

C. RĂDULESCU-MOTRU: ENERGY PERSONALISM AND THE DESTINY OF CREATIVE MAN*

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In nearly 70 years of activity in the field of philosophy, Professor Constantin Rădulescu-Motru (1868-1957), a member of the Romanian Academy and its President (in 1938-1941, the founder of the Romanian Philosophical Society), included in his creation a range of problems extending from the thinking of primitive peoples to the philosophy of ancient Greece, then to Christianity and the Renaissance and from the latter to modern philosophy at whose centre he placed Kant – not without polemic and systemic intentions. C. Rădulescu-Motru's dwelling on the work of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Ostwald, Dewy, Bergson, Dilthey, H. S. Chamberlain, Reserving, Spengler and others, was strongly marked by the need of his challenging mind to know not *only* whence the contemporary world outlook arises and on what shores it halts, but also whither it goes and what ideas it could offer to the world painfully traversing the late 19th century and the early 20th century; as we know, it was a world which reached an acute crisis in the 30's, 40's and 50's of our times.

That is why C. Rădulescu-Motru was not a historian of philosophy in the established sense of that word: for him, very much as for Hegel, the history of philosophical thinking spelt the history of mankind as concentrated in thoughts; he investigated the history of philosophy in terms of attempts at solving the enigma of the human being, of the way in which – since the alient eastern peoples, to the co-eval ones – answers have been offered to questions concerning the *origin*, the *structure* and the *role* of the human personally in the universe. In Rădulescu-Motru's creation, studies in the history of philosophy turned into a text of a key problem for philosophy, for culture generally, for the empirical history of man and of his relations; the same impassioned study of the history of philosophy also offered him a *pretext* for evolving a new kind of metaphysics, which he defined as *energy personalism*.

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The history of science, with the latter's great discoveries in such fields as biology”) geology, palaeontology, physics and chemistry equally offered him a source for a new outlook on the human personality, against the background of the ample philosophical confrontations in the latter half of the 19th century and the first three decades of ours, regarding the concept of the unity of science. This also involved the question of the unity of the human person, of its structure, of the place that it holds in the universe, of the role that it plays in a world which undergoes increasing relativization.

In its turn, psychology – with its spectacular results – was used diversely in order to illustrate the types of philosophy which tackled the theme of the unity of science, of consciousness and of the human person (Wundt, Fechner, Weber, Ostwald). Relativism had triumphed, and through it man himself was pulverized into the “precariousness” of states of consciousness.

Torn away from nature, society and culture – in the relativistic view – the human being was to remain eternally subject to fragmentariness. Even though at the turn of the century Bergson conceived duration as a melody different from its notes, his recourse to intuition and to the negation of the intellect spelt hardly more than the idea that man is pure subjectiveness, while human cognition means changing reality in the image of intuition. Bergson's anthropomorphism failed to serve man because it failed to achieve a scientific synthesis of man. Rădulescu-Motru was conscious of it and that is why he placed man at the centre of philosophical reflection and tried to establish the *metaphysics of the human person's unity as a foundation for the unity of science*

In this attempt, which unfolded within a mechanism of the concepts and ideas of unique value – not without some amount of vanity but not without solid grounding either –, Rădulescu-Motru assumed one of the great conceptions which he was discovering in Romanian spirituality.

Born in a village of Oltenia (West Wallachia) where he spent part of his childhood and where he kept returning in his lifetime, Rădulescu-Motru came into direct contact with the Romanian peasants' songs, legends, doinas, proverbs sayings and their psychology generally. In the traditional ballads of “Miorița” (*The Ewe Lamb*) and “Meșterul Manole” (*The Legend of Masterbuilder Manole*), in doinas and laments, he discovered the fact that Romanian spirituality depicted man in communion with nature, with land, with hills and plains, with mountains and the sea Rădulescu-Motru noted that the great Romanian poets, particularly Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889) had realized that, as the Romanian spirituality sees it, the natural environment is not man's enemy but man's shield. With Romanians

– Rădulescu-Motru wrote –, we find “steady belief in the connection between nature and the human personality.”

Out of this treasure which nobody had turned to good account in philosophy before him, Rădulescu-Motru distilled one of the principal sources of “energy personalism”; therefore his work attempted a synthesis of the universe with national elements.

It was his intention to set up a Romanian kind of philosophy within which Kant's suggestion regarding man's eminence and his creative destiny should harmonize with that originating in the profound and lasting strata of popular creation: man is “inseparable” from the land he inhabits. That is precisely why he wrote that, as “the consciousness of autochthonousness was already alive with our ancestors the Dacians” “energy personalism is the offshoot of an old ancestral belief” – of ancient ancestral wisdom, we could add.

It would be simplistic however, to reduce Rădulescu-Motru's outlook on personality to merely repeating the data of the culture which he experienced and assimilated, in the process of “developing” philosophy, the data of science and “the old ancestral belief.” Although the working out of his outlook on personality is not independent of co-eval theoretical and scientific data, nevertheless it was different from those data: we can check this, inter alia, in their very transfiguration into a discourse in which everything is thought out within a “general horizon” (to quote the philosopher himself) – within the horizon of that type of metaphysics which alongside the setting up of the “unitary and ordinating cognition of the world” meant to express “man's thrill” in the face of the absolute, i.e. man's need for the absolute, for unity, for equilibrium, for materializing and humanizing “the Whole”.

It is perfectly true that Rădulescu-Motru's intention to build such metaphysics as could comprehend “man's thrill” conceals an unconfessed poet as well: it is no less true however that as part of energy personalism, efforts go towards assembling concepts in such a way as to make them withstand total confrontation, in such a way as to introduce into them direct, practical experience, the results of science, the history of culture, aspirations and ideals, national traditions as well as universal values.

That the Romanian thinker manifested particular interest in a specific modality of organizing and re-creating concepts is demonstrated first of all by the way in which he represented for himself the functions and nature of the human consciousness in setting up energy personalism and, secondly, on the very plane of understanding the structure and role of the human personality.

Anti-subjectivistic and anti-relativistic in its orientation – though without denying the subjectiveness and relativity of the states of consciousness –

Rădulescu-Motru's metaphysics takes consciousness as a premiss for interpreting the world.

In this very general respect, Rădulescu-Motru drew rather close to Kant. As is well known the "Copernician Revolution" achieved by Kant in philosophy lay in his opposition to orienting knowledge according to things and in replacing that by the idea of orienting things according to cognition. For Kant, to know meant to create, to produce syntheses, *a priori*. Thus Kant focussed the world and philosophy on the subject, on human reason; the starting point of Kantian philosophy was creative consciousness.

The essential difference between the premiss on which Kant had built transcendental idealism and that of energy personalism through which Rădulescu-Motru worked out the theory of personality consists in the different significations ascribed to the term of "consciousness." In Kant's doctrine, C. Rădulescu-Motru noted, consciousness is general and universal because it is formal; Kant made absolute judgements in order to justify the necessity of science and the latter's universality, the numerical arithmetical unity – therefore the formal unity – of consciousness; for him consciousness as a generic one proved its necessity through its own formal structure.

In Rădulescu-Motru's outlook, the unity of human consciousness included the same reality as the rest of the universe, so that between consciousness and the universe there is no part-to-whole ratio, but a correlation, a ratio which exists between the aspects of one and the same reality. He wrote that it was only by identifying generally the reality in man's consciousness with the reality in the universe that one can find a solid foundation for science in the unity of human consciousness.

The idea of one and the same reality in consciousness and in the universe was meant to spare philosophy the difficulties of the psycho-physical parallelism which arbitrarily separated the psychic from the physic, admitting their existence as two independent substances while surpassing both the insufficiencies of "magic idealism" (specifically Berkeley's) and those of materialism – which Rădulescu-Motru usually reduced to the mechanistic materialism of Democritus.

Rădulescu-Motru analysed the human personality in terms of multiple relationships; resorting for the purpose to the data of biology, palaeontology, psychology, etc., he investigated the genesis of personality and the latter's structure, demonstrating, on the one hand that it arises out of the very structure of the universe (spelling its fulfilment) and on the other hand that personality can hardly be reduced to nature. In personality, he emphasized, "there is a purely biological

part depending on the entire cosmic environment and then a spiritual part, depending on the history of the entire human culture.”

Personality is equally part of nature and part of culture – a natural as well as a social phenomenon. In a comprehensive definition, Rădulescu-Motru represented personality as a bio-psycho-social reality, thus marking its fundamental features and elaborating a deterministic philosophic explanation for it.

As a natural phenomenon and at the same time as a social phenomenon, personality is a result of the world's evolution and transformation and, besides, the result of experience and of inherited data – whether biological or socio-cultural. The idea of the natural as well as socio-cultural determinism of personality contains within itself also the negative proposition (anti-Kantian in its essence) according to which personality does not reside in the pure spontaneousness of the moral or aesthetic genius, or in the intervention of some miraculous factor either.

Personality is a distinction which continues life, passing from the biological ground to the spiritual one. The specific difference of personality resides in “spiritual unity” conditioned by “material organic unity.”

The specific element of life is adaptation, as part of which variations appear: at the level of spiritual life, variants appear as anticipations, as “variations for a purpose.” Therefore the specific difference of personality as part of life takes shape through rendering variations conscious – which is tantamount to action.

Personality spells activity because, according to Rădulescu-Motru, the content of anticipations (aptitudes) is revealed in and through work. On a broader ontological plane, Rădulescu-Motru demonstrates that personality is not only inclination or thirst for work but also the result of work. That is precisely why in another definition of personality, consistent with that viewing personality as a bio-psycho-social reality, Rădulescu-Motru emphasized that “abilities established in a kind of work decisive for man's life mould personality.”

Within the texture of energy personalism, a place apart is held by the *ego* whose onto-psychological and cultural structure are amply described and analysed by the Romanian philosopher.

In relation to personality, the ego is conceived as “a flash of lightning”, as “consciousness of the anticipatory attitude,” an “organic” whole – therefore as a factor forerunning personality, which results among other things from the fact that without the activity of the ego, work itself is hardly possible. Without the ego, personality would appear merely as a blind conglomerate of tendencies, similar to instincts, while without personality man's ego would be a worthless kaleidoscope. Unlike the ego, which is subjective, personality includes cosmic and social elements and that is why it has an objective and social nature at the same time.

Personality is impossible without the ego, without the “fundamental intuition” which discharges a “regulating” (not constructive) function, but it is the offspring of time, it is determined by time, therefore by mankind’s history.

As a social phenomenon, personality is explained through “man's working function” – i.e. through the creative function; as a biological phenomenon, through the physiological structure of body functions; as a psychic phenomenon, through consciousness; as a cosmic phenomenon, in that it is a form of the reality of energy. It is an eminent part of the universe, conferring value upon the latter, in keeping with the latter’s specific laws, but also with the specificity of personality itself.

Energy personalism is a peculiar form of “energeticism”, completed with a theory on personality; unlike the former, energy personalism assumes personality not as a conglomerate of energies but as a unity of actualization towards which converges nature's entire energy. Energy personalism regards facts in the universe not as a linear succession but as immanent finality.

Within the context of energy personalism, Rădulescu-Motru particularly extended the analysis of the types of personality and of the role played by personality as a factor for creation; energy personalism offers a theory of culture whose structure acquired concentrated expression in Rădulescu-Motru’s book *Vocația – factor hotărâtor în cultura popoarelor* (*Vocation: A Decisive Factor in Peoples’ Culture*, 1932).

We said “a concentrated expression” because the problematics of the theory of culture had preoccupied Rădulescu-Motru ever since his first works. In 1904 he had written a famous book, *Cultura română și politicianismul* (*Romanian Culture Versus Politics*), where he undertook an explanation of culture through the concept of topical consciousness; later on, in *Puterea sufletească* (*Spiritual Power*, 1907) Rădulescu-Motru demonstrated that the phenomenon of culture was a kind of force generated by social power; in *Elemente de metafizică pe bazele filozofiei kantiene* (*Elements of Metaphysics on the Basis of Kant's Philosophy*) he defined culture as a product of actual consciousness, while in *Personalismul energetic* (*Energy Personalism*, 1927) culture was analysed as a factor generating personality and as a result of the activity of the human personality. It is particularly significant that in his subsequent work *Vocația...* Rădulescu-Motru defined culture as an expression of the identity between the ego and the environment, proposing a philosophical meaning of the man imbued with vocation, different from the one developed by Nietzsche among others.

Through his theory of culture, Rădulescu-Motru opposed pessimistic biologizing and psychologistic views. In his outlook, culture is “the indispensable

condition for the peoples' development"; through culture, he demonstrated, "human actions acquire a loftwl meaning, they become history."

Being deeply concerned in the idea of the relationship between culture and civilization and indebted in his early works to Houston Stewart Chamberlain's ideas, the Romanian thinker surpassed the latter's rather one-sided, oversimplifying vision and unequivocally wrote that "nothing (can be) more erroneous than the assertion of an alleged antagonism between culture and civilization, to the effect that the emergence of civilization could spell the degeneration of culture. Culture and civilization can certainly coexist. Moreover, if we take culture to mean especially the function of originality, then genuine culture can only be the aftermath of some civilization. It is only after man rises through technique, hygiene, juridical institutions and religious tradition to a certain command over nature and oyer animal instincts, it is only then that we can discuss his originality in culture."

Even though some of Rădulescu-Motru's ideas on the relationship between culture and civilization are debatable, we cannot but notice that the binding material of his outlook is provided by humanism, by his confidence in the capacity- of man and of culture to elaborate norms and ideals through which man's very life should be permanently improved. As a matter of fact it is from this humanistic stand that he tried to elaborate a science of spirituality generally and of Romanian spirituality in particular; it is on such a basis that he became a severe critic of xenophobia, anti-semitism, racialism, irrationalism and mysticism. In such works as *Etnicul românesc* (*The Romanian Ethnos*, 1942), *Românismul, catehismul unei noi spiritualități* ("Romanianism", *the Catechism of a New Spirituality*, 1936), *Timp și destin* (*Time and Destiny*, 1940 – also published in Germany), Rădulescu-Motru amply demonstrated that "Romanianism can hardly be reduced to hatred (...) it is no xenophobia (...) or Orthodoxism either." Thus he militated for a way of development of Romanian spirituality in which tradition and innovation, the universal and the national should harmonize so as to ensure the triumph of integral human personality, of progress in culture and civilization.

