

LUCIAN BLAGA: THE HUMAN BEING DESTINED FOR MYSTERY, CREATIVITY AND KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract. *Lucian Blaga (May 9, 1895 – May 6, 1961) is a Romanian philosopher of knowledge, history and anthropology with a “metaphysical vision of the totality of existence” (as he explains in 1938, aged 43, in his work entitled *The Sketch of a Philosophical Self-Presentation*) was influenced since his youth by Kant, Schopenhauer, Bergson, in structuring his antireductionist and anti-positivist perspective in philosophy. The main concepts of his philosophical system are the mystery, the style, the culture, the metaphysical and creative being, the Great Anonymous, the unconscious and the abyssal categories. We are going to address here mainly the historicity of the human being and the concept of mystery. This philosophical investigation is guided by the metaphysical principle, the problem of mystery and the problem of style, correlated in specific manners with the concept of a creative human being destined for mystery and capable of knowledge, dynamic, as well historical as spiritual, becoming onto being. The study addresses briefly the similarities and differences of the philosophical categories employed by Lucian Blaga against the Kantian categories. Also, we approach the relation of Lucian Blaga’s philosophy to Rortian philosophy and to certain ideas expressed by Michael Polanyi. The thesis of this paper is the idea that human expression overlaps human existence (and historicity), with her manifestations of knowledge through creativity; fashioned by the “stylistic matrix”, generated by the “abyssal categories,” with “ontological functions” correlated to the structure of the unconscious human spirit. Although not a personalist, Lucian Blaga emphasizes to such an extent the ontological difference of spiritual and creative nature between the human beings and other beings, that the perspective described is close to the area of personalist studies.*

Keywords: human being, mystery, abyssal categories, ontology, personalism.

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I. Lucian Blaga, a philosopher of vocation with a “metaphysical vision of the totality of existence”

Lucian Blaga (May 9, 1895 – May 6, 1961) is a Romanian philosopher of knowledge, history and anthropology with a “metaphysical vision of the totality of existence” (as he explains in 1938, aged 43, in his work entitled *The Sketch of a*

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Philosophical Self-Presentation) was influenced since his youth by Kant, Schopenhauer, Bergson, in structuring his antireductionist and anti-positivist perspective in philosophy. His PhD thesis *Kultur und Erkenntnis* (1920) approached the relation between culture and knowledge, which is a defining dimension for his approach of the creative human being. He was proposed for Nobel Prize by Bazil Munteanu (France) and Rosa del Conte (Italy) in 1954, but the Stalinist Communist government sent agents to Sweden to prevent this. Nevertheless, the publication of his work was resumed in 1962, even under the communists, due to its great value.

Lucian Blaga is the creator of an original philosophical system appreciated by Mircea Eliade, Antonio Banfi and others, interpreted as extremely relevant in correlation with several universal philosophers such as Nietzsche, Spengler, Emerson, Bergson, Freud, Nietzsche, Cassirer Kuhn, and others¹, but he was also a poet (translated in French, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, English, German, Russian, Finnish, Hungarian, Turkish, Greek, Serbian, Polish, and Bulgarian), a translator of Goethe and Lessing, a professor of philosophy and a diplomat at Bern, Vienna, Lisbon and Prague. His main philosophical works are: *The Dogmatic Aeon*, *The Great Anonymous*, *The Luciferian Knowledge*, *Science and Creation*, *Horizon and Style*, *The Divine Differentials and Anthropological Aspects* and the main concepts of his philosophical system are the mystery, the style, the culture, the metaphysical and creative being, the Great Anonymous, the unconscious and the abyssal categories. Among these we are going to address here mainly the historicity of the human being and the concept of mystery. This philosophical investigation is guided by the metaphysical principle, the problem of mystery and the problem of style, correlated in specific manners with the concept of a creative human being *destined for mystery* and capable of knowledge, dynamic, as well historical as spiritual, becoming *onto* being. Human expression overlaps human existence (and historicity), with her manifestations through creativity; fashioned by the “stylistic matrix”, generated by the “abyssal categories,” with “ontological functions” correlated to the structure of the unconscious human spirit, which are explained further in the following parts of the paper.

Lucian Blaga’s original work is developed in a critical dialogue with Kant, Hegel, Goethe, Spengler, Husserl, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Cassirer and Bergson in describing metaphysics as crucial spiritual value. The creator of metaphysics is

¹ Angela Botez, *Filosofia românească în dispunere universală* (Bucharest: Editura Prouniversitaria, 2012), 173-185.

the creator of a world. The philosopher who denies himself this ambition denies his own vocation, although this vocation is all the more difficult as it is a vocation for unfulfillment, since any metaphysical vision is but a caducous historical moment, which sets in motion an immanent critique. A metaphysical vision should not be deplored for its ephemeral character, but appreciated as a remarkable spiritual human achievement, in its inner *depth* and *harmony*.²

Lucian Blaga has published, as a philosopher, several volumes of articles, essays and studies. The first one was *Culture and Conscience* in 1922 and then many more followed: *The Philosophy of Style* (1924), *The Original Phenomenon* and *The Faces of a Century* (both in 1925), *Colored Windows* and *Daimonion* (both in 1925) *The Dogmatic Aeon* (1931), *The Luciferian Knowledge* (1933), *The Transcendent Censorship* (1934), *Horizon and Style*, and *The Mioritic Space* (both in 1936), *The Eulogy of the Romanian Village*, and *The Genesis of Metaphor and the Sense of Culture* (1937), *Art and Value* (1939), *The Divine Differentials* (1940), *About the Magic Thinking* (1941), *Religion and Spirit*, and *Science and Creation* (both in 1942), *On the Philosophical Conscience* (1947) *Anthropological Aspects* (1948), *Romanian Thought in Transylvania in the 18th Century* (1966), *Horizons and Stages* (1968), *The Experiment and the Mathematical Spirit* (1969), *Sources* (1972), *The Historical Being* (1977), the last five volumes being published post-mortem.

II. Man as “Historical Being”

The concept of “historical being” developed by Lucian Blaga has is an important part of a larger philosophical architecture. Lucian Blaga himself presents his system, about the totality of existence, in *The Sketch of a Philosophical Self-Representation* (1934)³.

The main part of Lucian Blaga’s philosophical architecture is composed of four trilogies. The first one is *The Trilogy of Knowledge* (1943), consisting in *The Dogmatic Aeon*, *The Luciferian Knowledge* and *The Transcendent Censorship*. The second one is *The Trilogy of Culture* (1944) formed by *Horizon and Style*, *The Mioritic Space* and *The Genesis of Metaphor and the Sense of Culture*. The third is *The Trilogy of Values* (1946) concerning matters of art and value, pure metaphysics and matters of the philosophy of biology. The philosopher planned to

² Angela Botez, *Filosofia românească în dispunere universală* (Bucharest: Ed. Pro Universitaria, 2012), 177-182.

³ L. Blaga, *Schița unei autoreprezentări* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1934).

realize also a fourth one, *The Cosmological Trilogy* of which he succeeded to accomplish only *The Divine Differentials* (1940) extremely interesting for the perspective approached in this paper – especially the part entitled “The Uniqueness of Man”.

These four trilogies each with three intended parts were seen by several interpreters in a similarity to the Kantian system of categories, while Blaga envisioned a metaphysical and not rationalist philosophical system, with a symphonic character, like a “church with many cupolas”⁴. Blaga’s philosophical construction, metaphysical in nature, is not erected on the basis of one sole idea, but it relies on several, completing and consonant ideas. Each idea grows on the meanings interpreted by other philosophers and triggers new horizons of meaning and understanding. Culture, history and historicism, time and temporality, being and becoming of being are only a few of the pillars of his architectural philosophy. The human being is a historical being but not merely a historical being. When we tackle historicism at Blaga we are in fact construing a being in a process of becoming, overcoming past mysteries and preparing for the future ones.

Historical Being is the final work of Lucian Blaga, published in 1977, post-mortem. There the author’s intention was to prepare the philosophical architecture for a “historical knowledge”, and eventually, for the “metaphysics of history”. In the final chapter of this work, Blaga pays attention to the metaphysical aspects of a philosophy of history. He says that the historicism of the human being is “conditioned” metaphysically, in the sense that the history of each human has the core of a justification and a foundation of the permanent creative state of the human being expressed in a specific historical and cultural horizon, overcome by the being.

While he was still working at *The Trilogy of Values*, in 1938, Lucian Blaga gave a speech entitled “About historical plenitude”, where he capitalizes on the Kantian tradition in the philosophy of culture, and as well on the “philosophy of symbolic forms” of Ernst Cassirer. In the latter, Blaga discusses a parallel to his “‘metaphorizing’ being” in Cassirer’s⁵ expression “symbolic being” for man as creator of meaning and ideas.

⁴ L. Blaga, “Schița unei autoreprezentări,” in Angela Botez, *Dimensiunea metafizică a operei lui Lucian Blaga* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1996), 29.

⁵ E. Cassirer stated: “Man has, as it were, discovered a new method of adapting himself to his environment. Between the receptor system and the effector system, which are to be found in all animal species, we find in man a third link which we may describe as the *symbolic system*. This

History is therefore interesting mainly in the ontological leaps and in the ontological mutation that occasion and captures metaphysical aspects in any act of symbolic creation. From this perspective, the history is the history of the creator of human creativity, which is also the very human nature. The mechanisms and processes of human action are at the same time mechanisms and processes of human creativity. It seems that while he was preoccupied by the aspects of style, while he was transforming his interest for the “stylistic matrix” into attention towards a more complex and flexible notion of “stylistic field”, he was also developing a general field of becoming interesting for its stylistic dimensions as for its diachronically developments. Blaga keeps the pace with the cultural philosophy of his times (present at Goethe, Nietzsche, Simmel, Riegl, Worringer, Frobenius, Spengler, Keyserling, and others). In complementing the stylistic dimension with the historical dimension of human creativity, Blaga wants to surprise and consider creativity in its becoming and to identify therefore the “medium” for an actualization of the very humanity of the human being in the horizon of mystery.

The existence of man within the horizon of mystery is more important than the existence of man within a narrow historical horizon. This is the reason why the philosopher emphasizes the universal and perpetual results of human existence, which is enriched by the presence of mystery and by the consequences of this existential mode: the revealing figments of culture (writings, art, ideas, ethical thoughts, or myths), constituting the universe of man.

As a consequence, to analyse the historicity of the human being is to understand the dual inner structure of human being: an existence in the horizon of the given world in the view of conserving his or her being (a pragmatic mode, characterized by Kantian logic and reasoning or, according to the symbolical terminology of Blaga, a “paradisiac” ontological mode) and an existence in the horizon of mystery that is to be revealed (a “Luciferian” ontological mode, which is considered by the philosopher the most characteristic for the human being). The idea expressed by Philon of Alexandria – the primary substance, with an equivalent in Blaga’s philosophy in the metaphysical principle, suffers no decrease after the emanations that are severed from it in producing the world – has echoes in the philosophy of Lucian Blaga, in the case of human creativity – it is never reduced to the human concrete creations – and in the case of human

new acquisition transforms the whole of human life. As compared with the other animals man does not merely live in a broader reality; he lives, so to speak, in a new *dimension* of reality.” From *An Essay on Man* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2006) (1944), 29.

knowledge. In his work *Luciferian knowledge*, 1933, Lucian Blaga makes a distinction between “paradisiac knowledge” and “Luciferian knowledge”. In both cases the “substance” of knowledge is not reduced by (or to) its manifestations. “Paradisiac knowledge” is rather the same in scientific type throughout human history and is not diminished by its findings; and the results of “Luciferian knowledge”, revelatory knowledge, work of deeper abyssal categories revealing mysteries are never reducing *the* mystery.

These are commented and included in an original theory of knowledge constituted as metaphysics of knowledge. Paradisiac knowledge corresponds to the current understanding of the term, based on the Kantian categories, while the Luciferian knowledge transcends the actual, concrete and pragmatic world, using the abyssal or stylistic categories. Exposed to this type of knowledge, the object provides “fanic” dimensions (that-can-be-showed) and “cryptic” dimensions (that-are-concealed). Luciferian knowledge is a minus-knowledge, not a lack of knowledge, but a differently oriented knowledge as in the case of revelations, or inspiration, in art. This type of knowledge approaches mystery (instead of negating, denying or cancelling it) by attenuation, permanence or potentiation. When Luciferian knowledge is in action, the “enstatic intellect”, based on logic, is transformed into “ecstatic intellect” accepting antinomies, employing a different type of logos and opening new creative horizons (a perspective similar to those defended, for instance, by Merleau-Ponty, Polanyi and Heidegger).

Lucian Blaga and Michael Polanyi have in common a vision assessing the specificity of the human cognitive powers, the fact that these powers are rather limited yet enhanced by creativity and that they cannot be formulated in a definitive and absolute manner. In a similarity to the cryptic dimensions of the Luciferian knowledge, to the dimensions of knowledge which are concealed, discussed by Lucian Blaga, Michael Polanyi says that “we know more than we can tell”⁶. Polanyi, as Blaga, analyses the role of the (personal) intellectual structures and of their variability for knowledge formation. These two thinkers set both as target the truth (the truth with a “universal orientation”), while they accept this as an unattainable aim. For both, mystery is an important part of human life and existence.⁷

Knowledge is approached within a context wider than what that of the reason, rational categories and known facts, accepting the emergent state of the

⁶ R.T. Allen, “Câteva considerații asupra lui Polanyi și Blaga,” in Angela Botez, *Dimensiunea metafizică a operei lui Lucian Blaga* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1996), 354.

⁷ Botez, *Dimensiunea metafizică*, 354-359.

unknown. We find relevant the similarity between the concept of stylistic field at Blaga and the concept of pattern, at Thomas Kuhn who noticed also another aspect which brings his perspective closer to Blaga's:

“The fact that science and art are both products of human behaviour is a common place, but not something deprived of importance. Both the problems of style and the problems of theory could be listed among the numerous examples when we are paying for ignoring what it is obvious... The role of science should be seen within the intellectual history of mankind. And if science is an active factor among it we cannot see how it could be totally separated from the context”.⁸

Angela Botez cites Richard Allen stating that in their approach of philosophy in relation to art, religion, or history Blaga and Collingwood are similar. Also, there is a similarity between Blaga and Emerson, enhanced by the correspondents of the cognitive and categorical pairs present at the two philosophers: paradisiac and Luciferian at Blaga, Reason and Understanding at Emerson, as well as the Great Anonymous and the abyssal categories at Blaga and the Great Cosmic Intellect and the Over-soul at Emerson.⁹

The Luciferian ontological mode retains the core of historical existence of the human being. And, at their turn, the historical phenomena keep a stylistic hallmark that defines them, owed to the categories of the unconscious, termed by the philosopher as “abyssal categories”. Blaga's historical being is forbidden access to absolute, but through the various creations, as particular expressions of universality this being has access to universes of knowledge and culture. This very limitation the human being is openness to relativity and creativity.

The human tendency towards historicism represents specifically the endeavour of conscious human agency to capitalize upon contingencies, to change the contingencies and his universe – the world. The being manifests in history as a consciousness, through creation and knowledge. While the limits of knowledge exist the being is not as much interested in merely mapping these limits, as man lives expressing axiological understanding and axiological finalism, and the axiological understanding is the key to human openness to the world of mystery and not to its borders. Science and philosophy are modes of understanding the world.

⁸ T.S. Kuhn, *Tensiunea esențială* (Bucharest: Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1982), 392. Translation from Romanian.

⁹ Angela Botez, *Dimensiunea metafizică*, 182. See also R.T. Allen (ed.), *Appraisal*, the journal of the Society of Postcritical and Postpersonalist Studies, no. 2, 1995, special issue, dedicated to Lucian Blaga.

“History is in the metaphysical order and that of the finalities of existence, this manner of living and creating of man as a being dangerous to the Great Anonymous and as being rejected by the Great Anonymous via the pre-emptive dispositions undertaken once and forever. [...] History is in its every moment this sort of existence of the great intentions, an existence imploded, because its only means of accomplishment at hand are turning unceasingly against it. History does not have a purpose, a terminus, for which it longs and which is a future end. History is waved, as an ontological mutation in the Universe, and it will not end, but with the end of man, being and remaining history, entirely, in each and every moment.”¹⁰

The concept of the Great Anonymous refers to a metaphysical center and a metaphysical myth, addressed to imagination, but not imaginary, the consistent source of all creation (Great), but separate from creation and secret (Anonymous), in a way the culmination of mystery.¹¹ Man creates history in his tendency to replace the Great Anonymous and the Great Anonymous takes measures to protect the existential centralism. History results when man deifies himself. Blaga says in *The Historical Being* that if God became man, man also could become God. In my view this could be understood in a Nietzschean perspective of the *Übermensch*, although if we consider a consistency of the line of thought present in Blaga’s philosophical system, we notice that in this view the idea is never associated with the ideas of power, death of God, amoral aristocratic values or power over others, but solely with the idea of creative power and knowledge (the power of the mind and the power of mythical consciousness). At the same time, history is not perceived as oriented with necessity toward progress and civilization.

Progress is possible, but not always present with necessity: in history (the human being is creator of history), in culture and in spiritual becoming the human being creatively identifies problems, provides solutions or “deepens problems”. But it is not necessarily that progress is always the finality of the approaches undertaken: the horizon of human becoming overpasses greatly the horizon of progress. The “substance” of the human being is spiritual and metaphysical, thus eternal, while progress is by comparison ephemeral and does not touch the essence and the scope of the human being or her essence. The creative and

¹⁰ Lucian Blaga, “The Metaphysics of History,” in *The Cosmological Trilogy, Works*, vol. 11 (Bucharest: Ed. Minerva, 1980-8), 487-489.

¹¹ See also Michael S. Jones, *The Metaphysics of Religion: Lucian Blaga and Contemporary Philosophy* (Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 71.

metaphysical nature of the human being induces a radical width of the empirical horizon.

Lucian Blaga's philosophy has deep roots in the popular thought. This is the adequate perspective to understand the correlation between historicism and a mythical consciousness, at Blaga. This explains the creativity and the danger deeply ingrained into the human being: "Myth is a creation of man in relation to his co-ordinates, specifically and wholly human, emerging in the order of the human existence."¹² The order of human existence, understood in metaphorical terms, involves the nature of human being. When he states in a poem that "eternity was born in the village", Lucian Blaga describes the long duration of the creations generated by the abyssal categories of the unconscious and the consequential stylistic matrix that they structure. Eugeniu Nistor emphasizes also that for Blaga the village borrows from the purity and magic of childhood "counts itself in the center of the world, living in cosmic horizons and extending in myth and mystery, both heavenly and 'virginal' and expressing 'the magic of a collective soul'".¹³ For Blaga, philosophy and artistic creations are affected by the spiritual long durations, demonstrating each in its manner the cultural style. The creative destiny of man is equipped with the necessary structures and accessories ensuring its expression. This way man appears as a truly unique being in the world and in the universe. In a beautifully poetic manner Blaga expresses human uniqueness through an exceptional image "there are stars which shine only to man; neither to beasts, nor to the angels".

Since 2004, thinking about the participation in 2005 in the International Scientific Session entitled *110 Years Since the Birth of Lucian Blaga*, organized by the Editor-in-Chief of *Revista de filosofie* professor Angela Botez and the Institute of Philosophy and Psychology of the Romanian Academy with the support of the Black Sea University Foundation, we have identified (with Eric Gilder) connections and similarities between Blaga's historicism and Richard Rorty's ironism.¹⁴ The Rortian notion of ironism was either misunderstood or

¹² Lucian Blaga, *Trilogia Culturii (Trilogy of Culture)* (Bucharest: Ed. Minerva, 1985), 331.

¹³ Eugeniu Nistor, "Lucian Blaga and the Structure of the Romanian Soul," available at <http://www.afahc.ro/ro/rcic/2015/rcic'15/IC/Nistor.pdf>, accessed March 16, 2017. See the discussion on the comparison Blaga – Spengler in a philosophy of culture perspective.

¹⁴ For the comparison Blaga and Rorty see Angela Botez, "The Postmodern Anti-Rationalism (Polanyi, Blaga, Rorty)," *Revue roumaine de philosophie*, nos. 1-2 (1997) and Henrieta A. Șerban

ignored, treated hastily as irony (and irony is an obstacle in the way of solidarity), even by very good analysts of philosophy, such as Simon Critchley. Rorty's definition presents an 'ironist' as:

"Someone who fulfils three conditions: (1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite or dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that is in touch with a power not herself. Ironists who are inclined to philosophize see choice between vocabularies made neither within a neutral and universal meta-vocabulary nor by an attempt to fight one's way past appearances to the real, but simply by playing the new off against the old."¹⁵

So, the ironist should take a philosophical stand against the world, and enjoy creatively other vocabularies as a continuous inspiration to their own vocabulary, continuously "under construction". Richard Rorty is a pragmatist and has no room for mystery as such in his philosophy. More precisely, as widely different as these two perspectives might be taken in their totality, they are extremely similar in their anti-rationalism and in crucial role assigned to creativity in the life and the universe built through creativity, by the human being, for the human being. Under the species of mystery, this continuous creative relation to the world is the essence of philosophical thinking and living according to Blaga, too, precisely because the mystery and the transcendental censorship prevent the arrival at the essence of things, if that exists:

"Philosophical thinking, through its buildings and its debris, through its delusions and disappointments that it does provoke to us all, through the suspicions and presentiments that it communicates to us, through the ever deeper inquiries that it occasions and invites, will mean therefore for the human genre an unlimited surplus of lucidity, its different stages being equivalent to as many 'awakenings' from the infinite sleep where our being floats."¹⁶

and Eric Gilder, "Blaga and Rorty. The Historical Being and the Ironism," *Revue roumaine de philosophie*, nos. 1-2 (2006): 19-29.

¹⁵ Richard Rorty, "Private Irony and Liberal Hope," in Walter Brogan, James Risser (eds.), *American Continental Philosophy. A Reader* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 44-66 (esp. 46).

¹⁶ Lucian Blaga, "Schita unei autoreprezentari," in Botez, *Dimensiunea metafizică*, 29.

In other words, philosophy is re-examination of things and the refusal to embrace ultimate positions, the effort of continuous awakening (at Rorty, the awakening corresponds to the continuous vocabulary adjustment), time and time again. Simon Critchley makes a similar point himself when he writes: ‘The freedom of the philosopher consists in either moving freely from topic to topic or simply spending years returning to the same topic out of perplexity, fascination and curiosity.’¹⁷ History and being in the world are intimately interconnected things. For Blaga man both creates history and is its object, while history is an ontological consequence of man’s life in the horizon of mystery, for revelation. History is man’s destiny.

Rorty’s post-liberalism starts with this freedom of thought manifest in vocabulary as a refusal of being to be limited in spite of the real, political or traditional limitations. Blaga’s human being manifests its freedom historically, in spite of the limitations, too. For Lucian Blaga, the power of conscious human agency to change the contingencies of existence is provided by the capacity of the human being to both live creatively and create in spite of the limitations of conscience, and by the transcendental censorship (because while acting and creating, the Great Anonymous starts seeing the human actor as a competitor).

The human being is a creative being according to Blaga and all the creations, cultural, metaphysical, scientific or even material, retain the traces and influences of the abyssal categories, related to conscious categories, but structured in a different manner. The unconscious is correspondingly related to the conscious. Similarly, the physical and cosmic categories are reminiscent of the abyssal ones, and the creations are concrete manifestations of one or another active configuration of such categories. For instance, the Romanian popular *doina* song describes a specific wavy rhythm, corresponding to a feeling of space, while the same valley/hill alternating design corresponds to the expression of a specific, Romanian, wavy lyricism. Born in the magic thinking and creation of God, man is not estranged from magic and creation, although man experiences limitations inclusively from the transcendent censorship, preserving and even increasing mystery. Thus, we can notice the similarity of the tasks and their scope for the Blagian historical being and the Rortian ironist: they have to understand the world anew and their purpose of creatively integrating either mystery or alterity is “infinitely demanding”¹⁷.

¹⁷ This beautiful phrase “infinitely demanding” belongs to Simon Critchley, who has elaborated around the imperative of “active nihilism”, implying the conscious and sustained attention to whatever around us requires an answer from our part, called “infinitely demanding,” an interesting

III. The Human Being Reveals Herself in the Horizon of Mystery

Mystery becomes a determinate and, at the same time, a central philosophical category at Blaga. The philosopher understands that mystery has an important role to play into the constitution of the human knowledge. He states:

“The ‘mystery’ exists for us as an original, irreducible horizon of our existence. Under the pressure and operations of the process of knowledge, this mystery precipitates itself in a multitude of ‘varieties’ that, logically, are very much determinable, precisely in their quality of mysteries. There are multiple ‘varieties’ of this type.”¹⁸

As the author explains, there is first of all the mystery as initial horizon of the manner of existence specific to the human being. Then there is the variety of the mystery that is “heralded” to us through our senses, an opened mystery, through the very signs related to our empirical sensitivity. Here is also the variety of the “revealed” mystery, at the constructive level of our knowledge, at the imaginary level and at the level of the abstract visions of our knowledge. Blaga underlines: “This mystery, both imaginary and revealed can be opened again as such and submitted to a new ‘revelation’. The process is infinite.”¹⁹

This infinite process is the mark of the infinite creativity of the human being. Philosophical thinking is called to unveil precisely these particular characteristics of the manner of existing through creativity, characterizing the humans.

“Philosophical thinking, through its buildings and its debris, through its delusions and disappointments that it does provoke to us all, through the suspicions and presentiments that it communicates to us, through the ever deeper inquiries that occasions and invites, will mean therefore for the human genre an unlimited surplus of lucidity, its different stages being equivalent to as many “awakenings” from the infinite sleep where our being floats.”²⁰

Similarly, to the Kantian categories, Lucian Blaga’s categories are thresholds for knowledge, while they are also hallmarks of receptiveness. Within consciousness, the categories have the crucial role of organizing consciousness, but they enroot themselves deeply into the unconscious, and there we find abyssal

ethical conception. See Simon Chritchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance (Radical Thinkers)* (London: Verso, 2013).

¹⁸ L. Blaga, *Despre conștiința filosofică* (Bucharest: Ed. Humanitas, 2003), 207, our translation.

¹⁹ Blaga, *Despre conștiința filosofică*, 208.

²⁰ Blaga, *Despre conștiința filosofică*, 21.

categories, which constitute the foundation for the other categories and concepts of knowledge situated at the upper, conscious floor, where from we are shooting, as Lucian Blaga poetically stated, “flamed arrows of thought” into “the metaphysical darkness” of our subconscious and unconscious levels of being. Such beautiful expressions bear witness of Blaga’s own struggle with mystery.²¹ Differentiating his view from the Kantian perspective, founded on invariable sets of categories, Lucian Blaga considers the centrality of the role of the horizon of mystery as a defining category for the human being, aside the “abyssal categories” describing next to the category of mystery, the human stylistic matrix and human spiritual and cultural universe, in general, and “determining preferences, attitudes and actions”²².

”We are considering also that the horizon of mystery is fundamentally and immanently involved in human existence and in human consciousness. We are defining human being through this characteristic structure presented. These statements should be read with attention for each word. Here we have the corner stone of our philosophy, which was not capitalized by any other philosophy. Nothing out of everything that man undertakes in her creator existence of myths, art, metaphysics, religion, science and other more, would not take place if the human being were not to have a structural use of this fundamental ingredient: a horizon of mystery. To be noted: we consider this horizon as immanent and inherent to the human consciousness. Human consciousness is not fulfilled as such, unless this horizon does declare an emergence within her. No revealing act and none of the problems posed by the human spirit would not be even sketched if human consciousness had not a background or a constitutive environment in the horizon of mystery. To this immanent character of the mysteries corresponds a region of transcendent instances which could never be absolutely adequate as well as they could never be positively converted into the terms of human knowledge. The horizon of mystery as a fundamental ingredient of human existence and consciousness is therefore the only gateway open toward transcendental dimensions.”²³

²¹ See also Al. Surdu, “Lucian Blaga on the vaults of the Romanian soul”, in Romanian, in *La porțile împărăției*, (Bucharest: Contemporanul, 2016), 96. We could emphasize as Gheorghe Vlăduțescu did in a recent interview that Lucian Blaga has the great gift to turn into poetry everything he touches, as a different kind of King Midas, leaving us the treasures of golden thought. For instance, in the same perspective, Gh. Vlăduțescu considers that we could read the *Divine Differentials* as a poem of light. Cf. <http://www.curentul.info/2011/index.php/2011031856012/Cultura/Convorbire-cu-acad-Gheorghe-Vladutescu.html>, accessed 27 March 2017.

²² L. Blaga, *Despre conștiința filosofică* (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 2003), 98.

²³ Lucian Blaga, *Trilogia valorilor [The Trilogy of Values]*, in *Opere [Complete Works]*, volume 10 (Bucharest: Ed. Minerva, 1987), 194-5.

The concept of mystery is developed in a close connection to Blaga's epistemological ideas included within his anti-reductionism, anti-positivism and anti-logicism reforming conception. Especially interesting in this respect are his works *Transcendental Censorship*, *Luciferian Knowledge* and *Science and Creation*. In these works, mystery is a central category of his metaphysics of knowledge as a consciousness of the unexpected and limitless reality found hopelessly beyond human reach. Under the species of mystery, instead of developing a philosophy (and metaphysics) of the limit out of this perspective, Blaga creates the metaphysics of the Luciferian knowledge and daring creativity, where the human being exploits mystery and is empowered to "integrate mystery" with relentless creativity by attenuation of the unknown, sometimes by making the unknown permanent and other times by the extension of the unknown. Not only that the human being accepts the mystery in this metaphysics, this being is conceived as a knowing person intimately structured by the mysterious abyssal categories, by the intriguing embrace of the transcendence of the pragmatic mundane and by the immersion into the great unknown with the ability to transform mystery into creation and science.

Thinking about the human being as creative person, about the Latin notion, *personare*, formed from *per* and *sonare*, that is, from the preposition "with" and the adjective "sounding" (sonorous) we can emphasize the person as the being who expresses herself and the deep roots of the conception in human thought.²⁴ At Blaga, approaching mystery in a multitude of manners and capitalizing upon mystery with various results, in creating meaning, culture and science, man is a person and distinguishes from animals in a relevant way. Human awareness brings about the consciousness of mystery, the challenge of mystery and then a dedication to mystery and revelation in religious, in scientific and in artistic forms of expression. This is more than just an aspiration. The very human nature makes it so that the human being transcends base necessities and the imperative of preserving her existence. This being lives "in mystery and for revelation" in a state of transcendence of the mundane inscribed into her existence. And this mystery, which seems easier to be understood as the unknown is not just the unknown: it is a concept that allows the plural, the idea of plurality into the unknown and the idea of structure into the unknown, corresponding, on the one hand, to the complexities of the human being, in general, and, on the other hand,

²⁴ See also Al. Surdu, "Lucian Blaga on the vaults of the Romanian soul", in Romanian, in *La porțile împărăției*, (Bucharest: Contemporanul, 2016), 97.

to a variety of abyssal categories, of stylistic matrixes and ultimately to the historical, cultural and scientific diversity of the universe of mankind.

Approaching the category of mystery at Lucian Blaga, Constantin Noica (1909-1987) wrote about the paradoxical coincidence of the metaphysical freedom appropriated by man and of his multiple limitations in the human being. In this perspective, conscious of the relativity of any metaphysical freedom vindicated man is destined to remain awake and creative. By comparison, the human being at Kant is less active and less creative, as consciousness is determined by the Kantian categories and in a certain measure bordered by these categories. "As the galaxies are rejected by an anonymous center, which is preserving its unknown centrality and in comparison to which they are but infinitesimal elements, a sort of 'cosmic differentials' [...]. At Blaga we have a supplementary set of categories than the Kantian ones that are going to actively generate the [structuring] 'bed' of any creation. [...] Blaga dares say: since we cannot unveil mystery let's enhance it".²⁵

The theory of mystery leads to a theory of consciousness structures. Blaga does not differentiate among conscious, subconscious and unconscious, considering only two floors of consciousness, found in a relative continuity. The characteristic of the theory of unconscious in the 20th century stays in its marginalization. On the contrary, at Lucian Blaga, as Vasile Băncilă (1897-1979) also noticed:

"The rehabilitated unconscious becomes the profound, varied and vital spring [source] of an entire world, with its specific categories and magic manifestations, with its forms and forces, with its jurisdictions, sentences and creative fatal events. This is the world at the basis of cultures, of all real cultures known by history, provided that this basis determines the cultural styles and the manners of the cultures, their specific. Blaga calls this stylistic matrix, making it the key for the philosophy of creation, as much as we can understand creation".²⁶

The category of mystery is also related to the attempts of rationalization from the part of the human spirit and in this respect Blaga approaches the related concept of dogma in which he combines the dimension of spiritual synthesis and the metaphysical dimension of protection from the rationalization attempts.

²⁵ Constantin Noica, „Viziunea metafizică a lui Lucian Blaga și secolul XX,” in *Lucian Blaga - cunoaștere și creație* (Bucharest: Ed. Cartea Românească, 1987), 26.

²⁶ Vasile Băncilă, *Lucian Blaga - energie românească* (Cluj: Ed. Cartea Românească, 1938), 42.

Patristic philosophy is considered by the Romanian philosopher founded on a dogmatic type of knowledge and it is identified as the source of a dogmatic eon, inspiring new works of gnoseology and new spiritual attitudes in history (see the New Age current). Remarkably, in his perspective scientific thought is not so far from the dogmatic thought, as we can see in the mental experiments, or in the example of Cantor's Aleph symbol conceived as a "trans-finite quantity which remains identical no matter which finite quantity would be subtracted from it". This is the manner in which we conceive the infinity and also this is the understanding behind the phrase that "God is one and multiple".

Dogma is just a transfigured antinomy with a religious content: a meta-logical construction.

Mystery is therefore a renewed pretext for a metaphysical perspective inter-connecting ontology and mythology without fanaticism and this way saving the value of knowledge, while acknowledging its relativism (in relation to the idea of transcendental censorship). The theory of mystery inscribes the interplay of transcendental mysticism, lucidity, axiology and rationalism into the human and Romanian nature.²⁷

IV. A Few Concluding Remarks

Lucian Blaga (1895 - 1961) is a Romanian philosopher of culture, knowledge, history and anthropology with a "metaphysical vision of the totality of existence" (1938 -*The Sketch of a Philosophical Self-Presentation*) and he portrayed the human being in a complex manner which combines a romantic dimension, epistemic, a cultural and historical dimension. Central are the metaphysical principle, the problem of mystery and the problem of style, correlated in specific manners with the concept of a creative human being *destined for mystery* and capable of knowledge, dynamic, as well historical as spiritual, becoming *onto* being. Human expression overlaps human existence, her manifestations through creativity; fashioned by the "stylistic matrix", generated by the "abyssal categories," with "ontological functions" correlated to the structure of the unconscious human spirit.

²⁷ See Lucian Blaga, *Trilogia valorilor*, in *Opere*, vol. 10 (Bucharest: Ed. Minerva, 1983), 194–195. Angela Botez, "Concepte integrative in 'Trilogia cunoașterii,'" in *Revista de filosofie*, nos. 5-6 (2001).

The idea expressed by Philon of Alexandria – the primary substance suffers no decrease after the emanations that are severed from it in producing the world – has echoes in the philosophy of Lucian Blaga, in the case of human creativity – it is never reduced to the human concrete creations – and in the case of human knowledge. Lucian Blaga makes a distinction between “paradisiac knowledge” and “Luciferian knowledge”. In both cases the “substance” of knowledge is not reduced by (or to) its manifestations. “Paradisiac knowledge” is rather the same in scientific type throughout human history and is not diminished by its findings; and the results of “Luciferian knowledge”, revelatory knowledge, work of deeper abyssal categories revealing mysteries are never reducing *the* mystery.

Progress is possible, but not always present with necessity: in history (the human being is creator of history), in culture and in spiritual becoming the human being creatively identifies problems, provides solutions or “deepens problems”. But it is not necessarily that progress is always the finality of the approaches undertaken: the horizon of human becoming overpasses greatly the horizon of progress. The “substance” of the human being is spiritual and metaphysical, thus eternal, while progress is by comparison ephemeral and does not touch the essence and the scope of the human being or her essence. The creative and metaphysical nature of the human being induces a radical width of the empirical horizon.

There are vast realms of mystery, spirituality and creativity within the human being, particularly on *metaphysic coordinates*. The stylistic matrix is an echo of this situation and functions as *hexis* (meaning state, structure, disposition, but not used in Blaga’s terminology, though). This describes the specific of Lucian Blaga’s philosophy and anthropology and a human being placed in a special relation with a metaphysical centre, The Great Anonymous (“metaphysical centre”, “metaphysical principle” and “something else than the world” (*The Great Anonymous*, 1840). The absolute value of the human being relies on the participation to mystery, and on the revelation of mystery, on creativity, spirituality, scientific and technical findings, sustaining the dignity and worth of the person, but situating her in the potential realm of greatness.

Lucian Blaga was familiar with the modern scientific thought of his times and this awareness influenced the interpretation of the cognitive, ontological, cultural, historical and axiological dimensions of the human being, within a philosophy which correlated the stylistic and cultural approach of philosophy of science, accompanied by an interdisciplinary investigation of epistemology, philosophy of culture and axiology. His notable contribution to the definition of

the human being represents a constitutive part of his contribution to the definition of the spirituality of the Romanian people. The lyrical feeling of the human ontological uniqueness enhances the aspect of culture as ontological mutation within the following lines:

“The attentive and persistent examination of our popular culture brought us in front of the comforting conclusion of a Romanian stylistic matrix. The glimpses of the latent meanings enable us to affirm that we enjoy a great cultural potential. All that we can know, without the fear of being contradicted, is that we are the bearers of exceptional possibilities. All that we can believe, without committing an attack against lucidity, is that we were meant to enlighten with our flower of tomorrow a corner of land. All that we can hope, without giving ourselves up to illusions is the pride of spiritual, historical initiatives, out of which, every now and then, a sparkle would bounce around to other nations”.²⁸

In his philosophical vision, the accent placed on science as knowledge, as metaphysical architecture and as a cultural approach of creation, on culture as ontological mutation (the very homeland of man) and on cultural values, which are constitutive of the cultural and spiritual eons, emphasizes the representative and original dimensions of a specific framework for the understanding of the uniqueness of human being. This way philosophy becomes “noology”, that is, a philosophy of the uniqueness of the human being and of the uniqueness of the cultural environment specific for the human being, who surrounds herself by creation, metaphors and cultural values, living both the mystery and the revelation, in the relation to the Universe, in the spiritual leap from appearances to essences, in the horizon of universal entirety.

Even though L. Blaga never formulates his philosophy in strong personalist terms – *only* persons are real; *only* persons have value and *only* persons have free will – for him, the ontological difference of spiritual and creative nature between persons and other beings is so great that it brings Lucian Blaga’s perspective very close to personalism.

There are vast realms of mystery, spirituality and creativity within the human being, particularly on *metaphysic coordinates*. The stylistic matrix is an echo of this situation and functions as *hexis* (meaning state, structure, disposition; not used in Blaga’s terminology, though). This describes the specific of Lucian Blaga’s philosophy and anthropology and a human being placed in a special relation with a metaphysical centre, The Great Anonymous (“metaphysical

²⁸ Lucian Blaga, *Trilogia culturii (The Trilogy of Culture)*, in *Opere*, vol. 9 (Bucharest: Ed. Minerva, 1985), 331, our translation.

centre”, “metaphysical principle” and “something else than the world”. The absolute value of the human being relies on the participation to mystery, and on the revelation of mystery, on creativity, spirituality, scientific and technical findings, sustaining the dignity and worth of the person, but situating her in the potential realm of greatness.

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