

NICOLAE IORGA'S FRANCOPHILOPHONIA AND HIS ROMANISM

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Abstract

Nicolae Iorga's work is strongly influenced by his proximity to the French language and culture. The fact that Iorga could speak many foreign languages allowed him to successfully communicate with the academic and the political environment. Today, we speak about a French-philophony when it comes to Nicolae Iorga. This concept refers to the huge broadcasting potential of the French language and culture in non-French environments, in politics, in business and, last but not least, in culture. The aim of this article is to analyse Iorga's proximity to the French language and culture and to other European cultures, a proximity which strengthened the scholar's unlimited love and respect for his own people, a belief that he stated over and over again throughout his life and for which he had to pay with his life.

Keywords: Nicolae Iorga, plurilingualism, French language and culture, French-philophony.

1. WHY N. IORGA AND THE FRANCOPHILOPHONIA?

The plurilinguistics in N. Iorga's work is one of the characteristics of the personality and of the texts of the scholar, who, at almost 150 years from his birth and 80 years since his tragic disappearance, still deeply impresses, generating multiple questions and representing a model for any intellectual in training, for any researcher at the beginning of his career.

Nicolae Iorga's biographer, one of the best specialists in the field, Barbu Theodorescu, begins his thoughts on the learning and knowledge of the French language, literature and culture by N. Iorga, with the statement: "The French, he knew it from her mother, raised in the French pensions of Iasi" (THEODORESCU, 1976).

The author of genius, in his memoirs, will emphasize himself that: "I was only six years old, I did not know how to swear, I had read Champfleury, A. Pichot, E. Sauvestre, I knew by heart Florian's fables [...] and Hugo's Orientals

[...], as well as Kogălniceanu's *Letopisețle* [...] and I was wearing a dress made of white pichet with blue ties" (THEODORESCU, 1976). At the age of 12, he was learning Italian, Greek and Latin himself, was tutoring, was writing the first media articles and was correcting the newspaper "Românul".

Raised and trained in the spirit of both languages, Romanian and French, to which will then be added the classical and the Romanic languages, then the German and the Scandinavian languages, the diligent young man, to whom a great scientific future was foreseen in a country where the university culture was more and more appreciated will arrive in Paris only after finishing his studies in the country in 1890, when he becomes a student at the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes*, whose academic background will remain close to him all his life the same as Sorbonne.

Far from being an end in itself, the knowledge of foreign languages was not only a means of conveying the acquisitions and of disseminating the scientific information for Nicolae Iorga, but equally important the means of communication in his contacts with the academic environment, and, later on, with the political one. From this perspective, the man Nicolae Iorga was the prototype of Europe (re)defined today as a personality who can communicate in several languages (I quote here the General Manager of the Wallonie-Brussels Delegation in Bucharest, Mr. Eric Poppe, and the answer he has recently given, in January 2019, in Suceava, in an interview with Radio USV) (WALTER, 1998).

The love of N. Iorga, but especially the admiration and appreciation of the French language, literature, culture and civilization, have been manifested throughout his life, to the end, on every occasion, in writing or in the

speech of his conferences, the scientist not being at all reluctant to express his filo-French feelings and beliefs.

It is no coincidence that we are now talking about N. Iorga's francophilic affiliation, the term being validated in the francophone metalanguage by the *Report* of Jacques Attali of 2014 (*La Francophonie et la Francophilie, moteurs de croissance durable*). The francophilicophilia represents the considerable potential for diffusing the French language in non-francophone areas with the help of cultural personalities, in the business world, in politics and in the media, in culture, last but not least. The Romanian area, represented here by Romania and the Republic of Moldova, occupies a privileged place in this francophilic component, difficult to quantify, but which constitutes a considerable potential for the dissemination of French language and influence (HOUDEBINE, 2002).

2. N. IORGA BETWEEN THE FRENCH AND "THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE"

In this context, it becomes almost natural to ask ourselves whether N. Iorga loved the French language and literature more than the Romanian language and literature. As natural as the question arises, as false it seems to us to be in essence, but not unproductive. Looking for an answer compels us to a thorough knowledge of the work, which, in itself is productive, whatever the angle of approach, philological or historical.

The long-term contacts with France and its academic environment, started with the collaboration at the French *Encyclopaedia* even since the time of his student years, stably set for the next decades, contributed to the construction of its intellectual scaffold not only in terms of scientific knowledge but also of research methodology and of his own intellectual architecture, a fact, the scholar showed to be conscious of and grateful.

Back in the country in 1896, from the high faculties of France and Germany, and from the painful rummage of the Italian archives, N. Iorga was to publish at a fast pace collections of documents concerning the national history, monographs and dozens of articles, which will immediately bring an altogether special prestige

not only in the country, but also abroad, the prestige of which the professor, who became a Bucharest inhabitant by adoption, was fully conscious and which he put for the benefit of his nation without pondering when the moment became convenient.

In spite of his unanimously recognized francophilicophilia at the crossing of the ages, N. Iorga will be the one who, with his high academic prestige, in 1906, will take an open attitude with rare vehemence and an immense public and academic support against the French language that invaded the social life of the Romanians, triggering what he called "the fight for the Romanian language".

The events of March 1906 will be described in his book *The Struggle for the Romanian Language*, to the republication of which I participated, until a few days ago, in an exceptional scientific and human collaboration with Mrs. Alexandrina Ioniță, Ph.D. in history, and the team of the prestigious Editorial House "Demiurg" in Iași and which we can offer you, all the participants in this memorable Congress, to see (IONIȚĂ, 2007).

In essence, N. Iorga emphasized that French was the language in which the performances were presented at the National Theater in Bucharest, that articles in the media were written with its specific spelling, that the education was in the new language, and the high society adopted French as a language of communication to the detriment of the Romanian language, despised. The professor then confessed that the "Frenchization" of Romanians - a phenomenon against which he manifested himself with great passion and with unbeatable logic and argumentation - had to cease at the request of all the Romanians, and the national language had to be reinstated in its natural place within the national territory (ARDELEANU & ȘOVEA, 2015).

His belief in the language of his ancestors is beautifully expressed as follows: "But in no making there can be more fully and nicely embodied the soul of a nation than in the mother tongue. The language encompasses in a form eternally understood by all, uninterruptedly used by all, throughout life, for centuries, for thousands of years, of that people. The language we are speaking now is not only today's

Romanian language, it is not something fixed now by grammars, for people to use according to the norms in these grammars; it is the living being that comes from the farthest times of our past, it is the most cherished inheritance of our ancestors who have worked, generation after generation, for the elaboration of this supreme soul product that is the language. “

Moreover, the scholar affirms to his enthusiastic students: “Today in the Romanian language one can express the finest thinking, one can express the most gentle feeling, one can express the highest level of thinking, because this language is so of mastery used when it is in the master’s hand like those used by the greatest writers of the civilized West. “

Without exaggerating in the least, these metalingual and metadiscursive comments, of which N. Iorga’s entire work, as a matter of fact, abound, allow us to talk about a true linguistic imaginary that the scientist mobilized to support his patriotic theses and the immense love of country and nation. His struggle for the purity of the Romanian language has its origins in the struggle of the great French authors to preserve the beauty of French, and today it has its sequence in the battle that we fight (or should we fight) against the pollution of our languages with Anglicisms.

It was not the first time when N. Iorga manifested itself against the phenomenon he called “French” and, with different intensities, this will remain one of the constants of his work that will fuel the accusation of nationalism and xenophobia, depending on the historical moment. Although he had been a friend of Pompiliu Eliade, the author of a Ph.D. thesis presented in Paris about Francophilia and Francophonia of the Romanians (*De l’influence française sur l’esprit public en Roumanie. Les origines. L’étude sur l’état de la société roumaine à l’époque phanariote*, Paris, 1898, then *Histoire de l’esprit public en Roumanie au dix-neuvième siècle*, Paris, I: 1905, II: 1914.) - a book also translated in our country, remaining a reference book for the study of the theme - because they had corresponded for a while, and Barbu Theodorescu published their letters, Iorga did not share many of his statements, considered without measure, attacking him with his well-known passion, in 1903, in *Final Dispute with Pompiliu Eliade* (AZZOUZ, 2000).

3. N. IORGA’S MILITANT PLURILINGUISTICS

If we were to review just the three volumes of a unique book, unfairly forgotten today though, *The History of Romance Literatures in their Development and Ties*, a book that we republished in 2015 and 2019, in the same collaboration and at the same “*Demiurg*” Publishing House, we will find that although the author makes a real slalom through the French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese literatures, with references to German, English and even Nordic literatures, most often the analogies refer to French literature

We know that the scholar was particularly concerned that his work, referring to the historical moment of a particular people, to be translated into that language, just as he was concerned not only with the integration of the history of the Romanian people into universal history but also with the translation the works of national history in the most widely spoken languages of Europe, for the knowledge and international recognition of our values. If such a statistics was to be made from these realities, we would note that most of the Iorga’s works are edited in French, and only then the Italian works would follow. The explanation is not easy to find, for there are not just few subtle coordinates of the problem. But the fact exists and one of the reasons would be the author’s belief in certain traits of spiritual affinity linking the Latin peoples, a conviction definitely altered when the Italian government sustained the Hungarian claims to Transylvania. Once the foundation shaken, the scholar wrote and published the protest memo addressed to Mussolini in four languages, spreading it in 5000 copies, at his own expense, all over the world, interested in the issue of the Romanians. His idealism was, from that moment, severely affected, without the possibility of being restored (ATTALI, 2014).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Despite his constant struggle to assert the Romanian language in the national territory, a struggle unfolding more or less tacitly, N. Iorga was concerned with the permanent refreshment

of the vocabulary of our language by introducing neologisms, which he proposed, most of them from French. At the International Conference at the University of Suceava in October 2018, I stressed that, most of them, the neologisms of French origin proposed by the scientist (*comensali, coturni, comparse, renovator, voliționar, lectriță, camerieră*, etc.) did not enter the current use in the natural vocabulary, maybe also because of their artificial and overly intellectual nature. However, it remains worth noting the effort of the linguist N. Iorga to contribute to the evolution of the Romanian language, if not through the adoption of his neologiccrations, certainly through translations and the constant effort to send his idea, concept, theory, through the word, pointed towards the heart and the consciousness of the audience (MARTINET, 1960).

Returning to the balance between the francophilophonia and the national beliefs of the scientist, who embodied the idea of Romanian feeling for more than half a century, we reiterate, even denying the claim of any possibility of balancing. With N. Iorga, the proportions were very simple: nothing was beyond the love of the people, and for this conviction, which he had repeatedly emphasized, he was to pay with life. He loved France, its language, its history and its culture, he loved Italy, its language, its history and its culture, under the auspices of which his character was shaped, in the shadow of the masters he had as a role model, who guided his first steps in the historical research, and to whom, for decades, he was a steady collaborator, whom he honored publicly to the end of his life, through speech and writing. "I raise," he was to say at the end of his studies abroad, "in honor of France, who taught me discipline too and gave me also the faith in the ideal, of the Anglo-Saxon world, who convinced me that the energy can do miracles [...], not least of Italy who showed me that the Romanian soul can overcome any hindrance" (THEODORESCU, 1976).

But above all languages, his studies and the received international recognition, the advantages and honors of the academic and political world, he put his own language, history and culture, aware that regardless of the language in which a nation expresses itself, Romanian, French, English or German, "The language is not, gentlemen, only a means to understand each other, it is not only the practical means by which one can communicate his thoughts and feelings to other people; a language represents for a people a lot more. It is the highest, the most complete form in which the soul of a people can express itself" (IORGA, 2019).

I continue to nurture the conviction that at almost 80 years after the scientist's disappearance, we are only at the beginning of the knowledge of his work and to value linguistically, of the principles of the linguist N. Iorga, that situate him, in our opinion, together with André Martinet and Henriette Walter, with other major representatives of the European Functionalism.

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