethno-historical superiority, thus trying to impose itself in relation to other ‘inferior’ nations”³⁸⁵.

The advancing border of the neighbouring state exacerbates the differences between the two communities, making it difficult or even blocking the formation of a climate of good interethnic co-existence. The ethnic criterion of relation to the Other predominates, and the local Romanian minority is discriminated against.

“Most of the interviewed subjects, especially those of Romanian ethnicity, feel discriminated, even more, stigmatized, their ethnic identity being a real social

acestora, de politicile de cumetrie și de afacerile transpartinice, de vanitățile și rivalitățile personale.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 172.

³⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

³⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 139.

³⁸³ „(...) minoritatea din plan național care are monopolul puterii în plan local.”, in Radu Baltasiu et al., *Slăbirea comunității românești din Harghita – Covasna. Raport de cercetare [The weakening of the Romanian community in Harghita – Covasna. Research Report]*, Bucharest, Ethnologic Publishing, Sociologic Studies Collection, 2013, p. 49.

³⁸⁴ „(...) populația majoritară în plan național care se află în minoritate politică și este mai mult sau mai puțin discriminată/stigmatizată în plan local.”, in *Ibidem*.

³⁸⁵ „Statul etnocratic este «governat» de ideologia conform căreia ar reprezenta voința unui popor cu superioritate etnicoistorică, încercând, astfel, să se impună în relația cu alte popoare «inferioare».”, in Radu Baltasiu, *op cit.*, 2022, p. 104.

handicap, especially when it manifests itself as social solidarity, cultural identity, political aspiration, economic initiative, etc. (...) We can say that the discrimination on ethnic grounds is part of the everyday life in this part of Romania's frontier"³⁸⁶.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LOCAL ROMANIAN MINORITY IN THE CAREI-SATU MARE AREA ON OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE LEVELS

The advancement of the Hungarian border and the aforementioned consequences create a discriminatory inter-ethnic climate for Romanians. The research team identified that discrimination against Romanians occurs both at the level of the system (objective discrimination) and at the level of public representations (subjective discrimination):

“Objective discrimination refers to the administrative and economic apparatus through which two important demographic masses are treated separately, often despite their will. (...)

Subjective discrimination refers to individual gestures, assumed by individuals, various perpetrators, and acts of violation of the rights of fellow citizens of other ethnicities, especially those belonging to the local minority”³⁸⁷.

In what follows, we will mention only some of the acts of discrimination against the local minority, with mention that in the book, the number is much larger, and the presentation is more extensive. At the system level, the Romanian community faces the following problems:

1. The emergence of infrastatality. Key positions in local government are not equally distributed between the two ethnicities. The dominated minority has a monopoly on key functions. Electoral behaviour is the main cause for this situation. Romanians vote according to political preferences while the Hungarian community votes according to ethnic preferences.

³⁸⁶ „Majoritatea subiecților intervievați, în special cei de etnie română, se simt discriminați, chiar mai mult, stigmatizați, identitatea lor etnică fiind un veritabil handicap social, mai ales atunci când se manifestă ca solidaritate socială, identitate culturală, aspirație politică, inițiativă economică etc. (...) Putem spune că discriminarea pe criterii etnice este parte a cotidianului în această parte de frontieră a României.”, in *Ibidem*, pp. 166–167.

³⁸⁷ „Discriminarea obiectivă se referă la angrenajul administrativ, economic prin care două mase demografice importante sunt tratate separat, adesea în ciuda voinței acestora. (...) Discriminarea subiectivă trimite la gesturile individuale, asumate de particulari, diverși responsabili, acte de încălcare ale drepturilor concetățenilor de altă etnie, mai cu seamă cele ale minorității locale.”, in *Ibidem*, pp. 112–113.

“If the Romanians are divided into 5–7 thousand little parties and form associations alongside them (...) people don’t even know where to start (D., female, 38, entrepreneur)”³⁸⁸.

2. Romanians must know the Hungarian language if they want to work for companies owned by ethnic Hungarians, which are more numerous than Romanian ones.

“One has a problem here is if you don’t know Hungarian, not if you don’t know Romanian, because no one hires you. (I., male, 61, retired)”³⁸⁹.

3. Classes taught in Romanian are closed. Because the Romanian state does not recognise them as a minority, the children of ethnic Romanians do not enjoy the same privileges as the children of ethnic Hungarians. The latter can study in classes of three to four pupils, a privilege that Romanian children do not enjoy.

“The problem is that the Hungarian section is not merged [like the Romanian one] because there are certain facilities and rights. A class with 12 Hungarian children can work because they are a minority, but in our case, if they are under 12, the classes are merged. For Hungarians that is not allowed, it is an order from above (O., male, 41, retired military)”³⁹⁰.

Regarding the subjective aspects of discrimination, it should be mentioned from the outset that Romanians live in an interethnic environment where “being Romanian” has become a discreditable thing. Being associated with something discreditable triggers the following problems:

1. Traumatic memory. Researchers have found that ethnic Romanians act on a traumatic memory caused by the “negative traumatic events in 1940–1944 and 1989–1990, when the Hungarian government-initiated processes of ethnic cleansing through physical and symbolic violence”³⁹¹. Traumatic memory is the opposite of founding memory, the only basis on which a peaceful inter-ethnic climate can develop³⁹². Some of the Romanians interviewed live with the fear that those events may be repeated.
2. Fear of publicly expressing oneself in accordance with one’s national identity.

³⁸⁸ „Dacă românii sunt dezbinați în 5–7 mii de partidulețe și mai fac și asociații pe lângă (...) nici nu mai știi oamenii pe unde să apuce. (D., feminin, 38, întreprinzător)”, in *Ibidem*, p. 190.

³⁸⁹ „Aici e problemă dacă nu știi maghiară, nu dacă nu știi românește, că nu te angajează nimeni (I., masculin, 61, pensionar)”, in *Ibidem*, p. 140.

³⁹⁰ „Problema e că la secția maghiară nu se comasează pentru că sunt anumite facilități, drepturi. O clasă cu 12 copii maghiari poate să funcționeze, pentru că sunt minoritari, dar la noi dacă sunt sub 12 copii se comasează clasele. La maghiari nu e voie, e ordin de sus (O., masculin, 41, militar pensionar)”, in *Ibidem*, p. 185.

³⁹¹ „(...) evenimentele negative traumatice din anii 1940–1944 și în 1989/1990, când autoritățile ungurești au inițiat procese de purificare etnică prin violență fizică și simbolică.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 128.

³⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 127.

“People are afraid [to participate to the Romanian events in Carei, referring to the teachers in the city]. Here is Hungarian leadership and if they are seen there, it wouldn’t look good, and they would not receive classes or the class master quality. In our school, two people have the courage [to participate at Romanian events]. Otherwise, [teachers] don’t come on the national day either (V., male, 49, teacher)”³⁹³.

3. Stigma and self-stigma. In addition to the fact that “being Romanian” has become something to be avoided, the research reveals the tendency of Romanians to accept low self-esteem to live their lives in apparently normal conditions. This phenomenon has been termed “self-stigmatisation”.

“(…) self-stigmatization is the cost that the discriminated person is willing to pay to be frequentable. It is related to the fear of social rejection. An almost normified component of self-stigmatization is confusion among the Romanian community between patriotism/nationalism and extremism”³⁹⁴.

All these forms of discrimination decrease the vitality of the Romanian community. Without the intervention of the Romanian authorities, the Romanian community will massify, lose its identity, or migrate from the area.

REFLECTIONS

The study coordinated by University Professor Radu Baltasiu in the Carei-Satu Mare area attempts to inform the Romanian state about the realities at its border. The book brings the problems of Romania’s western border to the attention of a worldwide public and is translated into an international language. This is of great importance because the ideologization of a border within the European Union and NATO raises security concerns for Eastern Europe, whose neighbor is the Russian Federation.

The advancing Hungarian border, pauperization of the area, ideologization of the dominant minority, and discrimination of the local minority are realities documented by the research team. Critics of the scholarly approach would label the work subjective because it raises real issues that may upset a minority of Romanians, or even the leaders of the country.

Sociology is a multiparadigmatic science, a competition between different paradigms to explain the same groups of social phenomena³⁹⁵. The most important

³⁹³ „Oamenilor le e frică [să participe la evenimentele românești din Carei, cu referire la profesorii din oraș]. E conducere maghiară și dacă îi vede nu dă bine, nu le dă ore, nu-i pune diriginți. La noi în școală doi oameni avem curajul [să participe la evenimente românești]. În rest, nici la ziua națională nu vin [profesorii] (V., masculin, 49, profesor).”, in *Ibidem*, p. 188.

³⁹⁴ „Autostigmatizarea este costul pe care persoana discriminată este dispusă să îl plătească pentru a fi frecventabilă, este încercarea celui care se știe discreditabil de a ieși din această zonă.”, in *Ibidem*, p. 187.

³⁹⁵ See Ion Ungureanu, *Paradigms of society knowledge [Paradigme ale cunoașterii societății]*, Iași, Junimea Publishing, 2002.

thing is for the researcher to recognize the paradigm from which he/she comes to present to the reader its possible flaws.

There may be other theoretical perspectives on the state of Romania's western border, which may lead to different results. For the moment, Professor Baltasiu's research is a pathbreaker for researchers interested in the subject, and the fact that it "causes problems": does not detract from its "objectivity", since the author has openly assumed the paradigm from which he approached the problem.

The future of the Romanian community is bleak without real help from the Romanian state. There are still "one-man-institutions" – "those who, often at their own expense, have assumed the protection of the identity and interests of the local minority community"³⁹⁶, while others have accepted the discriminatory situation. The impact of this study on the authorities in Bucharest remains to be seen.

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³⁹⁶ „(...) cei care, adesea pe speze proprii, și-au asumat protejarea identității și intereselor comunității aflate în minoritate locală”, in *Ibidem*, p. 95.

