

CULTURE LIKE PAIDEIA

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Studying Constantin Noica's attitude toward culture, one realizes that the philosopher felt much more attracted of *PAIDEIA*, than of the culture's perspectives. He had in view to create a school, a network for the transmission of the cultural values, overturning the traditional distribution "student-teacher" and trying to impose another type of authority than the one officially admitted.

In this respect, he have realized a program that was following not only the producing and the spreading of culture, but also the guiding of the culture's reproduction in time (Katherine Verdery's opinion¹).

As the already existing institutions haven't given too many guarantees of an authentic cultural reproduction, in Noica's opinion, he took on his own account the task of a "cultural trainer". *"He proposed himself trainer and he started to knock at the local authorities' doors asking for fictitious jobs for the young, talented people (for a short period of time), in the manner in which the sportsmen champions were hired in order to improve their individual performance capacity. This search represented the most direct Noica's assault upon the formal channels of the culture transmission"* [1: 281].

The *Journal from Paltinis* presents Noica's confession: "Taking into account the fact that today, in Romania there are 22 million inhabitants, then, one young man in a million has, probably, genius. But for these 22 geniuses we need, necessarily trainers" [JP: 172]. As the teaching activity could very rarely touch the "**TURN INTO BEING**" on the spiritual level, often resting on the level of the "devenance into devenance", the problem to find trainers was, for the philosopher, as ticklish as that of choosing the disciples. The philosopher wrote about the selection of the potential disciples the following "If one approaches the problem of a cultural élitism, and without it, a real culture cannot exist, we should have an impact with the students from the last high school forms. It is there the right place to 'throw the seed', not in the case of those students already graduated the university and whom you lose them for the best years" [JP: 130].

Constantin Noica was selecting the young people in "AGORA", hearing of them from rumors, and he established with them a relationship in which the essential thing was the differentiated contact with the each one's spirit. **PAIDEIA** "became therefore, a play-manner relationship, a superior game between a trainer and the trainee, an initiation into the esoteric of the culture, having as finality the cultural creation as a strange form of the modern sacrality" – wrote Gabriel Liiceanu [JP: 235].

There are, undoubtedly, two kinds of games: the so-called finite and infinite games. A finite game, no matter the price, is played to be won and an infinite game to be continued. Finite games are being played within certain limits, while in the infinite ones, the players are playing with the limits. Toward the latter kind of games Constantin Noica was going by; toward the games in which the individual establishes the limits by himself.

For a new school, as the philosopher wanted to make him understood, it was necessary to have trainers of a different type of orientation. *“Teachers were teaching the rule, not the exception, and they couldn’t devote themselves to only one apprentice. They cannot watch him every moment, step by step, even in his sleep. Is it the family the one that could take over this competence and courage? ‘Do not try too much,’ says the family to the young man, ‘Stay nearby the shore, if you want to be good for you’. But the trainer says the contrary; he loves the young man, too, and he tells him: ‘Throw yourself into the deepest waters because you will not drown yourself’* [JP: 174].

How to choose the trainers?

“It would be very simple to try, like in the army: those who think they are exceptional are invited to come out of the line. But we will found ourselves in front of too many candidates. Edison said that ‘genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration’. Good trainers are only the ones who, themselves, got a performance (for instance, Palade, the doctor, Grigore Moisil, the mathematician, or the oriental Mircea Eliade” [SIBTN: 258].

Considering the fact that good trainers are those who, themselves, have cultural performances, the following question is to be asked: what is the performance culture?

To answer to such a challenge, Constantin Noica proposes a negativist procedure: culture does not mean "poetry", at least in the manner it is practiced now, because poetry lacks craft, rhythm and rhyme; it is not 'the criticism' of the poets and poetry, either, as even a bad student can critically judge his best teachers, and it is not "prose", which frequently implies mediocrity.

Performance culture means, firstly, "*research*", and the task of the wise old men of the fortress would be to discover and to train the talented ones in order to perform a performance culture, no matter the domain of activity: mathematics, biology, chemistry, history, or philosophy.

The philosopher hasn't thought only of the exceptional trainers for the exceptional youngsters, but also of the great, humble trainers who live all their lives damned to the rigors of culture, without being able to adapt themselves, because they either were not shown, or they could not find the proper way on themselves.

Societies do not educate, as a rule, individuals for the fight, and make them being aware of their own strengths; on the contrary, societies limit themselves to offer the young people only the scientific and moral efforts, of the past generations. Constantin Noica considers that one comes to the idea that wisdom can be taught. "*We live an era of manuals*" [DC: 149]. Authority imprinted a desolating lack of will: when the teacher tells his disciple to do something, the latter does it, mechanically, as his obedience is very often pushed to the extreme.

Of course, thinks Constantin Noica, it is good to serve at the holy courts, but you have to assume the responsibility of your own vocation, and statements and even of your own destiny. That is why, sooner or later, it comes the moment when the disciple leaves his teacher. It is more like a separation, which rather unifies than parts them one from another; it is the case, for example, of Constantin Noica and Goethe, or of Gabriel Liiceanu and Constantin Noica, or of many other student-teacher like couples.

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Being an excellent trainer for the cultivation of the mind, Constantin Noica seems unsuitable for the second phase in the formation of the mind/spirit. During this phase, the disciple has to be guided toward himself, toward his individual way of being in the spirit – says Liviu Ciocarlie – therefore, for the quality of "**TEACHER (MAGISTER)**" That is because "*the goal to be fulfilled in the spirit is not for Constantin Noica – the self-edification, BUT THE EGO'S PERISH AND THE DEVENANCE INTO THE EXPANDED ONESELF*".ⁱⁱ

Andrei Plesuⁱⁱⁱ, as well, finds that Constantin Noica is not suited for the spiritual teacher's role, because he is not sensitive at the soul's wave length and at the minor or serious events of life. He can be a great educator, an instructive appearance, a wonderful intellectual performance, and a charming personality; but, anyway, he cannot be a spiritual teacher because a spiritual teacher has one quality that is not found at Constantin Noica: *the competence of the concrete*.

In order to discern upon the validity of such shocking statements, we must clarify the status of "**BEING A DISCIPLE (DISCIPOLAT IN ROM.)**" in philosophy, particularly in the Romanian space. Stefan Afloroaiei^{iv} distinguishes three classic forms of the relation teacher-disciple, which have been manifesting themselves in the course of philosophy: the stoical model, the skeptical model and the Christian one.

In the stoical model philosophy's equivalent is wisdom. The teacher, the wise man, makes him remarkable "*through a special type of indifference, a long time elaborated, superior one*", through an indifference to everything meaning social and political engagement, and to the needs of one's own body. The disciple comes close to an almost fusion to the model of living and thinking given by his teacher.

The skeptical model denies wisdom as an ideal of philosophy and the encyclopaedism often practised in the stoical initiation. A teacher of a stoical type wants like the stoic to reach the *ATARAXY*, only for the reason that this propagates the restraint of the body's desires and of the social engagements, but, especially, the restraint of the absolute judgements. The relationship between the disciple and his teacher is rather under the sign of the negation will, more exactly says Stefan Afloroaiei, of the difference will.

"A Christian model has special characteristics. The teacher is not a person, a human being, no matter how important it is, but an instance that includes the human, but it can also pass beyond it. Such an attribute can not be incumbent on someone else except Jesus Christ. While the problem of the teacher is extremely limitative, any of us can become a disciple – and not only for a certain time but also for the whole life" [4: 145].

The less secret side of the relationship teacher-student emphasizes an evolution from the antiquity to the present days. The mentioned author specifies, in Nietzsche's terms, that there is a will of identification of the disciple with his teacher - which is valid for the Greek space of philosophy (it is the case of the relationship between Socrates and Plato) – a will of negation or of difference – which is valid especially in the modern interval of time (for example the relationship between Fichte and Kant), and a will of interpretation, widely, manifested in the contemporary age (the relationship between Wittgenstein and Russell).

It is also mentioned the existence of a discipleship of ideas, where the disciple tends to be attracted by a certain doctrinaire domain and not (necessarily) by the *TEACHER'S* (*MAGISTER'S*) own reflections; but there is also a discipleship

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based on the magister's personal life, on following the way in which the magister thinks and interprets the meanings. In our cultural space, thinks the author, this discipleship of ideas does not manifest, even though some specific terms used by one philosopher or by another are present in the disciple's works (as it is the case of the terms: "*limit*", "*devenance into being*", "*raising up to the idea's level*", which appear in Gabriel Liiceanu's work, too, being taken from Noica) because we do not have a doctrinaire continuity. "*The feeling to make philosophy with (in our space n.n.), is that in many respects, everything must be taken from the very beginning*" [4: 161]. Therefore, one can not speak about the exploration of a philosopher's idea up to the last consequences.

There is a manifestation of the discipleship as an approach to man "*in flesh and blood*", to his own manner of reasoning, living and interpreting. Those who have assumed the responsibility initiation in philosophy drew the attention by their own persons and always had the conscience that they were standing at the frontier between many cultural areas. Stefan Afloroaiei says that all these men have all the time told their disciples that the entire lasting creation in philosophy belonged to other cultural spaces (like the German or the Greek ones); this fact gives a characteristic note to our discipleship.

Among the classic forms of discipleship (stoical, skeptical, Christian), in our philosophical area, the stoical model has manifested pre-eminently, believes the mentioned author.

The arguments supporting such an idea are multiple:

1. the disciples felt attraction, in most cases, for the magister's own way of making philosophy;
2. it has been considered that philosophy is a form of wisdom;

3. it has been preached the detachment from the social and political life;
4. it has been cultivated a kind of cultural encyclopaedism^v, the philosophers handling easily metaphysics, logic and ethics;
5. the stoical disciple is humble and he does not radically deny his magister's theory, even when they are separated.

These specifications are valid in Noica's case, too. The philosopher is a stoical magister. The statement was valid for the skeptical and the Christian forms of initiation only, as his quality of magister has already been rejected (to see Andrei Plesu). From the stoical discipleship perspective, Noica has entirely all the requirements to be considered magister. Andrei Plesu considers that - though he believes that this qualificative can not be attributed to Noica – it is necessary to make an inventory of the things, extremely useful, which he learnt from Noica.

In the chapter entitled “*What I have learnt from Constantin Noica*” (from the book “*The birds' language*”), Adrian Plesu enumerates all things he owes in his formation to Constantin Noica: “*Have I learnt only a professional technique? A certain exigency? The responsibility to go back to the origins/sources, to learn a language, to read certain books? Undoubtedly, I learnt such things, as well*”. *But because all these could have been learnt from anyone else, Plesu asks himself what he had learnt in addition from Noica. “I had to admit that, if by education we understand a compact doctrine, a system of solutions, a recipe, something permanent to keep it in your pocket all your life, if something like that means education, I can say something scandalous at first sight; that is, in this area, I didn't learn anything from Constantin Noica”* [3: 204-214].

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This assertion is not in contradiction with the Nicassian opinions regarding the purpose of his own school, as he, himself, wrote in the “*Philosophic Journal*” (1940): “*I dream of a school where nothing is taught.... A school where nobody teaches anyone something specific.... A school where the disciple has nothing to get and he is rather advised to be an authentic weed than to become an ivy, to contaminate his magister; such a school can transmit you states of spirit, not contents, or advice, or education*”.

This makes Constantin Noica be, if not a non-teacher (as he himself, said about Nae Ionescu), at least a rebel toward the conventionalism of the current education.

NOTES:

ⁱ Katherine Verdery, *Compromise and resistance. Romanian culture during Ceaușescu's age*, (Rom.), Ed. Humanitas, București, 1994, p. 281

ⁱⁱ Livius Ciocârlie, *Initiation in separation*, (Rom.), Viața Românească, nr. 6/June, 1988, p.25

ⁱⁱⁱ Andrei Pleșu, *Birds' language*, (Rom.), Ed. Humanitas, București, 1994, p. 195

^{iv} Ștefan Afloroaiei, *The way it is possible to make philosophy in the East Europe*, (Rom.), Ed. Polirom, Iași, 1997, pp. 141-155

^v In the article *The Cantemir model in our culture or a Memorial to the One in Heavens upon the spirit's situation in the three Romanian countries*, (Rom.), in Viața Românească nr. 1/1993, pp. 1-17. Noica wrote: "Indeed, when the Romanian man of culture is great, he can not stand only one specialty or the simple, no matter how deep specialization". He called this cultural model, the model of the *POLIHISTOR*.

ABBREVIATIONS:

JP – *The Journal from Paltinis* (Rom.), Ed. Cartea Romaneasca, Bucuresti, 1983

SIBTN – *Simple introductions to the kindness of our contemporary age*, (Rom.), Ed. Humanitas, Bucuresti, 1992

DC – *De caelo. A try around the knowledge and the individual* (Rom.), Ed. Humanitas, Bucuresti, 1993