

**FROM PHILOSOPHICAL SELF-PRESENTATION:
A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ (1938)***

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Abstract. The idea of “mystery”, of our existence in the horizon of mystery, has indeed such a central position, that there have been voices criticizing me for mysticism and, although Blaga did not take this criticism negatively, stated that he was not mystical in his philosophy, maybe in poetry or drama, where mystical experience has its place. However, his idea to place mystery in a central position of his philosophy is the consequence of the desire he had for exactness in his philosophical thinking. Thus, in *The Dogmatic Aeon* and *Luciferian Knowledge*, for the first time in the history of philosophy he thoroughly analysed and examined the very idea of mystery. Neither the philosophers, nor the theorists of science, have ever done this before. The issue of “mystery” has been approached as vaguely as possible. I am the first who has ever tried to establish the role of this idea in the formative process of human knowledge.

Keywords: Lucian Blaga, mysticism, “mystery”, existence, human knowledge.

The six systematic studies published so far complete each other and display a certain architectural vision. They are part of a more comprehensive approach that I hope to carry out through the years to come. All the six approaches belong to the same wider philosophical framework, and they finally outline a metaphysical vision of the whole of existence. Let me say a few words upon the architecture of this system. The system I am conceiving has, unlike the classical ones, a symphonic nature, being neither a one-idea-system, or a none-formula-system, but is structured rather like a multi-cupola church. Some principal, rhythmically alternating leitmotifs interweave in this system, which was conceived cyclically, in “trilogies” dedicated to one group of daily experiences. Two of these “trilogies” are already completed and published:

* This text shows clearly that in Blaga's philosophical works there is a systematic architectonics or symphonic structure like that of a Byzantine church with many cupolas. His metaphysical construction does not erect one single idea but principal leitmotifs, which interweave and return from one study to another in a rhythmical alternation. In Blaga's *Trilogies*, the metaphysical perspective of the third part crowns the ideas set forth in the first and second ones. Blaga expresses clearly his appreciation of his main achievement, with roots deep in his poetry and philosophy, a metaphysical representation of knowledge created in the horizon of mystery (editors' note). *Revue Roumaine de Philosophie*, tome 49, nr. 1-2, 2005, pp. 3-9.

1. *The Trilogy of Knowledge*, containing: *The Dogmatic Aeon*, *Luciferian Knowledge*, *Transcendental Censorship*.

2. *The Trilogy of Culture*, containing: *Horizon and Style*, *The Mioritic Space*, *The Genesis of Metaphor and the Meaning of Culture*.

I am presently working at *The Trilogy of Values* and the first version of Volume I, *Art and Value* is already completed. A volume on the “equivalences of truth” and one dedicated to ethical issues are to appear in the same trilogy. Maybe I should not speak about works I have not written yet, but it might be worth presenting the framework of the trilogies already published. I shall only add that two other trilogies are going to be dedicated to some issues of the philosophy of biology and of pure metaphysics.

A central idea, supported by some other leitmotifs, certainly exists in the two trilogies that are already completed: it is the idea of “mystery”, of our existence in the horizon of mystery. The idea of mystery having such a central position, there have been voices criticising me for mysticism and, although I do not believe this would be a crime, I should state that I am not mystical in my philosophy. I may be in poetry or drama, where mystical experience has its place – that, I believe, no modern aesthetician can deny. However, my idea to place mystery in a central position of my philosophy is the consequence of the desire I have for a supreme position and exactness in my philosophical thinking. Thus, in *The Dogmatic Aeon* and *Luciferian Knowledge*, for the first time in the history of philosophy, I thoroughly analysed and examined the very idea of mystery. Neither the philosophers, nor the theorists of science, have ever done this before. The issue of “mystery” has been approached as vaguely as possible. I am the first who has ever tried to establish the role of this idea in the formative process of human knowledge. I tried, in *The Dogmatic Aeon* and *Luciferian Knowledge*, to provide a sort of logical, almost mathematical, analysis of the idea of mystery and after I placed it in a certain system of co-ordinates, I pointed out possible “variants” of the idea of mystery. Those listeners, who have not had the opportunity to read these studies, should not be alarmed by purely symbolical titles, such as *Luciferian Knowledge*. I assure them that we are not talking about the Devil: we are just trying to solve some issues concerning logic and the theory of knowledge: “The Mystery” exists in our vision as a primary, irreducible horizon of our existence. This mystery is atomised, under the pressure and operations of the process of knowledge, into innumerable “variants” that may be logically determined, as “mysteries”. Here are some “variants”: first, there is the “mystery” as the primary horizon of the human way of being. There is the “mystery” that our senses report to us, a mystery described by signs by our empirical sensitivity; and then, the “mystery revealed” in the constructive plane of our knowledge, on that of our imagination and that of abstract visions. This revealed-imaginary mystery may be described as it is and may be subject to a new “revelation”. The process

may continue for ever. Moreover, the fact that mystery may never be converted into non-mystery is pointed out in my studies. Kant's "thing in itself" is referred to in these studies as being one of the countless variants of the idea of mystery.

The analysis of the idea of mystery led me to some very peculiar variants. I am speaking about the "intensified" or "essentialised" mystery. These mysteries may be expressed and formulated only through antinomies, precisely through transfigured antinomies. In order to illustrate this idea of intensified, essentialised mystery, we refer to examples from Neo-Platonic metaphysics or from Christian theology. And this is a point on which I would like to insist for a moment. I tried to point out that, as for the variants of the intensified, essentialised mystery, which may be expressed only by means of antinomy, a kind of knowledge is possible that has not been experienced since Neo-Platonic times and even since Christian dogmatics. I must specify that it is not the very content of the dogma that I wish to update, but the method that might be thence inferred, a method that may be updated and assimilated by philosophy, as for some external issues. On the other hand, it is worth observing that, due to quantum theory, modern physics states the antinomic structure of light; the phenomenon of light is perceived as being an "undulation" as well as something "corpuscular". This is a logically incomprehensible paradox. Still, some experiences necessarily demand this antinomic solution. This is why the belief is that modern physics is subject to a crisis. I believe that I succeeded in demonstrating that, as this undulatory-corpuscular theory of the nature of light is actually part of a *sui-generis* type of knowledge, which I called "minus-knowledge", it is not a crisis of modern physics but a new type of knowledge that we are dealing with. We already know that Kant built a theory of knowledge that was actually meant philosophically to justify Newton's classical physics. Today Newton's physics represents only a limiting case for modern physics. Thus, the necessity for philosophically justifying the constructions of modern physics by means of a new theory of knowledge is imperative. This is, essentially, what I tried to do in *The Dogmatic Aeon* and *Luciferian Knowledge*, especially by providing the theory of knowledge with the concept of "direction". Knowledge has not, as has been thought since Kant, a unique sense ("plus"), *i.e.* to "attenuate" mystery by means of an infinite theoretical process; knowledge has two opposite senses, namely plus and minus. And there are circumstances when the "minus" direction, that does not attenuate a mystery but, on the contrary, intensifies and radicalises it, rendering its formulating exclusively antinomic, is required. This is how modern physics acts in certain circumstances. These theories must not be regarded as an impasse, but, on the contrary, they justify a certain type of knowledge, that we have called "minus-knowledge". I shall have myself the opportunity to apply in some essential matters this method of minus-knowledge, that I have tried to justify for building a new theory of knowledge. My researches in this field conducted me to the discovery of some fundamental

aspects of human knowledge that remained unobserved until now. To my regret, I do not have the necessary time to present systematically the way I preceded to this discovery. Thus, I restrict myself to some results. Knowledge has a dual nature, and this dualism is essential, irreducible to a common denominator: (1) the knowledge built within the frame of the given world and which can be completed with simple “unknown factors”; (2) the knowledge built within the frame of mystery, where everything that can be referred to as belonging to the given world is only a sign or signalisation, *via* the senses, of certain 'mysteries'. We called the first type of knowledge “paradisiac” and the second one, “Luciferian”. Within the framework of paradisiac knowledge, the idea of mystery, which is very complex, has no role, though, even in this framework of knowledge – which operates with intuitions, concepts and intellectual categories as they have been examined since Kant – there may be so-called “unknown factors”. Nevertheless, mystery implies a more complex “unknown factor”. Mystery and the attempt to reveal it are the object and task of Luciferian knowledge, which has *sui-generis* articulations and structures. All the elements that also have a role in paradisiac knowledge – *i.e.* experience, intuition, concept and categories – have different functions in the two types of knowledge. All of the theories of knowledge elaborated until now have attempted to reduce human knowledge to aspects related only to paradisiac knowledge. When I see a tree and I say, “This tree is an apple tree” (even if I am the victim of an illusion), I perform an act of paradisiac knowledge. When I see the curtain in the window waving and I say, “Something unknown”, the *X* that produces the movement may be the wind, I also perform an act of paradisiac knowledge. However, when I state, “Light is an undulation”, I perform an act of Luciferian knowledge. The light was first turned into a sensitive sign of the mystery, that we try to reveal to ourselves. The revealing of the unknown factor is in a certain way a *substitute* for the sensitive sign and it acquires a firmer existential value than the one the “sign” is endowed with. The unknown does not approach the known at the same level as it does in paradisiac knowledge; on the contrary, once it is *revealed*, it becomes a *substitute* for the known.

Thus, all the aspects of Luciferian knowledge are essentially different from those of paradisiac knowledge. *Paradisiac knowledge/Luciferian Knowledge*: “The mystery” is set forth and “changed” by Luciferian knowledge through infinite processes of attenuation and perpétuation. All these aspects have nothing to do with paradisiac knowledge. Another result of my researches is that mystery can never be converted into non-mystery.

The third volume of the *Trilogy of Cognition*, that is *Transcendent Censorship*, which I called a metaphysical attempt, is a study that entirely differs from *The Dogmatic Aeon* and *Luciferian Knowledge*. I believe that I do not need to justify metaphysics at the Cluj University, where there are so many brilliant teachers of philosophy. I just want to point out that metaphysics is different from

science and even different from the philosophy of science. Metaphysics is always a leap into the uncontrollable. To put it this way: experience has just a “veto” role in metaphysics, if the latter happens to contradict it. However, experience should not control and verify – not in a positive way – metaphysical conceptions. I reflected upon the result acquired in the two preceding studies, that is the nonconvertibility of mystery into non-mystery. I asked myself if the situation that we are doomed to bear does not have a metaphysical transcendent meaning. This was a metaphysical perspective. Suppose our individual consciousness, that includes knowledge and its possibilities and limits, is actually interrupted and controlled by a metaphysical center, of a spiritual nature, but being above us. Let us call this spiritual center *transcendent*, as for its relationship with our consciousness, “The Great Anonym”. Admitting this metaphysical assumption, we could establish why man is not able to covert mystery in any positive or adequate manner. The Great Anonym imposes a censorship upon human knowledge, which prevents us – to our advantage – from knowing in an absolute manner, or from adequately revealing mysteries. This transcendent censorship applies to us structurally, by means of sensitive constants and intellectual categories, on which human knowledge perpetually depends. Intellectual categories would be the means of a transcendent censorship, that purposely and to our advantage and maybe to the advantage of the whole of existence, the Great Anonym uses in order to keep us away from mysteries. If we had the capacity of absolute knowledge, we would be endangered: we would cease our efforts or we would substitute ourselves for the Great Anonym, which would generate cosmic anarchy. We must therefore see the relativity of human knowledge not as a shortcoming, but as the result of a superior metaphysical order. This metaphysical conception of knowledge is in accordance with a given situation, *i.e.* the fact that mystery can not be converted into non-mystery. It does not contradict the empirical results. Nevertheless, as it is a metaphysic conception, it cannot be controlled by means of empirical data. But this is a common place for every metaphysical conception. Anyway, my conception is the first attempt in recent times at a metaphysics of knowledge. It is absolutely new. And, as the author is a Romanian, I believe I have the right to claim that this metaphysical conception is Romanian too.

I shall now proceed further, to the second trilogy, which deals with another group of phenomena: the cultural ones. Recent researches have increasingly highlighted the mental aspect of cultural phenomena that is “style”. It has been pointed out that there is a certain stylistic uniformity that is common for cultural phenomena: there is a same “style” that applies to all cultural creations belonging to a certain space and time. Once stated, this stylistic aspect has generated increasing and assiduous debate, not only among art historians and critics, but also among philosophers of culture. However, the phenomenon of style demands an

explanatory theory. This explanatory theory has gradually appeared: the first explanation, without a precise awareness of what they were dealing with, can be found in Classicism. To give an example, the great poet Hölderlin, who also was a greater thinker than he is believed to be, when attempting a determination of the Greek style (the term was not used with its present meaning), used to speak about the popularity of the “organic” vs. “inorganic”, which corresponds approximately to Nietzsche’s “Apollonian” vs. “Dionysian”. Actually, this latter pair of terms had also been used by the Schlegel brothers in their approach to the Greek phenomenon, much before Nietzsche, but certainly not having the same visionary scope as the latter. Nietzsche as well as Simmel, Frobenius and Spengler, and then, more related to artistic phenomena, Alois Riegl, Worringer, Wölflin and many others, tried to offer an explanatory theory of “style”. As I showed in *The Trilogy of Culture*, all of them incline towards visualising “style” as a “monolithic” phenomenon, as I call it, and towards reducing it to a single factor, by hypostasising it. Frobenius’ and Spengler’s morphology approaches “culture” as a unitary stylistic phenomenon, as a result of a soul of culture, which rises as a spatial organism in a certain type of landscape and nowhere else. Culture, style, is supposed to be a parasitic organism, superimposed on the emotional life of man, and is supposed to have every characteristic of a genuine organism: it is born, grows and dies. The lifetime of a culture that has a monadic nature is, according to Spengler, around 800-1000 years. Each culture or cultural style is dominated by a certain feeling of the space connected to a certain landscape. I thoroughly examined these theories in *The Trilogy of Culture*, where I also proposed a new explanatory theory of cultural style, a theory that, in our opinion, overcomes all the difficulties, which face all other existing theories. We explain cultural style by means of categories of the unconscious. We have already pointed out that it is not only our consciousness that has its own series of cognitive “categories” meant to receive data from the world. We admit that, beyond these categories of knowledge, about which philosophers have been speaking since Aristotle, and especially since Kant, there is a second wide series of categories of the unconscious, categories that we call, because of their depth and to their place, “abyssal”. There certainly is a correspondence between the categories of conscious knowledge and these abyssal categories of the unconscious, but the latter have a different structure. Admitting that our consciousness has, as a form or category of sensitivity, “space” and “time”, we admit that our unconscious also has its own space and time, only that they have a different structure. To the unconscious expressed in Western culture, we assign a category of infinite tri-dimensional space, while to the unconscious expressed in our Romanian culture we assign a wave-like space. We find a certain temporal form expressed in Western culture, that is, ascending time, the basin-time, as we called it. But as for the ancient times, especially with regard to the Hellenic culture, we found another

shape of time, cascade-time. We cannot justify this theory with all the necessary examples, but they can be found in the three volumes of *The Trilogy of Culture*. There also is, in our unconscious, another category besides space and time, *i.e.* the formative category that tends to individualisation, typification or elementarisation. The unconscious also includes the category of “expansion” or “withdrawal” from the stylistic horizon. In what he creates, the European, for example, is generally dominated by the category of “expansion”, while the Indian is dominated by the category of “withdrawal”. But, as I was saying, our unconscious has many heterogeneous categories, all of them converging to create a *stylistic universe*. All cultural creations, *i.e.*, works of art, metaphysical visions, great scientific theories, mythology and others, are marked by the existence of their abyssal categories, which are connected, by a para-correspondence, with the respective conscious categories, but are differently structured. This not a new “categorical” theory, because nobody ever thought to establish these categories. This theory has the advantage of explaining – in a more satisfactory manner than others – the multiplicity and variability of the aspects of the stylistic phenomenon. We do not study “style” as a monolithic phenomenon but as a complex phenomenon that is sustained by an entire complex of heterogeneous “abyssal categories”, and by a cosmic-genetic synergy. This has also the importance of highlighting, for the first time, certain aspects of the “unconscious”.

Beyond its general theoretical advantages, this categorical theory of the basis of the stylistic phenomenon provides us with the possibility of examining stylistically – for the first time and more thoroughly – our folk culture. My study *The Mioritic Space* has been a best-seller among all my studies. In this study, my point was to demonstrate the existence of a series of abyssal categories, effectively active in our people's creations. Therefore, I discovered in the *doina* song the wave-like space, the same valley/hill horizon, which I could discover in the sentiment of destiny that is typical of our lyrical poetry, that expresses the Romanian way. I pointed out the importance of the “sophianic” category in our culture and the importance of the descending transcendent, of the “organic” category for the entire spiritual life of South-Eastern Europeans. I also showed the efficacy of the “ghostly”, or elementarising category for folk art. And so on. I believe this is enough to provide an understanding of the efficiency of our theory upon style. Actually, I gladly observe that most of our younger literary critics successfully applied these ideals in many areas as well as in monographic studies. Thus, the data provided to supply a stronger basis to our theory becomes increasingly impressive. Anyway, this theory has cleared the way for new approaches, general as well as specific, that have finally begun to show their efficacy.

After elaborating the theory of abyssal categories, which I was the only one to have discovered, I had to make this theory of “culture” and “style” become part of the metaphysic system I am working at. I did this in *The Genesis of Metaphor*

and the Meaning of Culture. In this recent study I worked upon a metaphysical anthropology and a metaphysical theory of the meaning of culture and style. It is the first attempt that has been made in philosophy at elaborating a metaphysics of the stylistic phenomenon. "Metaphor" and "style" are the fundamentals of any cultural creation. Any such creation is an attempt of man to reveal mystery to himself. But this revelation, whether realised by artistic, theoretical or visionary creations, has always a metaphorical nature in its constitution, and is made with stylistic co-ordinates and forms. This means that revelation of mystery is never adequate. Not only human knowledge of the ineffable world, but also our attempts at revealing mysteries by means of creations are subject to a transcendent censorship. The categories that form the basis of a certain style are given to us as transcendent hindrances. This is how the Great Anonym prevents us from revealing mysteries in a positive way and with accurate adequacy, lest we should attempt to substitute ourselves for him and disturb the cosmic balance. But it is also to our advantage, in order to preserve our permanent creative state and protect us from the unknown dangers of absolute revelation. Man has, unlike animals, a specific way of being: it is living within the horizon of mystery, aiming at revealing it. But our revelations are just metaphors of mystery and their transcendence is limited by the censorship of abyssal categories.

Translated by Angela Crocus
