

# PHILOSOPHICAL ENCYCLOPAEDISM AT MIHAI EMINESCU

ALEXANDRU SURDU

**Abstract.** The study starts from the status of philosopher of Mihai Eminescu who was not only a great poet and journalist. Eminescu studied philosophy at Vienna (1869–1872) and Berlin (1872–1874), where he attended the lectures of the great philosophers of the time: Th. Vogt, R. Zimmermann, Ed. Zeller, H. Bonitz, etc. According to the curriculum, during these years he studied also matters of law, economy, history, philosophy and natural sciences. His notes prove his interest and his personal thoughts on such matters. A few decades after Hegel's death, who was considered one of the most educated people of all times, Eminescu seems also to follow the path of the absolute Idea in sciences and culture, history and nature, animated by *encyclopaedic* preoccupations.

**Key words:** philosophy, investigation, interiorization, absolute Idea, *uomo universale*.

What is usually forgotten in what concerns the personality of Mihai Eminescu is the fact that he, even as great poet and journalist as known, was actually a philosopher by profession. Eminescu studied philosophy for five years at Vienna (1869–1872) and Berlin (1872–1874), attended the lectures of great philosophers of notoriety even today, such as: Th. Vogt, R. Zimmermann, Ed. Zeller, H. Bonitz and so on. According to the scope of the university education at the time, he studied also law, economy, history, and natural sciences along philosophy. His notes from that period prove that Eminescu was very interested by such matters and that he insisted to study them further by himself, by readings and personal considerations, as nowadays usual students in philosophy do not do anymore. Philosophers of profession used to do that, though, at that time. We are only with a few centuries after Hegel's death, when his philosophy was not in fashion anymore. Hegel was considered one of the most cultivated men of all times. Obligated or not by his own conceptions, on the route of absolute Idea to which nothing can resist, Hegel crossed in its name not only all the sciences of the time and all the cultural and artistic domains, but also their histories, from their very beginnings.

It was thus only natural that young Eminescu had such *encyclopaedic* preoccupations. Our opinion is that he followed with special interest the accomplishment of an encyclopaedic vision of the world. With, or without the intention to find a formula or a principle from which to deduce then, as Hegel, and as all the systematic philosophers, in general, the evolution of the entire world. Eminescu himself says it: "I believe I have found the solution of the respective problems, grouping the intuitions and the demonstrative systems that accompany each of the stages of evolution, in antinomies referring to the eternal aspect (atemporal aspect) of history, law and politics, but not in the sense of the Hegelian evolution of the Idea. For, as Eminescu differentiates himself from the German philosopher, at Hegel thought and being are identical – here, they are not". This is a fragment from a letter addressed to Titu Maiorescu (5 February 1874) who advanced the idea that Eminescu should become philosophy professor after he obtained his PhD title. It was not meant to be that way. Which does not mean that Eminescu, in his way, and we refer to his famous „Note-books”, failed to leave us, at least as intention, but also as a partial accomplishment, a series of evidence supporting the affirmation of Constantin Noica, according to which, our poet was also, truly *uomo universale*, in general, and especially, "the complete man of Romanian culture".