

ATHANASE JOJA – OUTSTANDING PERSONALITY OF THE ROMANIAN CULTURE

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Abstract. *Concerned with philosophy, history and logic alike, Athanase Joja has written a treatise on logic which is the fundamental landmark of the current logic research. The second half of the twentieth century is marked by the appearance of its four volumes of logic. The volumes include a history of logic, problems of systematic logic and logic of science, which reveals his logical vision, but also his philosophical one. He manages to develop a complex theory of the history of logic, capitalizing on the conceptions of classical and modern philosophers, through a proper hierarchy and interpretation, corresponding to an integrative conception. He gives ample space to some complex, vast and difficult-to-match problems. He has been questioning himself constantly and he sought pertinent answers to problems of logic, epistemology and ontology, in order to capture some generally valid truths. The history of ancient thought, Greek philosophy and especially Aristotelian thought were analysed, systematized and discussed in his own manner, a fact which led Constantin Noica to contribute to the publication of two of his History of Ancient Thought volumes. About him, Ion Ianoși stated that through his texts he proves a certain aesthetic sensitivity and receptivity to artistic values.*

The present study, based on a careful documentation, aims to configure an image as close as possible to the reality of the great thinker Athanase Joja. Particularly critical of his own writings, he provoked a relatively low cognitive interest in his research; this explains the fact that his work is insufficiently known and valued. However, the 21st century has begun with a globally manifest desire to capitalize on and reinterpret the knowledge of the forerunners. In this regard, we note the fact that his life and work were evoked, in 2004, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth. In the public life, he played an important role in promoting scientific values and contributed to the establishment of prestigious international scientific publications and events, which would capitalize on the results of Romanian scientific research. We consider that any attention paid to Athanase Joja's work is an approach that is part of the global cultural trends of the 21st century.

Keywords: contributions in logic, contributions in philosophy, public personality, contributions in the international capitalization of the Romanian science and philosophy.

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Introduction

Athanase Joja viewed philosophy as a system that includes some of the most complex problems that man constantly poses to himself. That is why he was interested in all areas of philosophy. However, he excelled in the field of logic,

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which he appreciated as an integral, particularly important part of the system of philosophical issues. "Athanasie Joja was a logician, a historian of logic and philosophy, especially of Greek philosophy, and mostly of the Aristotelian contributions." [1] This is explained by the fact that logic goes, like a red thread, through the entire history of philosophy, and the foundations were laid by Aristotelian logic. He wrote four volumes of reflections and analyses on the problems of logic, put in the necessary connection with other problems of philosophy, entitled *Studies in logic*. The fact that he published these volumes throughout his scientific activity is a proof of the fact that he was constantly and predominantly concerned with logic. Thus, the first volume was published in 1960, and the fourth volume was published posthumously, in 1976. Some of the studies published in these volumes were translated into French during his lifetime. Two more volumes of research in logic, entitled *Recherches logiques*, were published in 1971 and 1977, respectively. His extremely rich publishing activity revolved around logic, which he considered the quintessence of the problems of philosophy and science. Certainly, Athanasie Joja made important steps in knowledge through logic, but the most important, we believe, is the fact that he tried to highlight its practical applications in solving the problems that man constantly faces. The 20th century is one in which science held the attention of most thinkers, concerned with solving the problems raised by the scientific reflection of the 18th and 19th centuries. We mention that these centuries are marked by an unprecedented development of scientific knowledge, stagnated for centuries during the scholastic period. Athanasie Joja joins this natural tendency of researchers of paying more attention to scientific problems, more precisely to analyse and interpret them from the point of view of philosophy, which itself tends to become scientific. That is, philosophy no longer interprets scientific results with detachment, but is involved, through the new ways of reflection, in highlighting the practical importance of the essential discoveries of the sciences. In other words, philosophy makes itself useful to science by guiding it in the way of approaching and solving its problems, which become problems of philosophy as well. Philosophical and scientific reflections intertwine in solving novel problems for the field of knowledge, to solve the increasingly complex needs of people. "With reference to Athanasie Joja's *Studies in logic*, Constantin Noica (1977) said: 'Great people have something of the harshness of the spirit, and the first harshness of the spirit is towards oneself. A too strong personality, moreover, casts a shadow over his own work. This is what happened in the last three decades with Athanasie Joja, whose role in the public and cultural life of the country, combined with a severe author's conscience, made his work less known. We believe that the work of the Romanian thinker must be removed from under this injustice... Then we will see not only its Romanian and European value; we will at

the same time say to what extent the work obliges and it obliges us in Romanian culture”’. [2]

Logic – perennial science

Discussions structured around problems of logic lead to a thorough understanding of scientific endeavours, taking place in distinct stages and with clearly defined objectives. Like any other science, logic has known a dynamic of its object of study, of its own research methods, of methodologies (permanently adapted), so that we can talk, without reservations, about relative and absolute in logic. “However, a curious thing happened with logic. Despite its antiquity (a first form of it being Aristotle’s *Organon*), of the numerous works of logic (elaborated in antiquity by the Aristotelians, the Platonists and the Stoics, in the Middle Ages by scholastics; in the modern era by prominent representatives of philosophy), Kant and even Hegel still considered, each in his own way, but essentially illustrating the conception of time, that logic is a science without history.” [3] We believe that the invariance of logic is overtaken by the evolution of its modern forms. Moreover, the problems of mathematical logic (the fact that it was far behind the conquests of mathematics and did not have solutions for solving some of its problems) led Edmund Husserl, towards the end of the 19th century, to search in *pure consciousness* (conceived by him) absolute truths that can solve problems in any field. This broad approach led to the emergence of phenomenological philosophy. Coincidence or not, both Husserl and Joja titled their most acclaimed studies *Logical Investigations*, from which we conclude that solving scientific problems requires passing through the Caudine forks of logic.

Analysing very carefully the controversies about the history of logic, Joja decided to write a history of this form of knowledge and ways of solving problems; “as a good connoisseur of traditional logic, understanding the interpenetration and inter-conditioning of absolute and relative, rest and movement, identity and contradiction, and being, at the same time, a good connoisseur of ancient philosophy, Joja finds in Greek logic the double origin, the Eleatic provenance of the classical logic, and the Heraclitean provenance of the dialectical one.” [4] However, other approaches that represented priority, at different moments of its evolution, made this project remain only an unfulfilled aspiration. However, he published numerous studies of the history of logic. Moreover, his logic volumes have a consistent part from the history of logic (in volumes I and II). We can’t help emphasizing “the author’s passion for *logic* – in the historical evolution of the apparatus, the constructions, the operations, the principles, the types, the applications, from Eleatism, appreciated as ‘a school of logic in action, one that legally constitutes the protohistory of logic in Greece’, the mode of reflection and the actuality of Athanasie Joja’s conception, to the logical positivism’s representatives; no less, the significant contributions from Romanian

logic being brought as well in a ‘summary research’’. [5] Although he did not elaborate a treatise on the history of logic in the classical manner, this thinker searched for the beginnings of logic starting with the Ionian materialists, with the Pythagoreans, with Heraclitus (the core of dialectical method and logic appeared with Heraclitus), Parmenides, Socrates and Plato. It was precisely his in-depth knowledge of ancient philosophy that helped him make the decision to be a logician rather than a historian of philosophy.

His landmark work is called *Studies in Logic* and it has four volumes, which have been translated into French. Thus, his volumes begin with studies of dialectical logic and parts from the history of logic (**the first volume**). He revealed his belief that Marx’s dialectic proves its usefulness in the science and philosophy of the 20th century (more precisely, the first half of this century). It is the volume in which he defines a series of positions regarding the relationship between logic and philosophy, respectively science, starting from what he calls “the origins of logic in Greece”. It is well-known that Athanase Joja is a follower of the dialectical logic, conceived as a logic of change and development, as opposed to formal logic, conceived as a logic of stability and identity. He also identified other distinctions between the two types of logic: dialectical logic is that of concrete thinking, while formal logic is that of abstract thinking; dialectical logic conceives knowledge in a progressive sense, according to the progress of the knowledge process. He was convinced that “contemporary science is moving consciously or spontaneously towards dialectical logic.” [6]

The expression “Horizons of Logic”, developed by Joja in 1960 and found in the first of the four volumes of *Studies in Logic*, refers to the fundamental orientations of modern and contemporary logic. It explains and differentiates between traditional logic, formal symbolic logic and dialectical logic. Traditional or Aristotelian logic starts from subjective logical forms, that is, from predicative propositional expressions from which the conclusion of syllogisms results, then they appear and reappear in the real process of objectified knowledge through scientific knowledge. Formal logic is the product of the most elaborate forms of logic of the 20th and 21st centuries. It studies subjective forms and noetic forms equally, thus expressing the variety of objective phenomena and processes studied by various disciplines. Dialectical logic consists in the unity of subjective forms and noetic forms. “It is therefore the science of the laws of development of the whole concrete content of the world and of knowledge.” [7] This kind of logic is rather one of the concrete contents of things than one of their abstract forms.

In the second volume he deals with problems of systematic logic, problems of the history of logic and problems of the logic of science. The studies called *Prolegomena to the History of Logic* and *Doctrine of the Universal in Plato* (1966) are among the most appreciated studies of Athanase Joja. We consider that the problem of the universal is addressed in its relationship with the problem of

the particular and the individual. In this approach, the universal abstracts one or several essential properties of particular and individual entities. Next, there is the problem of the relationship between the universal and the essential of maximum depth; that is, the universal is the general and the general is the universal, but in two different planes of approach. Science, until it reaches the universal it aims at, investigates the individual and particular entities from which it abstracts the essential of maximum depth, identified with the universal. This fact shows the dialectical relationship between the sensory or perceptible concrete and the logical or intelligible concrete. This problem sends reason to “inspect” the relations between the two worlds postulated by Plato, the world of sensible things and the world of forms or ideas; that is, it is what Aristotle saw in the so-called “participation” of man in the world of the shadows of ideas, objectified in and through sensible things that surround us and that trigger (in reason) our ideas corresponding to their concrete forms. Therefore, “Joja follows in all the dialogues the concrete ways in which Plato tries to justify his realist doctrine, on which occasion he reviews all the pre-Socratic conceptions, the Aristotelian criticism of the Platonic doctrine of Ideas, ancient and modern commentaries, as well as the opinions of contemporary philosophers. A special importance is given to the logical consequences of the Platonic doctrine, especially at the predicative level, from the perspective of traditional logic, and at the level of categorical reports, from the perspective of dialectical-speculative logic.” [8] We note that he is aware of the dynamics of reality and knowledge, as well as the discrepancies that occur during their evolution, due to objective factors. These discrepancies are noted by scientists who research to clarify various contradictory aspects and come up with knowledge that serves to solve some problems, which people face at a given time in their activities. We believe that this great thinker was constantly oriented towards the concrete problems of man, which he looked at, both from the perspective of philosophical knowledge and from the perspective of scientific knowledge. This attitude towards human needs and especially towards the identification of solutions to solve them is part of the new philosophical orientation called phenomenology.

The third volume includes the commentaries to Aristotle’s logic. “The study about *the universal in Aristotle* is one of the strong points of Athanasie Joja’s logical-philosophical conception.” [9] Moreover, he used all known interpretations of Aristotle’s philosophical work in his commentaries as a unique aspect of contemporary philosophy. He carried out this extensive undertaking over several decades. [10] Precisely for that reason, he is considered an important commentator of the Aristotelian work.

And **the fourth volume** continues with the analysis of Aristotelian logic, the explanation of abstract entities and the apophanic logic (the logic of conclusions from the structure of the Aristotelian syllogism). Science and

philosophy, through their forms of knowledge, are not interested in what is random and accidental, but in those phenomena and processes that manifest themselves necessarily, generally, essentially, relatively stable and repeatable. Objective laws, which manifest themselves independently of our consciousness and will, are of interest in scientific knowledge precisely to know them and act according to their requirements and to be able, thus, to intervene in their shaping, according to our concrete needs. The problem of abstract entities, says Joja, is not only for philosophy, but also for the sciences. Therefore, Joja sought to mobilize prominent representatives of the exact sciences and the human sciences to discuss the problem of abstract entities to meet the needs of today's culture. This debate would have been an important affirmation of Romanian thought, but it remained at the level of intention. This fact forces us to shed light on his work.

“Athanasie Joja belongs to the family of those cultural personalities of the nation who, excelling in the sphere of logic, found it appropriate to lean towards the slippery realm of ethics, conceived as a teleological orientation, for the fulfilment/perfection of the human in man.” [11] A complex personality, the Romanian logician wanted to develop a genuine philosophical system, addressing the problems that are the subject of philosophy. Among them, the problems of freedom and morality could not be missing. The problems of community, of man seen in the context of society, which have always preoccupied philosophers, became dominant in the 20th century. That is precisely why we bring to attention “the fact that in France, historical events have brought essential changes in all areas of life, from economic to cultural aspects. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty noticed this and paid special attention to history. They sought to anchor phenomenology in the concrete social-historical reality. They wanted to create a philosophy useful to man. They strove to make phenomenology a social philosophy. It is obvious that French philosophy is making a change of direction towards the concrete” [12]. Concrete man, viewed in the context of historical becoming, represented for Joja the object of the reflections of the complete philosopher, who is concerned with society and culture.

Apogee moments from the scientific and cultural activity of the academician Athanasie Joja

About Joja, Constantin Noica affirms that he has contributions of European value, being “a great cultural consciousness of the European world today” [13]. He was in tune with the knowledge he had acquired (nationally and internationally) during the decades he had passed through, and he constantly strove to promote Romanian culture internationally. The integration of Romanian culture into universal culture was his fundamental objective in public life. These are just a few arguments for researchers of the 21st century to capitalize on the work of this thinker. Academicians, researchers, students, and PhD students are

increasingly interested in the necessary connections between logic and philosophy on the one hand, between the results of knowledge and the development of human societies, on the other. We note that his life and work were evoked, in 2004, on the 100th anniversary of his birth by the Romanian Academy. “The studies written by the distinguished thinker stand the test of time” [14], says Academician Gheorghe Vlăduțescu, and “his expertise extends from the Greeks to the philosophers of the 20th century and was illustrated in studies in various fields, from logic to ethics, aesthetics and philosophy culture” [15].

Throughout his scientific life, he held important positions in the academic world. He was a professor of logic at the University of Bucharest and held the position of Minister of Education and Culture between 1957 and 1960. From 1955, he became a full member of the Romanian Academy, and between 1959 and 1963 he was the president of the Romanian Academy. At the same time, he became a member of the Association of Scientists from Romania in 1956 and President of the Association of Scientists from Romania between 1959-1972. This is the most prolific period for this thinker and implicitly for Romanian culture; the published results of his research have become reference systems for Romanian and foreign scientists.

He introduced logic into university education, as a fundamental discipline for deep understanding of scientific and philosophical approaches to knowledge. *He taught logic from the perspective of philosophy for a thorough understanding of philosophy.* At the same time, he established the Logic Centre of the Romanian Academy, which still operates today. Within this research collective, “Joja imposed the point of view of ‘logical horizons’, adopted by most Romanian logicians, a particularly fruitful point of view for current Romanian logic.” [16] The expression “Horizons of logic” was developed by Joja in 1960 and refers to the fundamental orientations of modern and contemporary logic.

Very importantly, the 4th International Congress of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science organized in Bucharest in 1971, whose organizer and president Athanasie Joja was, is considered the congress with the widest international participation organized in a socialist country, being known that Romanian researchers had participated sporadically in previous congresses. This manifestation meant worldwide recognition of the Romanian school of logic. That’s why, “he illustrated with his life and work, the words of Romanian wisdom that man honours the place regardless of the time in which he lives” [17]. That’s why Noica considered Joja a true consciousness of culture in our world.

This important thinker, landmark of logicians in Romania, but also from abroad, wanted to elaborate a true philosophical system, being constantly concerned with revealing the most important ways to solve the problems of knowledge. In his view, future philosophies must offer valid solutions for the diversity of problems that man faces throughout his evolution. Extremely

analytical, rigorous, and disciplined in his research work, he developed a real work in the field of logic, to which many researchers refer today. A great admirer of Aristotle, Athanase Joja created a true neo-Aristotelian current in the mid-20th century. His work is configured around the ideas of ancient philosophy, which he wants to capitalize on current knowledge, loaded with more and more complex problems, complexity given by the more and more elevated needs of man. His rhetoric is one centred on research that aims to deepen the universal in order to be able to identify it in the particulars of each historical stage, in the sense of being able to objectively explain and interpret the concrete manifestations (objective legalities) of various phenomena and processes.

His rhetoric is one centered on research that aims to deepen the universal in order to be able to identify it in the particulars of each historical stage, in the sense of being able to objectively explain and interpret the concrete manifestations (objective legalities) of various phenomena and processes. Being aware of the relativity of the truths revealed to us in philosophical research, as a result of the reflection on existence, Joja strives to formulate the fundamental problems that logic has faced throughout its history. He was constantly concerned with the logical approach to the knowledge of existence; in other words, he does not hesitate to clearly state that the ontic and the epistemological, as well as the relations between them, must be viewed from the perspective of logic, as a way of identifying the mechanisms for discovering truth-valued knowledge. Therefore, “one of the most important problems of logic and its history, directly related to all the ‘functional invariants’ of the perennial logic and all its historical visions, is, according to Athanase Joja, the problem of the universal” [18]. We believe that Joja’s essential intention was to develop a logical view of the world and knowledge, more precisely, he sought to identify those logical truths with the help of which you can explain any problem of knowledge. In *Logos and ethos*, he states that logic has the unique possibility to recreate objects, phenomena, processes in the form of essentiality and universality. [19] Thus, our Thinker joins the universal philosophy, troubled by the discovery of essential truths, truths to which most reflections on cognition relate. His conclusions about the place and role of logic in philosophical reflection are due to the deepening and appreciation of ancient philosophy, which laid the foundations of current logic – the positivist logic. His concerns were multiple in the problems of philosophy, but he excelled in logic.

The Romanian spirit, but also our culture, have always preoccupied him; that’s why he designed a model of cultural behaviour, through which we can capitalize on the specifics and merits of Romanian culture, culture that we can look at as a component part (worthy of analysis) of universal culture. “All peoples make their contribution to the development of universal culture.” [20] At the same time, it thoroughly addresses the role of Romanian culture in shaping the moral profile of the Romanian people. The behaviour proposed by this philosopher refers to the efforts we must make, permanently, to make known the values of

Romanian culture and to preserve our traditions. Thus, we can ensure “participation in the immortality of universality, of the eidos, of the form, of the archetype, of the type of structure” [21]. It is known that Joja constantly expressed his admiration for Romanian folklore and popular artistic creation, which he considered sources of good, beauty, morality, sensitivity of the Romanian people. In the analysis of the Romanian ethos, he highlighted the positive features of the Romanian people and their culture. “By selecting positive traits and insisting upon them, Athanase Joja’s undertaking will have a significant function of awakening, even of decontaminating and mobilizing towards the fruition of potentialities that really deserve to be developed, defended, demonstrated with increased urgency (!), in response to the too noisy and just destructive toxic manifestations, of the opposite nature, so ‘fashionable’ today among a segment, fortunately, not at all representative of the majority of Romanian society.” [22]

Conclusions

Little has been said about Athanase Joja, but, every time, the desire was to be aware of the universal value of his work, given by his sustainable and fair speeches. “Then we will see not only its Romanian and European value, but we will also say to what extent the work obliges and obliges us in Romanian culture.” [23] Through his volumes on the history of logic, he tried to rank the concepts, problems, logical systems that he ordered according to his own criteria, which he interpreted in his own way, that still requires a thorough analysis by current logicians. The depth of his studies demonstrates the value of Romanian culture viewed in the context of universal culture. The universality of the Romanian people’s culture is also demonstrated by the work of this profound Romanian thinker, “in a world whose spirituality can only endure through the complexity and polychromy provided by the diversity of cultural values” [24]. We cannot fail to notice the topicality of the ideas of this visionary thinker. We believe that a good coordination in the effort to capitalize on the ideas of Athanase Joja is necessary, in a society marked by fundamental transformations at the social, economic, and scientific level.

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