

VALUE CRISIS AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE MORAL CRISIS AND TODAY'S MISSION OF THE ROMANIAN PRESS

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Social settlements in various human societies and communities have always been based on the pillars of their own values. These values create a balance or even a winged development and existence for these constructs whose limits, dimensions and essence are perceived by thought and mind. It goes without saying that the strength of the social edifice depends on the strength of such pillars. Searching for and identifying values is not just something related to intuition or inspiration and much less to coincidence. Selection and especially involving values has long become a science and an art at the same time. To accomplish their mission, the pillars must be set in their right place. That is why human societies and communities started to place them on the basis of some exact and thoroughly conceived criteria. At the beginning of mankind this important thing for progress was done more empirically but, as history started to evolve, this process of a wise separation of values has come to be more and more cerebral, elaborate and with a quantification that would not leave things in the ineffable field of impression, but focused on a more precise evaluation, by means of science laws as well as by laws derived from life experience, in a most harmonious union. All of these can be found in what has imposed itself as the scale of values. The more the individual's hierarchy of values in a society was protected from damaging subjectivities, the more numerous chances of having an enduring social environment with proper functions. A long observation of this phenomenon may have actually generated the meaningful saying "Homo locum ornet" (meaning man is the most important in changing his environment). Well, he is, quite often even in a sacerdotal way, provided he were in the right place, where his

potential could fully develop and thereby the possibility for achievements both for himself and for the community to which he belonged. This placement in the social field is carried out according to an established and respected scale of values.

The scale of values remains a constant element in Mankind history besides the different models of social organisation. The first criterion is that of merit and vocation. That is why, of course, societies in which life keeps up with its common sense, not facing great tribulations, dramatic scissions and where the value system is a reality, are known for their meritocracy. In these societies merit is highly appreciated and accomplishes its fruitful act, generating prosperity in the respective space. But one cannot talk about living absolutely according to the scale of values, and which is more, one cannot talk about reaching its highest standards. Undoubtedly, there are troublesome factors interfering, disturbing the most refined mechanisms. However, a society aware of its interest does never abdicate from the sacrosanct principles, as I would put it, of the values scale. Should that society ignore this aspect, it would be condemned to regress, to inevitable failure. Temporary decreases and falls are usually corrected. In normal societies a constant care is directed towards avoiding the initiation of some unhealthy situations as well as towards avoiding the dangers coming on the way.

When fault fractures occur, also as a consequence of some social quakes, and radical changes of social settlements are taking place, the scales of values are overturned or practically pulverized. Abandoning the authentic value and cultivating false idols represent the typical expressions of a drifting phenomenon, of a moral crisis that gangrenes a society at a given moment.

Merit and value alienation triggers only the deepening of the moral crisis, alienates society as a whole, creates that condition of <<nausea>> invoked by Sartre, obviously with another meaning. Such a violent overturn of the values scale usually occurs in the periods of historical discontinuity, of disputes and attempts – successful up to a point – of imposing a new order, just as the rise of Bolshevik Communism in 1917 Russia and of the popular democratic regimes (of Soviet inspiration and obedience), in eastern Europe, after the Second World War. Building, as they were ritualistically and indisputably asserting, <<a more just world>>, the communists imposed with violence their own value criteria, nevertheless, unaccredited, due to their desecration by the class criterion and the ideological criterion, as well as by that of unconditioned fidelity, so comprisingly expressed by the Bolshevik slogan, created by Lenin, – a slogan that has survived even in some of the so-called democracies: <<He who is not with us, is against us>>.

The people, the very strong and enduring columns invoked figuratively at the beginning of our essay as pillars of support of the social settlement, are no longer selected in such societies according to their values, training and education, but by social origin, political affiliation and in the last place by their merit. That is how in Romania in the years of the proletariat cult, workers came to run theatres and philharmonics, graduates from the so called workers' faculties came to teach in faculties from where the real personalities had been removed and the popular assessors came to replace the vocational judges. This <<social surrogate>> had fatal results so that at a given moment the decision makers of "the new order" were forced to make corrections and go back, at least partially to the merit criterion. Why partially? Because the nomenclature of the time didn't have the power to give the ideological criterion up. They kept stifling the free manifestation of the values scale in society. Moreover, in Romania, once the economic crisis of the 80s deepened, the dictatorial power returned to the stereotypes related to the proletariat's cult as far as the

political staff was concerned.

The scale of values, with its just measure, isn't endangered just by a blind ideology but also by the moral downfalls in societies that don't resort, at least declaratively, to ideological and party criteria regarding human resources. Here, however, careerism, clientelism and money power bring seriously into discussion the scale of values. Although they do not deny it in principle, these societies ignore it with nonchalance, discard the mechanism of values promotion – engendered by a historical synthesis – and bring people in the spotlight of society on the basis of some criteria that have nothing to do with value as it is. The classic models disappear under our very eyes while new ones appear, by means of impudent, commercial and noisy promotions, – new models without a sacred existence and the spirit of creation. Now it is exactly what Zoe Dumitrescu-Busulenga was telling me in 1995, in an interview for <<Let's Have a Little Chit-Chat>>, my TV show of those years: "My ever stronger impression is that models have vanished almost everywhere". And in the same interview on TVR2, in my following book, <<Sunday Lounges>> (2001), published at "Polirom" Publishing House, she added: "Of course, a model involves some levels in a hierarchy. That is, I am humble, he feels superior. Well, the 'rollers' that you were talking about must lead to desecration. That is, I make him my equal. Why would he be better than me? I can be better than him". And further on: "I would have never said that it would come so easily to a desecration of excellence. We will always need someone better than us". These wise insightful remarks, genuine psychoanalyses, were being engendered by what the scholar painfully lived and felt in the Romanian postcommunist society. The scholar hoped, like many people of that time, for a return to the natural course of things, for a rebirth of tradition, for coming back to a normality, even though not a perfect system of values, safe from distortions, as it had been in Romania until the last war. Of course, this system of values was to undergo the natural readjustments and changes required by the evolutions of the society. In

reality, the things happened just the other way round. Even the crooked scale of socialism ceased to exist while the confusion of values started its reign. It was, in fact, the obvious expression of a moral systemic crisis, of the replacement of the value criteria unanimously accepted in the civilized world with the klan-like criteria, may the klan be political, economic, or of any other nature and not rarely a time mob-related.

These changes affected seriously the well-being of the social matrix, they poisoned the spiritual climate and alienated the nation's soul, depriving it of hope, which is the worst scenario. Politics in this field, if one may use this word, have transformed many of the institutions in vectors of interests of smaller and larger groups rather than in vectors of progress and of general interest. A disintegration process of society essential components, of the state itself began and it became more profound and more dramatic in the course of time, while we're unfortunately and helplessly witnessing a disintegration of the national unity.

There are lots of factors responsible for such worrying changes. One of these and not one to be mentioned last was the press. Getting the freedom of expression remains one of the great achievements of the historical year 1989. Lots of people spitefully say this achievement is the only one we got and that it is just a platonic one, since we are the ones who speak and the ones who listen to, or, as another saying reads: << Dogs would bark, the caravan would pass >>. That means that no matter how hard the speech or the criticism would be, they are not perceived, they don't have the proper and desired feedback, they fly away with the wind, they are sent into the desert, while those who should have a reaction are autistic. Of course, it is not right that the possibility of saying what one thinks and feels should exist only as a cathartic function of communication. Pouring one's soul out is not enough. This freedom of speech, one of the most precious things that we conquered by bloodshed sacrifices in December 1989, has an extremely effective means of expression which is the press, thereof rightfully named <<the

watchdog of democracy >>.

In spite of the numerous difficulties of the beginning, the existence of a professional body marred by a collaborationist past, in spite of the lack of democratic exercise in media, the Romanian press, with all its great faults, most of them deontological, has become one of the decisive factors of Romania's <<face change >>. The voice of the press, except the official press or the party press, the latter rapidly succumbing, has powerfully made itself heard with pertinent critical accents addressing the power. Criticism can be made, perhaps, regarding a certain Manichean vision, and an absence of nuances - to be explained and understood, taking into account the heightened emotional 'Fahrenheits' of the moment and the professional drawbacks, as well as the scant renewing human resources. Nevertheless, the explosive development of the press in that dawning decade, especially the written press - the next decade marking the same phenomenon in the audiovisual field - was one of the most spectacular things in the Romanian society. It was the romantic period of the Romanian press, a period of self making, but also of learning, by means of international support, namely European and American.

These years represented the happy time of a self sufficient existence, of an immense interest of the public to whom it was offered insatiably, a performance never seen before. Consequently, the most important publications were living on their being sold. This fact created premises for an expression not subjected to any constraints whatsoever. Soon, though, black clouds gathered in the press sky. Another censorship appeared, not less severe, the economic censorship. In order to survive, newspapers, radio and television either submitted obediently to power entering the political games and losing their equidistance, or wideopened their doors to shallowness, to the sensational, to cheap commercialism, which, on the other hand, attract public and publicity, i.e. money. A malignant process of giving way to tabloidism began imperceptibly to occur and both the written and the electronic press were lured into it. Thereby, press gets amnesia, forgets its mission as the

creator of a moral climate, as generator of spiritual emulations and that of promoting a fair range of values. But how could such missions be achieved when the very structure of media institutions are not based on the scale of values, but rather on feudal principles of vassalage towards the head-in-chief or the employer, whose spokesmen not very seldom come to be the journalists on call who have made themselves known.

The models propagated by media, especially the electronic media, do not have even the elementary proper attributes. Media is invaded by the so-called models that have soap opera characteristics and have the power to influence the public. Culture has lost its stand on the small screen, being pushed to "outskirts" even on the public television. Taste is perverted by means of the press, whose purpose should also be a formative one, so that we are witnessing a poisoning action of the national community space. In the same quoted interview Zoe Dumitrescu-Bu^oulenga condemns with justified severity this phenomenon: << This avalanche of the media has invaded us, it is a catastrophe, if you asked me. I am totally against mass-media. Nothing could have had a more harmful effect on the Romanian soul. Perhaps it didn't do so much harm so far as it might do from now on. What true cultural programmes can we watch on television? I remained in Romania for a short time, but in Italy the situation is even worse. What they are doing, what they are broadcasting. Not non-values, but things that would have disgusted us between the two World Wars. Who makes the selection? I'm asking all the time. Who watches this? Not to mention the written press, because it makes me sick. I cannot see one magazine without a naked woman or any other nonsense. "You need to sell", I'm told. Well, under such circumstances it is difficult to restore a system of values.

It's true, the Romanian press missed this opportunity. It hasn't succeeded to bring its contribution to the rebuilding of the values scale and implicitly the moral improvement of society. The models, i.e. the elite, didn't and don't find their deserved place. It would even be necessary

for a well articulated program to be created to bring in front of the nation personalities from all walks of life who could be considered to be models. Every social categories and human occupation have their elite and it is press mission to present them as models. Especially for young people this is of an utmost importance. But what the media has generally brought and keeps bringing in the foreground is the other side of the coin, examples of easy success, obtained without work or education, careers built not on value, but with the help of money, arrangements and other such dishonest tricks. It is the responsibility of the press to radically change its outlook, to establish the right order in its own garden, based on the primacy of value observed by journalists and the decision makers in daily-politics and then steadily cultivate value, unbiased, thereby showing the right way to be followed by a confused and tired nation. This step must be a norm, a way of living.

Of course, one cannot deny the fact that now and then, on the radio, or on television, in newspapers and magazines one can find genuine values. But the prevailing sensation is that of sand thrown into the sea. This wish of selection change, of suggesting a conduct, the achievement of a high standard of quality is extremely imperative. And that even more since the main source of the crisis with which we are struggling is not essentially economic, but also moral. The press can play a primordial role in getting things back to a natural course, in setting values in their right place. In this respect, there's no room for ambiguity, nor for the inadmissible concessions to bad taste or of wanton commercialism. In order to fulfill its mission as a voice of the people, of the public, the press must assume its predestined condition as a guiding light, especially in stormy times like those that we are having now. Let us hope that reason will prevail over the spiteful thought. Should this happen, chances are that our social settlement would regain its natural and strong columns of support, that is its values with many and genuine carats. Only in this way we will be able to successfully face the challenges and cross the bridges of time while keeping our identity in a world more and more globalized.

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I reckon it an honor to have taught for five years Romanian language at *Comenius* University in Bratislava, Department of Romance. Faculty of Philosophy.

Jana Páleniková, Ph. D. a graduate of the Department of Italian and Romanian of *Comenius* University in Bratislava has shown love and consideration for her students, always trying to make them interested in literature. In 2011 Jana Páleniková translated Mircea Eliade's *Midsummer Night* and got awards for it. In 2011 she published an excellent book on *Interwar Romanian literature, Theories and Practice* (Jana Páleniková, *Rumunský medzivojnový román, Teórie a realita*).

In its favor I will say that this book of 109 pages was published by the prestigious Comensky University Publishing House in 2011, in Slovak.

The main aim of the publication was to introduce the *Interwar Romanian literature* in its variability and wealth in world literature, to view it from various angles showing the vast

dynamism of its development. This also corresponds to a partly subjective choice of authors and of novels and helps explain the fact of that some authors e. g. Mircea Eliade, are dealt with more extensively than others since their novels are representative samples of varied forms of the *Interwar novels*.

It is a book of literary theory, history and criticism of an informational and educational character. I would like to emphasize its attempts of making Romanian literature world known, both practically and theoretically, this book, aiming of perfection, gives the latest adequate information inveigled in warm tenderness.

Analysis of novel structure is made from the perspective of the narrator Jana Páleniková (in Garabet Ibrăileanu's work) or in terms of multiple narrative voices (in Camil Petrescu's work), with special emphasis on interior monologue (in Mircea Eliade's work).

The presentation is a guideline for students at Slovak and Romanian language department, as well as for wide literature loving public.