

A WORD FORWARD

"No pleasure is greater than thinking you used to be a philosopher – and you are no longer one..."

Emil CIORAN, *The Twilight of Thinking*

This issue of *PLURAL* is dedicated neither to philosophy nor to essay or literature, but to that hybrid genre abundantly flourishing in Romanian culture at their border or juncture. It is the specific "philosophical literature", one that is rather repelling both philosophy and literature while it is precisely practising both of them, dodging at the same time the loose, free-style essay.

To proclaim, to provoke, to detract, to contradict, to disavow, to subvert represent some of the favourite rhetoric strategies of this type of writing. On the other hand theoretical curiosity, invention, surprise, mystification, seduction, play, dramatic and showy individualism appear as distinct marks particularising a genre that combines a certain philosophical rigor and concentration on distinct ideas, and a literary, skilful (sometimes even stylish), persuading discourse.

Private (later public, because published) diaries appear as the epitome of philosophical literature. This explains the incidence of diaries and diary-like writings in our selection. Obviously, these are journals of ideas, although sometimes (in the cases of Constantin Noica, Emil Cioran, and Eugen Ionescu) they turn into reflections on life as an idea, and therefore life as such, with illnesses, love affairs and public encounters becomes the very matter of reflection. The diary preserves and displays something of the irreducible physiology of thinking, of its inescapable humanity. And this is what mesmerises an individualistic writing, centred on authenticity and genuine (if not even suicidal) commitment.

This is also the sense in which A Word Forward should be taken: as philosophical literature's implicit, inchoate ambition of making a step (that is one word, one thought) further than the life and feelings of the writer himself. At the same time, precisely because of that unbearable and meaningful life, it generates the opposite ambition of being one step (that is one emotion, one "psycheme") ahead of the author's own thinking. And everything is

made for the benefit of the enhanced, acute aesthetic presence of both tormenting ideas and excruciatingly painful life and, of course, for the greater delectation of the reader, a feature that brings it closer to literature than to philosophy. Philosophical literature is not a didactic writing, but on the contrary, a disruptive, essentially demonstrative and baroque, highly-aesthetised genre that produced volcanic pages throughout the history of Romanian culture.

Posing, as both posing problems and posing as such, is a feature connected with the journal-like specificity of philosophical literature, busied to sketch a theory in the generic, not philosophically specific, sense. It focuses mainly on history, ethics, language, metaphor, religion (Christian-Orthodox), on anthropology (centred on autochthonism), on escapism and cultural salvation. Significantly enough, there are very few inquiries on social matters. In its turn, political theory is replaced by a heavily politicised existentialist involvement in both the text and public sphere, with an indelible stamp of national preoccupation on it.

A widespread praise and proliferation of literary plays on words is also a feature that particularises philosophical literature, as this literary genre is interested in speculations on the inner treasure of the national language and on the (cultural) redemptive qualities of Gnostic-like employment of chosen words. This quasi-mysticism and politics of words and language is of a piece with the focus on autochthonism and local Orthodox religiosity.

Paradoxically, although it is deeply marked by a pathetic, ritualistic internalisation of traditional philosophical problems (especially in the field of epistemology, axiology, ethics, aesthetics and theology), philosophical literature lacks any methodology. Method is replaced by a cohesive, though somehow monotonous (despite the dynamite-like spiritual and personal involvement) questioning of some "major" philosophical problems. No dialectics, no critical analysis, no phenomenology is professed, not even in Ion Dobrogeanu-Gherea's account of some strictly phenomenological problems. Dramatism and persuasion, style and commitment replace a coherent, argumentative path toward the explored theoretical field.

Nonetheless, philosophical literature manages to implement a recognisable pattern of discourse. This is individualised mainly by a strong theoretical, stylistic, and existential investment in lexicography, in a certain contemplative metaphysics focusing on truth as it shines through words and cultural constructions. It also relies heavily upon the authenticity and significance of the lived, historical experience in the concrete, national milieu, and on a (finally problematic) anti-scientist stance. Knowledge is viewed from an excessively aestheticist and relativist perspective, one that insists on the tactile-like pleasure of dangerously manipulating explosive, serious themes. It also finds ultimate delights in accumulating and building clusters of cultural clichés, the (seemingly philosophical) investigation appearing as a kind of

exquisite manipulation of such clusters, of rich, shiny grapes of words and statements.

This again links it to literature, from which philosophical literature wants to make a step forward, in the direction of exploring and magnifying the intrinsic value of the signifier (the word and the human consciousness proffering and "wording" the world) instead of the signified, that is the proper message, the meaning given to the world. This is why philosophical literature, as a cultural meta-discourse, is produced by both philosophy-driven writers such as Dimitrie Cantemir, Mihail Eminescu, Lucian Blaga and Eugen Ionescu, and by literature-driven philosophers such as Constantin Noica, Emil Cioran and Mircea Vulcănescu as well as by literary-expressive, unclassifiable thinkers such as Ion Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Imre Toth.

The selection includes authors that either viewed themselves as writers or as philosophers and, in the case of Lucian Blaga, of an author who published in equal measure literature and philosophy and ranges, in Romanian culture, both among the major literary and philosophical figures of his time. The texts were excerpted either from literary works (Dimitrie Cantemir) or diaries (Mihail Eminescu, Constantin Noica) and diary-like, essay texts (Eugen Ionescu, Emil Cioran), or even from philosophical treatises (Lucian Blaga, Ion Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Mircea Vulcănescu, Imre Toth). What is common to the selected material is, first of all, its literary quality, the style, even if this was not especially sought by the author, as an end as such. Secondly, it is the preoccupation with introducing clusters of words, of recognisable philosophical sentences and ideas in a non-strictly philosophical context, and the effort of making them part of the Romanian language and culture of their time, striving toward a synchronisation in matters of theoretical vocabulary and specific debates of ideas. Thirdly, what holds them together as "philosophical literature" is the poignant, even excessive self-implication, the personal, rhetoric investment of each author in the life of ideas, that turn the selected texts in a kind of philosophical story, a romancing theory built on the experience of a hypertrophied consciousness.

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*Our selection has two key-figures that delineate the dual nature of "philosophical literature", its main points and even the trajectory of its future developments. The first figure is the Moldavian king **Dimitrie Cantemir**, who was the first typical Renaissance, and later Enlightenment, "homo universale" in Romanian culture. Writer and philosopher, historian and geographer, he was also a theoretician of music and a reference pillar in the study of Muslim religion. In philosophy he was rather a peddler of late Renaissance and early Modern theories, mixing up knowledge of logic and traditional ontology with curious, alchemy-tainted obscure comments on subtle, spiritual matters. However, he was the first thinker and writer in Romanian culture to introduce vernacular lexical equivalents to some cru-*

cial philosophical terms and concepts such as *essentia* and *existentia*. He actually etymologically translated or paraphrased them into Romanian. He did it like a demiurge, through a "fiat" (but, as it happens, this primordial creation of words through other words was not a lasting one: later Romanian philosophy did not employ Cantemir's variants of the basic philosophical notions, but those historically developed during the actual practice of philosophy). He was the first to enact the founding gesture of any philosophical literature, that is the determination and definition of those ideas, notions and words without which the discourse itself is not conceivable.

From his various works we selected his most relevant annotated Index of words and concepts that prefaces his famous Hieroglyphic History. This is a philosophic and literary allegory employing birds and beasts as actors of a story that generally follows the outline of Cantemir's own tormented history as a king of Moldavia. It is a work that combines a larger philosophy of history and a very personal commitment manifested through cruel irony, criticism and witticism directed against his enemies, particularly the king of Wallachia, Constantin Brancovan, himself a prominent figure and an enlightened monarch.

Cantemir's Index or Glossary of the Hieroglyphic History is the first work that explicitly states the author's lexical, semantic and conceptual interest or responsibility facing the reader. This is also a matter of intellectual pride, a demonstration of intellectual sovereignty made by the king writer. The Index is in itself a discourse, an epistemological one, distinct from the book itself. It is an intrinsic argument that points to the literary-philosophical maturity of an intellectual milieu that can afford such intricate endeavours such as a coded fable, an allegory of current politics linked to larger philosophical horizons and cultural ambitions. In his Statement to the reader, Cantemir claims that the need for an Index is prompted by his willingness to help the Romanian reader understand foreign words, especially Greek and Latin ones, that show "the way to the deepest knowledge."

Cantemir insists that he is not using any foreign words at random, but precisely those which "made by themselves the subtlety and meaningfulness of any language." As a good example of that kind of words he gives the Greek "hypothesis" which, he stresses, "is understandable by Latins, Italians, Poles and others." His ideal is a late Medieval, humanistic "conceptual language", largely communicable, European, which is both profoundly theoretic and accessible. But he completes it with a Modernist insistence on particularism, recommending those foreign concept-words to be "made Romanian" and, conversely, to circulate also some Romanian words which are already conceptualised and, following this path, to assure the national advancement in "logical instruction", that is philosophical reflection.

However, the most important and relevant remain precisely the words chosen by Cantemir for his Index. And these words and terms, like his thinking, constitute a literary-philosophical mixture, amalgamating notions related to

the body and its (religious, but not only) experiences, like "agony", "anatomy", "chronic illness", "aphrodisian" (that is a womanising person). There are also strictly philosophical terms such as "aporia", "argument", "atoms", "ethics", "idea", "matter", "metaphysics", "sophism" and "theory". Alchemy and astronomy are well represented with words like "alchemist", "astrolabe", "galaxy", "geomancy", "necromancy", "metamorphosis". But there are also words that point to politics, like "democracy", "armistice", "monarchy", "politeia", "tyranny" and also more interesting words that are mapping human psychology, like "antipathy", "privacy", "sycophant" or "temperament" and "fantasy." The whole Glossary is mixing up Greek, Latin, Romanian, Slavic, and Arab words that enable a kaleidoscopic opening to a rich philosophical-literary thesaurus ready to support both major thinking and consummate style.

But this major accomplishment will have to wait centuries. Even the poet **Mihail Eminescu**, the most prominent representative of Romanian culture in the late 19th century, and the second key-figure of our selection, is still a Cantemir-like figure. He is a "homo universalis" and a pioneer who is endlessly preparing the theoretical premises and the lexical-ideal supports for a later significant cultural achievement. This continuous lexical-ideal preparation falls within the domain of "philosophical literature". This time the Humanistic Greeks and Latins are replaced by the Romanticist Germans and, to a lesser extent, by the French as cultural propellers.

Eminescu's commitment to the advancement of Romanian culture is enthusiastic. Language and literature, aesthetics, history, folklore, national welfare are his permanent topics. Our selection comprises fragments from various of his notebooks containing annotated bibliography, debates of ideas, diary entries, logic exercises, philosophical investigations, literary drafts, political reflections, ethnologic observations and historical or even economic remarks. At the core of this lyrical and fragmented thinking lies, strongly perceivable, the national issue.

Eminescu viewed himself, in a typical late-Romanticist stance, as a historical, necessary product of the culture of his nation, if not the embodied consciousness of the Romanian people reflecting on itself through him: "Peoples learn to think, and then think on themselves, and later think for the whole world." This kind of deeply rhetoric and emotional, nation-based discourse is the very substance of "philosophical literature", of which Eminescu is a significant, major case.

His reflections frequently focus on ethical issues. Truth, for example, is national, historical and personal, that is ultimately relative: "Truth is an individual creation, and it is an effect of concrete circumstances" Voluntarism in its cultural form is transparent in such sentences that would constitute the roots of militant cultural politics in Romania during the first half of the 20th century. The anti-scientific mood is also inscribed in Eminescu's words: "Abstract truths do not heat the people."

But the most important reflections of Eminescu are related to language, to the Romanian language, to its uniqueness and complicate genealogy. His lucidity is outstanding, facing the wave of Latinist purism of the 19th century, that aimed at purifying the Romanian language of any non-Latin elements. He is a partisan of language as it is, of its natural, organic state: "We are not the masters of language, but language is our master." He also notes, concerned with the same problems as Dimitrie Cantemir, that "the profound heritage of a language is constituted by its untranslatable part, while the translatable part is common to human thinking in general." His focus on irreducible language particularism is grounded on his profoundly lyrical approach to words, while Cantemir's universalist lexicography is linked to a more philosophical stance vis-à-vis language.

Although instructed in "human thinking in general", Eminescu was, in Romanticist fashion, a partisan of that untranslatable, sometimes obscure, but always enchanting element of a language, its deep particularity. He is both concerned with Cantemir's problem of the larger, European communicability of a language's inner content, but he is against unnecessary import and forced translatability, finding different "truths" in national language which cannot be equated in any other language. This view, and the national pathos associated to it, will mark the thinkers of the first half of the 20th century too.

Eminescu had a profound intuition of the philosophical implications of words, besides their lyrical properties. Sometimes his observations turn into a real philosophy of language that, although significantly backed by his literary skills, nevertheless reveals the proper philosophical depth of this kind of "philosophical literature". In this sense, his notes on the meanings and implications of the Romanian words for "grateful, ungrateful"/ "satisfactory, unsatisfactory" ("mulțumitor, nemulțumitor", literally "thankful, unthankful") in comparison with the French-like insinuating neologisms "grat, ingrat" is very penetrating. To Eminescu, the Romanian words "touch the subject, the individuality, the Ego of the subject – as long as "ingrat" works for the object as such. A father could have the "mulțumirea" to love his child, although the child is "ingrat", a painter or a poet are "mulțumiți" of their works, though the works may be "ungrateful" to them. He points that "gratitude implies a duty from the part of the object, while this is not the case for "mulțumire." The "mulțumire" is intimate (it is for its own sake), it is genuine, it is because it is. "Gratitude" presupposes a duty, it exists because it must exist, and its absence generates moral frustration. "Mulțumirea" does not have the duty to exist. Moreover, he stresses that words are not only indigenous or neologistic, they are profoundly not synonymous. In the case under attention, Eminescu considers that "mulțumire" and "nemulțumire" are psychological phenomena, while "grat" and "ingrat" are thoroughly ethical. This observation opens not only to a metaphysics of language, but also to a better understanding of the philosophical support of a literary dis-

course, and Eminescu's high sensitivity to the axiological, aesthetic, and even ontological properties of words will influence Blaga, Noica, Vulcănescu, and Cioran.

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However, **Lucian Blaga** is gliding from single words or sentences to larger lexical and semantic compounds that he investigates in order to extract from them an original, undisclosed truth concerning the people who speak a certain language, the people who sing a certain music and cultivate a certain poetry. He is pointing (in a German-inspired intellectual manner, like Mihail Eminescu) to the deep, foundational anthropologic structures of popular culture. His most famous considerations on the Romanian matrix of the "national psyche" are present in our selection. After investigating the music of Bach and the ethno-psychological implications for the German people it has, Blaga focuses on the most specific production of Romanian popular culture, i.e. doina. This is an old type of anonymous poetry turned to song which is – in numberless variants – to be found in all the historical provinces inhabited by Romanians.

Starting from the specific pitch, rhythms and images developed by such songs, Blaga delineates a whole ethno-psychological theory centred on the major concept of a so-called "Mioritic space*", an "unconscious spatial horizon" or "substratum" that represents the matricial figure of the Romanian national psyche. Its basic constituent is rather geo-emotional. It is about the presence of an "undulated space" made up of an infinite and indefinite succession of hills and valleys. This is the proper geographical setting where the story of a doina takes place. As the consequence of geographical determinism, this assuaging, undulated outer space gives birth to an inner psychic space grounded mainly on "the melancholy of a soul that ascends and descends." Melancholic, the environment's infinitely ascending and descending pace brings forth a "destiny which is not tragic, like the one stamped by hubris, but rather mild."

One can find occurrences of this pattern or figure in arts and crafts, in architecture, and in all the other elements of the national cultural expression. Although extracted from cultural products, this pattern does not characterise only the arts and culture, but the profound, ontological positioning of a people. It is not used as an explanatory or interpretative tool; it is presented as the genetic principle of a national psyche that could not escape such a "stylistic matrix". Thus style itself, seemingly an external adornment, becomes an ontological landmark – an essential, not an auxiliary one.

Following Cantemir's call, Blaga is prompting toward the superior sphere of philosophical vocabulary some authentic Romanian concepts such as the "Mioritic space", while manipulating traditional, universal philo-

* See L. Blaga, *The Space of "The Meek Ewe's Vision"*.

sophical concepts too. In an Eminescu-based perspective, they are inherently national, untranslatable wordings of an irreducibly Romanian, untranslatable experience of life and the world. They are formulaic expressions of particularism. At the same time, they are the products of the conceptual and lyrical, philosophical and metaphorical commitment of an individual in the circumstances of a given national rhetoric.

Eugen Ionescu's debut book *Nu* (No), the next in this selection, is apparently the opposite figure of the tradition based on Cantemir and Eminescu, and further developed by Blaga. Eugen Ionescu is deeply concerned with the national literature of his time, with the moral customs of the cultural milieu of his time, and with all that bears upon the traditional values of intellectual endeavours. But his interest is in subverting, unmasking and imploding them from the innermost depths of an assumed crisis of literature, literary criticism, "intellectual humanism" and national rhetoric. Yet he is only apparently saying no to the whole establishment. In fact, he reveals the most pathetic epitome of "philosophical literature" of his time, one that takes into account above all the position of critical consciousness in an environment excessively and simply uncritically mesmerised by national values, national interest, and political common-sense. He is pointing precisely to the fallacies that such a system could not knowingly credit.

Although Cantemir, Eminescu and Blaga saw an inherent opening in being Romanian and writing in Romanian, in being formatted by the national psychic matrix, Ionescu's *No* is seemingly directed against the very fact of being Romanian: "To be the greatest Romanian critic! This means, still, to be a poor relative of the European intelligentsia. – What melancholy circumstances had Romania cast in the part of an extra in culture? I will die without having played a role on the European scene, which will be crumbling without my help!"

To the previously preached trans-personal, cultural and national involvement of the author's consciousness, Ionescu opposes his extremely individualistic – but acutely critical – paroxystic exhibitionism. Gossip, friendship, love affairs and even purely subjective whims become, as diary entries, a more legitimate matter for reflection than the cultural, literary profession relativised and demystified by himself: "I, this I, can do approximately anything I want: walk on one leg, not walk on one leg, yawn, not yawn, believe in God, not believe in God, learn and spell, sweetly, *A-ris-to-te-les*." Ionescu enacts that reflective individual whose being-in-the-world is already replaced by being-in-the-culture, being-in-a-language, being in one definite, suffocating but also liberating milieu (despite stormy debates, *No* was awarded a major prize in 1934).

However, Eugen Ionescu's attitude and tonality, his innovative iconoclastic reflection and upside-down positioning in respect to the major themes of Romanian culture were unique. **Constantin Noica's** *Philosophical Diary* is a contemporary, journal-based philosophical composition that connects

the older tradition of investigating cultural, social, religious, historical, political and national data to the newly flourishing solitary reflective consciousness. One that stands like a catcher at the conceptual outskirts of national culture and civilisation, employing both reason and emotion in order to build a model of the lived, temporal experience. It is the sign of an intellectual individualism which, although softer than Eugen Ionescu's, is still perceivable.

Contrary to Ionescu, Noica tries to introduce critical consciousness into the cultural establishment that the former was subverting. His is a paroxysm of re-integration. Like Cantemir and Eminescu, he is preoccupied by national history and by the irreducible qualities and the specific philosophical openings of the Romanian language. He is a typical meliorist, and this is why perhaps the major – though ideal – concern of his Philosophical Diary is to establish a school of thinking, an alternative school of philosophy for which he is searching a setting, a curriculum, students and professors. But this is only a metaphor of a meliorist will, of the rhetoric of enhancing the national cultural potential. Culture is viewed, as in Ionescu's case, but also as in Cantemir, Eminescu and Blaga's, as the suitable battlefield for a nation's survival. Redemption through culture is not only a matter of individual escapism, but part of a larger utopian and existentialist involvement in the public sphere which is backed by conscious or unconscious national politics.

Emil Cioran is not an optimistic figure as Noica was, but rather a dedicated pessimist. Nevertheless, they share a significant number of preoccupations, themes, and chiefly attitudes. The seriousness, individualist commitment, and nation-wide breadth of Noica's stylised philosophical and existentialist moods, together with his (and also Eugen Ionescu's) diffuse and pervasive sadness or feelings of uselessness inspired by the state of the national social-cultural body of the time dominate Cioran's fragmented, diary-like, explosive though aestheticised fervour.

His reflections rely heavily upon a religious meditative stance, upon the matters of revelation, holiness, mystery, religious initiation, sin, fear, unhappiness, nihilism, ethics, mercy, history. Paradoxes and paradoxical thinking becomes a distinct mark of his self-preying investigations that intentionally culminate in a tremendous intensification of sensations, viewed as the obligatory ingredient of a saint-like solitary experience able to open towards the absolute. Philosophical literature receives in Cioran's case a blend of mysticism and stylised intellectual exasperation that finally aim at the sublime.

As the incommensurability of the sublime, in Cioran's view, includes a pregnant "suggestion of death", unexpected "instruments of knowledge" emerge such as vice, pain and suffering, illness. Suicide itself becomes a favourite tool and substance for thinking, for writing, because suicide is "death's way of loving life." Hence a powerful attack on philosophy, which

is not open to death and suicide, to the appropriate, immediate experience of the limit. To him "everything in philosophy is of a second or a third rank (...) nothing is direct in philosophy." As in the case of Eugen Ionescu, truth is relative for Emil Cioran, it is subject-dependent and the distance between truth and error is "only marked by the pulsation, by the inner animation."

Vociferating individualism breaks through reflection, turning thinking into a literary scene on which ideas, concepts, beliefs, political convictions, linguistic and national matters mix up into a new, expressive entity. At its core is the irretrievable, subjective historical experience, one whose ambition is nevertheless to provide a model of living the thinking, the way Cantemir, Eminescu and Ionescu did too. The personal biography is shown to one's own people as a secular hagiography, a temporal pattern, a paragon of transience, of its problems, confusions and illuminations, the way Blaga was showing the pattern or structure of the national, collective, timeless psyche. Emil Cioran was confident that such an experience requires something else than philosophy because "for an objective philosopher only ideas have a biography; for a subjective one only autobiographies have ideas."

Unmistakably, a powerful impetus toward such a positioning was due to the rising influence of the meditations and speculations on religious, mystical and theological, Orthodox themes. **Mircea Vulcănescu** is one of the prominent thinkers that offered a theoretical ground for this fusion of philosophy, theology, individualism, and style. Unsurprisingly, the selected pages pertain to a work focusing on crucial words or concepts in the Romanian cultural milieu of the time, that is "Logos" and "Eros".

Mircea Vulcănescu attempts to bridge the gap between "the rational ground of existence", the "Logos", that is the word, the discourse, the ordered perspective on human experience and life, and the "Eros", that is love, the irrational, disruptive and unifying force which is the source itself of precisely that life and experience. His endeavour is typical of the philosophical-literary attempts to legitimise the irrational through a discourse designed to explore the paradoxes of rational thinking. That is why he sees this tensional relationship from the point of view of theology, where both terms receive a mystical connotation, being caught into a discourse based on a particular conception on rationality.

Mircea Vulcănescu's work is mainly interested in distinguishing, in a Blaga-like ethno-psychological and mystical-philosophical manner, between the religious patterns of the West and the East in treating Logos and Eros. Although not stated as such, the prominence of the Eastern (Orthodox) pattern is perceivable. To him, the Eastern religious matrix "subordinates love to knowledge", while the Western one is particularised by a "subordination of knowledge to action." The West is seemingly marked by a technical and voluntarist vocation, whereas the East is driven to contemplation and revelation, because it acknowledges "the supremacy of the cognitive moment

over the moment of perception and action", while in the West "the speculative moment is subordinated to the practical, sensible and active moment."

Like Cantemir, Eminescu, Blaga, Ionescu, Cioran and Noica, he is also determining and manipulating speculative typologies or categories that have at their real core the need for an (essentialist or transient) national-cultural definition. It unmasks the search for particularism and difference, for a spiritual matrix that either ideally nourish or diminish a certain relationship or experience of the world, be it creation, contemplation, knowledge or action.

Ion Dobrogeanu-Gherea is apparently a thinker of a decidedly different theoretical genre, one that philosophises inside the given framework of professional philosophy. However, the chosen fragment from his major work *The Self and the World*, is marked by a tendency of both assimilating a new conceptual instrument, the phenomenological one, and by the divergent propensity of giving luxuriant, rich literary body to his reflections.

He is also significant as a symptom of his time, of a culture marked (as in the cases of Eugen Ionescu, Constantin Noica and Emil Cioran too) by a preoccupation with one's own history, with the lived (cultural but not only) experience seen as the proper substance of thinking. Under the influence of Henri Bergson and Martin Heidegger, Ion Dobrogeanu-Gherea's work focuses precisely on the matter of "the stream of consciousness" and the related problems of duration and time. His Bergsonian notion of a "stream of conscious duration" is not only descriptively psychological, but is also ontological. His notion of duration comprises both one's own stream of consciousness (that is sensations, emotions, but also volitional acts) and the actual existence of a material object, perceived in that stream, an object that is welded to an unconscious duration but which is however given in time, is not a-temporal. Its time, in a phenomenological fashion, is viewed as subject-dependent.

Ion Dobrogeanu-Gherea's subjectivist philosophy is a reflection on immediate experience, on the direct relationship with reality in the "lived time", a non-objective philosophy whose absence was previously deplored by Emil Cioran. Conventional, chronological time is characterised as an "impersonal duration", a fictitious one, because there is no duration emptied by the concrete time of somebody or something. Ion Dobrogeanu-Gherea is adding to Bergson's inner plurality of duration the plurality of durations as such, the multiplication of time in plural "times". Thus his basic question "how does one succeed in interpreting data of one's own duration as signs of other durations?", i.e. how can one bridge the gap between one's own, irreducible experience and the concomitant experience of the others. This opens again to the preoccupation of Ionescu, Cioran and Noica with the elaboration of a model of consciously being in one's own time, of turning the experience of the "lived time" into theory.

Similar matters and their inherent paradoxical feature constitute the substance of the unclassifiable work of **Imre Toth**. He is one of the thinkers

that, following the loose path of earlier philosophical literature, elaborates on a model of integral cultural redemption. His work is in itself a glossary and speculation on nothing else than cultural matters, on philosophical and logical concepts, on arithmetic and geometric problems, on works of art and literary productions. Life as such, immediate and "lived experience" exit precisely through the sophisticatedly-processed interpretative treatment. Contrary to Emil Cioran's claims, with Imre Toth (whose influence on a wide range of philosophers, essayists and literary figures is still perceivable nowadays in Romania) the "biography of ideas" is crushing and transfiguring the autobiography. All that is, exists only in order to open a literary figure or a philosophical problem. Eugen Ionescu's, Emil Cioran's, Constantin Noica's and Ion Dobrogeanu-Gherea's striving to found a psychology, a metaphysics, a style and pragmatics of the "lived time" proves to be only a utopian project, the utopia of immediate experience.

Imre Toth epitomises a time when mediated, cultural experience was enthusiastically praised, and the rhetoric of one's pathetic involvement in one's own thinking were replaced by the opposite rhetoric of one's speculative commitment to problems of general human interest. His own topic, the paradox, is precisely masking the matter of life's intrusion into the aseptic work of ideas. Thinking is ultimately repressing the lived experience. Conversely, when occurring, the immediate experience of time, the empirical relationship with reality is actually disturbing reflection – as he stresses, "the paradox appears only at the moment when "eye witnesses from outside the Fable and having no connection whatsoever with it claim having seen with their own eyes how Achilles not only caught up with the Turtle but overtook it too!" Otherwise, in the sphere of pure thinking, there is no paradox: Achilles will never be able to outrun the turtle.

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Our selection begins with the glossary of an allegory and ends with the corollary of a fable: two literary figures. Between them there is a long, ornamented history of subjective theoretical writing or philosophical literature, of "logomachia" and cultural escapism, of national affirmation and exasperated, individual detraction. At its very core lies the dual matter of an author's internalisation of "biographies of ideas", some clusters of theoretical terms, sentences and theories and the opposite trend of projecting one's own tormented and stylised biography as the adequate matter of reflection. In other words, of being either one word ahead of one's own life or being one emotion ahead of one's own thinking. The aim of both is the emergence of a model, a local and time-related paragon of cultural experience.

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