ANALELE UNIVERSITĂȚII DIN CRAIOVA

SERIA COMUNICARE. MEDIA

❖

EUC

CONSTANTIN NOICA'S SYSTEM OF THE ROMANIAN PHILOSOPHICAL UTTERANCE

Acad. Al. SURDU

With his "Romanian philosophical utterance", Noica holds a unique place in our philosophy, one that is still undefined both by the philosophical critique and by the author himself. The latter practically stopped research on this topic, after the publication of the well-known works *The Romanian Philosophical Utterance* (1970), *Creation and Beauty in the Romanian Philosophical Utterance* (1973) and *The Romanian Sense of Being* (1978). From a strictly philosophical point of view, at first sight the works seem uninteresting: the same thing is even more obvious, perhaps, from a strictly philological point of view. In spite of this, the works were appreciated and contributed to a great extent to the author's popularity, due to their beautiful, attractive and readable style. In fact, the field investigated was suited to such an approach, being placed somewhere between the truth and the beautiful, which prompted the author to resort to a wealth of the most refined stylistic expressions ever used in a philosophical context.

Style apart, "the Romanian philosophical utterance" later reduced to the more general term of "Romanian utterance" and ultimately concentrated to a central term, "the being", belongs to the field labelled today *hermeneutics*. Not in the ancient meaning of interpreting thoughts by means of words, of expressing thoughts, but of discovering thoughts represented by words. Hegel had also sporadically made such investigations. As Noica puts it, Hegel was glad to find in the language words that match not only different, but also opposed speculative significations. Still, Hegel was also dissatisfied with the language and fearfully touched the agglutinant keys of the German language. Heidegger's work, on the other hand, is a real hermeneutic delirium, a meeting point of the strangest projections ever made on the permissive coordinates of Greek and German. Disappeared as a living language, canonised in dogmatic writings, Greek seems to be reborn through its major words and to become more convincing than when it was alive. Noica himself explains this phenomenon. It may happen, he says, that words remind you of things you have never learned. "Since any word is the result of an act of oblivion and meanings you no longer know are buried in almost any of them." An authentic hermeneutist should therefore be a kind of language archaeologist and dig deep down those words in order to find

the forgotten novelty. Noica adds to this idea that "if you had not found me, you would not have sought". A common hermeneutist seeks for something that nobody has forgotten and finds what everybody knows. Eminescu was an authentic hermeneutist. Delving into the complexity of the Romanian language, he found "The Morning Star", forgotten by everybody, since "The Morning Star" *existed* in the Romanian language even without Eminescu, but only through him it was meant *to be*. There has been no Eminescu of the Romanian philosophy yet, says Noica. That is, a hermeneutist that should explore the complexity of the Romanian language in order to find there the philosophy that we have forgotten. Until one does that, Noica himself attempts to investigate the metaphysical abyss of some Romanian words. Quite naturally, he often seeks for what has already been found and expressed as such in other languages, but concludes that Romanians have a different, often better way to say it. There is nothing special in saying what others have already said, but just like Hegel, Noica rejoices at that fact that all these were hidden and forgotten in our language, as well, and revealing them today is an admirable deed. At least from the perspective of a humanistic culture.

Still, what if there are in our language things that have not been uttered in any other languages? Things forgotten by us only? In that case, it not just joy, but in fact our duty to remind the others of them. To try, as Noica does, to express them by creating a *system*.

We do not find it accidental that the system presented by Noica has five moments. In the same volume entitled "The Romanian Philosophical Utterance", while referring to *Brâncuşi's double infinity*, he believes that "any legend, even the great story of the world, unfolds in five moments". What else is philosophy, if not this great story of the world? This pentad of all pentads?

The first moment of the system is the classic "within oneself", so habitual in the traditional languages of philosophy (*kath'hauton, in se, an sich*), to which Noica finds a corresponding Romanian pair of terms "sinele" (ego, self) and "sinea" (the self), that make a distinction between the objective and the subjective characteristics of the unconditioned, by mutually excluding and completing each other.

Then comes "the cycle of the being", within which "rostirea" (the uttering), "întru" (in-to) and "firea" (nature, character) suppose subtle differentiations of the dialectical relation between "to be" and "to exist", differentiations triggered by both interiorisation and reference to something else and by both duration and perishability; which automatically leads to the following moment, that of "devenire" (becoming)". Its cycle starts with "petercerea" (the passing by), through "vremuire" (living) and "infinire"

(acquiring infinity) as representation of the becoming in time and space, ending in "troienire" (amassing), in the ruining excess of impetuous becoming, which needs "rânuială" (ordering). This one starts with the foundations of the prefix "în" which pulls the being out of the unleashed waves of existence, by *establishing* its being (*înfiinţând-o*), by finding its essence, thus finding its reason to be ("temei"), its balance ("cumpăt").

There is a surprising coherence of these four moments of the system, something that brings them together and orders them almost deductively. In fact, this is the "great Romanian philosophical utterance" – the utterance of its very moments, the system of this utterance. However, the last moment of the system no longer represents a "cycle". The philosophical utterance is abandoned in the world and let there to wander "on the road of folly". Might this be a king of forgetting of all forgettings? Or could perhaps this world, life, society and then creation escape order and the recovered balance of the established being? But then, what is the use of order?

Of course, be many other questions could be asked. We should not forget that "the Romanian Philosophical Utterance" finds in Noica's writings a *first* systematic representation, and this is nothing but a search for what he had already found in the essence of the Hegelian triad: being, becoming, reason, to which he adds a beginning in keeping with the traditional absolute and a diffuse ending. Other representations are of course possible. Knowing what to look for depends on what you have found. We have knowledge of no other attempts in this line, except for Mircea Vulcănescu's, who preceded Noica. Noica himself does not return to the sketched system of the Romanian philosophical utterance, but only to some of its fragments, that he presents individually (*The Romanian Sense of Being* and *Becoming in-to Being*).

Taken as such, the system oh the Romanian philosophical utterance proves to be a simplistic one (as compared to Hegel's, for example). However, the issue was not to transcend the universe of human culture (that Hegel attempted to explain), but to place the Romanian philosophical utterance, with its specificity, in the flux of the philosophical utterance in general.

Methodologically, it is an investigation of the conceptual, categorial language of philosophy, which, according to Noica, can by no means be reduced to symbolisation and codification. As long as philosophy uses a conceptual language, Cantemir can be paraphrased in this field, too: "one learns philosophy from foreign languages in order to philosophise in one's own language". But this means that, just like "The Morning Star" that survived "forgotten" in the Romanian language, eventually there would have come a time for somebody to succeed in bringing to light the

substratum of a Romanian philosophical thinking. It was meant for Noica to be that person. And he did it majestically.

ABSTRACT:

The paper analyses the philosophical meanings of the Romanian term "utterance", by pointing out shades of meaning that bring this term closer to the Greek "logos". Moreover, starting from the meaning of this term, the author shows there is an entire context of the Romanian philosophical language that supports the idea that we can speak of a specific Romanian approach onto the universal philosophical matters.

KEYWORDS: utterance, logos, nature, in-to, becoming

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS THE WORD

Alexandru SURDU

After God created the world and people, they all spoke the same language, states the *Old Testament*. Ambitious and reckless as they were, they decided to build a tall tower in order to reach the Heavenly Kingdom. God became upset, but did not destroy the tower that can still be seen today; He only entangled their languages, so that they can no longer understand one another. People abandoned the building and spread throughout the world, and because of their incapacity to understand one another they have kept making wars to this day.

After having sent His Son among people to redeem them from their sins, and people crucified Him, out of His great pity, through his chosen ones, God tried to spread the teachings of Saviour, who is "the way, the truth and the life". To this purpose, on Pentecost, He made the Holy Spirit descend upon people as tongues of fire, so that each apostle may be understood by everybody in their own tongue. However, this does not mean that anybody in any language, which is "each in his own tongue", has an equal good understanding of God's and of the Saviour's words. This fact can be illustrated by numerous historical examples.

At the beginning, long before the Gospel, *the Old Testament* was translated from Hebrew into Greek, it is said that *Septuagint* was not a mere translation, since the Greek text was identically decided upon by the 72 representatives, 6 for each tribe, that translated *the Old Testament*; this could not have been done without the intervention of the Holy Spirit, who helped the translators and also enabled the translation into Latin (*Vulgata*). Other translations followed, and even the Hebrew text was revised by the

Masoretes and then used together with the version in Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus. But except Matthew's, written in Aramaic, the Gospel was written directly in Greek, according to the Apostles' revelations. As inspired as these texts may have been, written one after the other and appreciated differently, they all echoed the same question regarding the language spoken by God. Especially when *the Holy Scripture* started to be translated into all the languages of the world.

In turn, we have our own Romanian story about this episode. Attempts have been made (and still are) to correct *theHoly Scripture* in Romanian, according to all the existent canonical texts, taking into account confession, doctrines and traditions. It is not insignificant that the first Romanian translations were made from Greek during the period of the Greek cultural domination in the Romanian Provinces; here, two Greek Academies were open in Bucharest and in Iaşi, where Greek and Latin, the two Classical languages of Christianity, were spoken. For this reason, but for some archaic expressions and the syntax of Greek and Latin influence, the first Romanian translations still astonish even today by their suggestive, revealing power, which often makes them equal to the original texts and sometimes even closer to the meaning of the biblical context.

In his well-known work *The Romanian Philosophical Utterance*, the philosopher Constantin Noica starts from the first verse of the Prologue to the Gospel of John (*En arche en ho logos*), often translated by "La început a fost cuvântul" (In the beginning there was the Word). By analysing the old Romanian translations, he notices the translation of *en* by "*întru*" (in-to) instead of "*în*" (in) and of *logos* by "*rostire*" (utterance) instead of "*cuvânt*" (word). "Întru" (in-to) proves to be even more appropriate than the Greek en, meaning both "în" (in) and "la" (at), as it suggests the co-substantiality of the Logos and of the Beginning, not just their simultaneity. In its turn, in all the languages that can translate the Greek logos, "rostirea" (utterance), proves to be the only term that means both speaking and ordering. Romanian alse has an ancient term, more suitable for *arche* than "început" (beginning): "obârşie" (origin). It means both beginning and ending, that is it best renders the context of the gospel of John (Alfa and Omega, the Beginning and the End), while instead of "a fost" (was), the form "era" (an equivalent of the progressive form *was being*) maintains the divine permanence. "Întru obârşie era rostirea" may sound archaic but fully corresponds to the context of the Gospel.

We can not provide an answer to the question "What language does God speak?", but we are certain that at least in the first verse of the Gospel of John He is at His best in Romanian.