

EMINESCU AND ROMANIAN NATION

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Abstract. This opening speech emphasizes the plurality of preoccupations of a complex Romanian personality, the Romanian national poet, journalist, philosopher and publicist, and among these the manner of conceiving the evolution of Romanian nationality in relation to the western European civilisation of the time. Eminescu meditated at the status of the Romanian nation and at the Romanian civilisation, with attention for the affirmation of the national values, for the consolidation of the cultural unity of all Romanians and for the accomplishment of the Romanian national state, within its ethnical borders.

Key words: Eminescu, Romanian nation, Romanian civilisation.

This is the opening of the symposium on Eminescu of the Department of Philosophy, Theology, Psychology and Journalism of the Academy of Romanian Scientists at the occasion of the commemoration of 122 years since the death of the “unpaired poet” another great poet, Nichita Stănescu titled him.

For me, of an entirely different trade, seems an impiety to express authorised opinions concerning the work of this giant of the Romanian literature and culture.

Eminescu’s work was the subject of numerous studies, commentaries, analyses and interpretations signed by various personalities with resonance in the history of Romanian culture such as: Titu Maiorescu, Garabet Ibrăileanu, Nicolae Iorga, Eugen Lovinescu, Perpessicius, I. Negoïtescu, Petru Creția, Acad. Dan Berindei, Acad. Alexandru Surdu, Ilie Bădescu, Svetlana Paleologu-Matta, C. Schifirneț, etc.

It seems that once he was labelled as a “genius poet”, the rest of his work slipped into the shadows, as it happened for instance with his journalistic work, expressing a manner of thinking and understanding the world through particular ideas and visions, entirely original.

From the multitude of his preoccupations, we shall stop at his interest for the status of the Romanian nation. During his university formation at Vienna, living in that medium of Western civilisation, Eminescu entered in deep contact with the civilisation of the west, with its particularities, with its main currents of opinion and fashionable doctrines. All these influenced Eminescu and determined him to think modern evolution of Romania, as European country, especially through its Latin origin.

For Romanians, this type of civilisation was the direction of affirmation for the national Romanian values, for the consolidation of the cultural unity of Romanian for establishing the Romanian unitary national state, within its ethnical borders.

According to C. Schifirneț (1996), Eminescu, as a poet not only had a global manner of thinking the world, but also a profound knowledge of the universe. Thus, his poetry, playwriting, prose and journalism are results of this paradigmatic manner of thinking. In his work there is not only a practical, scientific, historical, sociological, economic thought, but also an original perspective of the world in its entirety and in the reality of his times.

His vision of state and nation is as well the expression of his paradigmatic thought. In this respect, Eminescu appears today as an evolutionist thinker, as Aristotle, Plato, Descartes and others, who conceived the world in its cumulative becoming and

knowledge was the continuation of a tradition that we should develop and capitalize, inclusively in their defining dimensions for the concepts of state and nation.

The fact that Eminescu made a plea in conformity with his thinking of the Romanian reality of his time is well known, and he insisted on the perennial values of a democratic society based on: property, liberty and diversity. He rejected any infringement on individual and national liberty.

In his work are approached all the aspects of his epoch: political problems, historical, economic, sociological, demographic, geopolitical, intercultural, the relationships among the social classes, bourgeoisie and peasantry, modern institutions, the Danube matter, the relationships of Romania with neighbours and Western states, the territories occupied by the great powers (Bucovina, Bessarabia, Danube mouths and Dobruja), the activities of the Government and Parliament, etc. In his articles, all these aspects led in the perspective of time toward the consolidation and development of the Romanian state and nation.

In the pro-Western development of Romania, Eminescu noticed the state of under- development of the country due to a yet unprepared ruling class from a socio-economic and cultural point of view for the implementation of development measures to reducing differences, as standard of living, registered for over 200 of years in comparison to the Western states. He said: "Our national sympathies are very far from Western Europe, among Roman or Roman-Germanic nations. The causes of this rather distant relation of sympathy are not only political, but of a very diverse nature, ethnical, intellectual" (XII, p. 318).

He added: "By our aspirations, by the intellectual development of Romania for almost half a century, the country looked for a closeness to the Western civilisation; progress's ideas and economic development must be forever our target to strengthen ourselves inside and inspire trust outwards" (XI, p. 51).

Eminescu noticed: "Extremely legitimate aspirations of the country were to come close to the Western culture and make it so that, through the institutions, the morality is strengthened, too" (XI, p. 96).

Therefore, the consolidation of the Romanian nation is determined by the social and economic transformations, as well as the credit of the country toward others is conditioned by the progress of the Romanian nation. Out of the multiple problems listed above, we stop at the issue of Dobruja and inter-ethnic relations. It is known that after the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878, after the agreement among the great powers, Romania received Dobruja, and the Tsardom of Russia the south of Bessarabia, act considered by Eminescu "an unfair act of enthrallment over Romanian land". By the attachment of Dobruja to Romania that was under Ottoman occupation for over 450 years, it obtained *de jure* state independence from the Ottoman Empire. Regarding the ethnic groups from Dobruja, Eminescu had an advanced vision for his time, and I quote: "It should be an understanding and not enthrallment there".

Eminescu explained: "Far from us to de-nationalise the particular elements from the region: we are, on the contrary of the opinion that elementary school should be confessional and from that stage even Turks should learn Turkish language, Tartar the Tartar language, for this is the only path on which they can advance. Let us not repeat ourselves, a small and not enslaving people, the injustice done to our nationality, in our neighbouring countries even, and let us not impose our language and our institutions to nobody" (X, p. 132).

The following clarifying statement was made, though: “We believe that Romanian language should be a compulsory object of study, but the teaching of all disciplines should be done in their respective mother tongues, because this is the only way they will learn to love Romania” (X, p. 132).

Another interesting problem emphasised by Eminescu is the particularity of the geopolitical position of Romania. “Romanian people are situated on this separating area for three distinctive civilisations: the Slavic one, the Western one, and the Asian one. Our neighbours were always too big and us we have always been too small. We have always fought bearing arms against direct aggression, and in victory as well as in failure we have always proven that the defence of our national existence was no joke for us, as it is not for any people caring for itself, for its own manner of existence. But aggressors we have never been ourselves and we were right not to. On the other hand, if we dare say as well that we are – *sans peur et sans reproche* – as any other people, our exceptional situation teaches us that one of the fundamental conditions, not of existence, but of peace and peaceful development, is to live in peace with both neighbours and to leave the equilibrium between their powers to be the guarantee of our neutrality. It is above any shred of doubt though that showing too much inclination to a side, we indispose the other, which is at least extremely imprudent, aside the fact that is totally lacking useful quality.” (XI, p. 311).

Thus, it is clear enough that Eminescu, in his vision, saw the necessity to strengthen Romanian national state in relation to the real influential factors of the epoch guaranteeing and perpetuating its existence. He advocated the preservation of the Romanian nation and state under any circumstances and disapproved any dangerous experiments regarding them.

It is now appropriate to underline the fact that Eminescu insisted permanently on the necessity of predominance of the Romanian element, fact that should not be labelled as xenophobic, because he envisioned the evolution of the Romanian nation, by whatever confers its identity, as it is this question discussed in all the European cultures, in what concerns one nation or another.

In conclusion, I think these are just a few arguments proving that Eminescu, this titan of the Romanian nation, with an encyclopaedic culture, is our contemporary value more than ever.

At the 124 years anniversary of the death of the great national poet, Mihai Eminescu, we are highlighting the characteristics of his personality unfolding at the initiative of Professor Angela Botez.

The celebration of the genius Mihai Eminescu, is taking place this year not only within the country, but also abroad, especially in respect to his poetry.

Thus, his beautiful poems were and will be listened in Paris, Madrid, Lisbon, Budapest, Venice, Rome, Brussels, London, and Warsaw and in other European cities, within the readings organized by the Romanian Cultural Institute.

Actor Dorel Vişan held in Paris on 14 June, at the Byzantine Hall Béhague Palace, an extraordinary recital dedicated to the „erudite French public, to the amateurs of Romanian Literature and to the members of Romanian Diaspora”.

On 16 June the same show took place in Madrid, at Circulo de Bellas Artes, Velacios Antonia Hall, and on June 20 in Lisbon, at the auditorium of the Palace of

Independence, where the recital was accompanied by an exhibition of photographs and poems translated into Portuguese.

Actor Emil Boroghină presented at Buzău on 15 June during the „days Mihai Eminescu” organised by the Theatre “George Ciprian” the recital “The Risen Star” and on June 17 at Budapest, too, at the Romanian Cultural Institute along with a vernissage of a thematic book exhibition until 17 August. The well-known actor is to be in Venice on June 20, at the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research and then in Rome on June 25 at the Academy of Romania. Both in Venice and Rome Emil Boroghină’s recitals will be accompanied by book exhibitions.

Another well-known actor, Ilie George, was invited to give a show of lyric poetry Eminescu organized by the Romanian Cultural Institute in Brussels on June 18 at the Association of New Europe, expected then to travel to London on the same show, scheduled for 20th of June at the Romanian Cultural Institute. The recital will include music interventions: violin – maestro Maistorovici, piano – Antoine Francaise and clarinet – Hary Cameron-Penuy. The organizers provided media coverage, and the translation into English (including the English subtitles where necessary) of the lyrics recited by actor Ilie George in London.

The recital will be preceded by the movie „Eminescu, Veronica, Creangă”, a documentary about poet directed by Octav Minar in 1914, produced by Pathé and discovered in the National Film Archive. After London, the actor Ilie Gheorghe will have a poetry recital at the Romanian Embassy in Warsaw, Poland.

Commemorating the birth of the great poet appears as a cultural phenomenon with unusual vocation accompanied by innate and irresistible appeal to culture.

The first who drew attention to Eminescian culture was Titu Maiorescu, who said that at Eminescu „culture is not a foreign material, exterior, brought from outside, but one assimilated by his individuality.”

In the history of Romanian literature – see *Critical Introduction* (1929) – it was the great historian Nicolae Iorga, author of unparalleled work totalling over 1,000 books and 20,000 articles, who bowed before the genius of Eminescu and said that “Eminescu’s work represents the most comprehensive synthesis ever made by a Romanian”.

George Călinescu appreciated Eminescu’s knowledge with its deep insights in all fields of knowledge. He said that the great poet, seen from the perspective of the totality of his knowledge was situated far beyond the view of specialists. He considered that Eminescu was in possession of all the cultural factors.

In his essay “Thoughts on Eminescu, the complete man of the Romanian culture” (1975), Constantin Noica was dealing with Eminescu’s manuscripts, and with the 44 books submitted to the Romanian Academy in 1902 by Titu Maiorescu. The great philosopher stunned noticed that these manuscripts include, in addition to literary texts and philosophical reflections, lots of math, physical and chemical formulas, physical emotions, and numerous astrological pieces of knowledge ... Noica saw in Eminescu the embodiment of the recognized ideal of “homo universal” open both to the humanities and to the exact sciences. In this respect, Noica called Eminescu “a complete man of Romanian culture.”

Eminescu had, primarily, a solid philosophical culture. In his essay “Eminescu and his poems,” Titu Maiorescu established the first landmarks of Eminescu’s philosophical culture: Indian philosophy and Buddhism, Greek philosophy, especially

Plato, and German metaphysics, Kant and Schopenhauer, especially. At the age of 20 he began to translate the *Critique of Pure Reason* (approximately one third of this work) and he was convinced that Kant was an almost unattainable ideal.

Instead, Arthur Schopenhauer felt closer, more accessible. He was the philosopher of his heart, a true “magister vitae”.

From him, who was also a great moralist, Eminescu learned a lot, because he was a philosopher with extensive erudition, good knowledge of traditional cultures and ancient cultures alike.

Schopenhauer was a disciple of Kant from whom he differentiated himself on the line of an illustrious thinker of subjectivism and voluntarism.

From Greek philosophy Eminescu was influenced mainly by Plato and Pythagoras.

Eminescian harmony is, in the last analysis, nothing else but that universal harmony from Pythagoras, on which he relies, accepting, himself too, that “Cosmos is order and harmony”.

Eminescu cannot be understood without the Indian philosophy with which he became familiar during his years of study in Vienna and Berlin.

Eminescu knew the Sanskrit grammar of Franz Popp.

Also, he knew well the « vast » collections of religious and philosophical hymns from the beginning of the first millennium and anterior to the Homeric epics (The Epic of Gilgamesh, third millennium).

From the Indian philosophy he was mostly interested in Buddhism. For example, in the poem « I do not believe in Jehovah » Buddha appears with his full name as Buddha-Sakya-Muni.

Buddha means “The Awakened” or “The Illuminated”, Sakya is the royal name of Buddha from the North of India, while Muni means “The Wise”. This philosophical doctrine exposed in the book Dhamonapada (The Words of the Law or The Buddhist Scripture of Truth) the essence of life is formed by pain and sufferance. The cause of pain and sufferance is represented by the will of life.

Consequently, the freeing from pain and sufferance is produced by one’s situation on the Middle Way, the Right Way or the Way with Eight Arms of Buddha, which implied correct thought and action, without any exaggeration and excess.

The Middle Way leads to Nirvana, which means in Sanskrit “the curfew”. Nirvana is a state of serenity, of quietude, of repose, of happiness, of quenching the vital fire. Nirvana is the only experience possible in front of the void and it is acquired through the yoga techniques of meditation. In one of his manuscripts, Eminescu declared: I am Buddhist and Cicerone Teodorescu, another Romanian writer and man of culture, in one of his notes, asks himself, what would have happened with our culture if we did not have Eminescu, who he called « a Buddha of poetry ». Besides his vast culture at a young age, another key concept for the interpretation and the understanding of the work of Mihai Eminescu is harmony. By Eminescian harmony, we understand the musicality of his verse, the equivalence of the harmony of Eminescian poetic lines.

The most important exegetes have spoken about the Eminescian harmony: Titu Maiorescu, Mihai Dragomirescu, Garabet Ibrăileanu, Tudor Vianu, George Călinescu

as well as Dumitru Caracostea, Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulenga, etc., and making selections from the multitude of writings concerning the complete man of our culture, we are answering to our duty to honour his memory, as he is unique in our culture and always relevant. The above mentioned film entitled « Eminescu, Veronica, and Creangă » highlights some aspects of his immortality.

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