

A SKETCH OF LUCIAN BLAGA'S PHILOSOPHY

Geo SĂVULESCU¹

ageos2007@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT. I will try to present a sketch of Lucian Blaga's philosophy which will contain both the *theory of knowledge* and the *theory of the unconscious*. I will concentrate my study on the approximately 1000 pages from *The Trilogy of Culture* and *The Trilogy of Knowledge*. I would like to limit myself to these two trilogies, which represent the core, the center of the Blaga's philosophy. In the *Dogmatic Aeon*, published in 1931, the *Luciferian Knowledge*, published in 1933, in *The Transcendent Censorship*, published in 1934, in *Horizon and Style*, published in 1935, as well as in *The Genesis of the Metaphor and the Meaning of Culture* published in 1937, the key notion is *mystery*.

Another key notion for the understanding of Blaga's philosophy first appears well defined in *Horizon and Style*. It is the notion of *style as unconscious*. It is notable that Lucian Blaga wanted, from the beginning, for the notion of the unconscious to not have a direct link to psychology, to becoming a philosophical concept. In *The Trilogy of Knowledge* one can feel in the subtext the thinking of an unconscious domain, which he evidently needed, but which was probably not yet well structured in its new form, liberated from psychology, or in any case liberated from psychoanalysis. Moreover, in *The Genesis of the Metaphor and the Meaning of Culture* he speaks more about *transcendent censorship*, and in my opinion, more consistently, more credible, than in the entire chapter with the same title from the *Trilogy of Knowledge*, text which has a poetical beauty in its metaphysical display.

KEYWORDS: Lucian Blaga, theory of knowledge, mystery, unconscious.

Introduction: Kant and Blaga

Let's start our discussion with *The Dogmatic Aeon*. What does Blaga want to communicate in this book? He starts by introducing the idea of dogma, dogmas, from a critical point of view, as

¹ Dr., membru al Diviziei de Logică, Metodologie și Filosofia Științei a Comitetului Român de Istoria și Filosofia Științei și Tehnicii al Academiei Române.

“philosophical theses which more or less surpass experience”², and he states his point of view that “Dogma requires... a certain crisis of understanding³...”⁴ such that after he justifies dogmatism in the first dogmatic formulation made by Philo of Alexandria, he will assume this formulation. Philo was the thinker who lived in that Hellenistic world so appreciated by Blaga, world in which the wisdom of the Orient met with the rationalistic attempts of the Hellenics. Blaga will define dogma as “...any formula which, incongruous with understanding, postulates a transcendence of logic”⁵. Everything start to become more complicated: what does *formula* mean? What does *transcendence* mean? By *formula* Blaga understands an expression through words. By *transcendence* he understands to surpass it. Toward the end of *The Dogmatic Aeon* he will write about *radical transcendence* referring to knowledge in the negative direction, Luciferian knowledge.

Before entering deeper into Blaga terminology let’s attempt a clarification. The paradoxes of Zeno of Elea—the impossibility of the arrow to reach its target—and that of Achilles, the son of Peleus—of reaching a tortoise while running—do nothing but show us that we cannot think rationally, logically, about movement, the displacement of objects, people, or beings, which is otherwise a common sense observation. Logical antinomies, logical paradoxes, should not solicit our effort to give them a solution, they are a witness of this difference which exists, and of which we should be conscious, the difference between the reality observable through our senses, the perceived reality, on one hand, and our attempt to give it a correct shape through our expression, especially written, on the other hand. By correctness many understand a logical form, a rational concatenation, such as we are not accused that what we write has an aberrant path from head to toe. Maybe that’s why Pythagoras wrote his wisdom in verse, *the golden verses*, maybe that’s why Heraclitus was considered *the obscure*, because he tried to express in written words what in live dialogue was easier to argue, maybe that’s why the few phrases left

² Lucian Blaga, *Eonul dogmatic in Trilogia cunoașterii*, Fundația Regală pentru Literatură și Artă, București, 1943, p. 11.

³ I will replace, from the text, the word *intellect* with *understanding* every time it will be necessary. In modern spoken Romanian, intellect and reason are synonyms. Blaga uses them in the same manner, because he refuses the terminology introduced by Kant, for whom *Verschtand* (understanding) is different from *Vernunft* (reason).

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 14.

⁵ *Op. cit.* p. 19.

from Parmenides seem to have many obscurities, and maybe that's why Socrates refused to write, considering the dialogue a possibility to correct his statements, while *scripta manent*, as the Latins said—if you wrote a stupidity, it stays.

It seems simple, but it's very complicated. Those for whom life was the main educator will understand this easily, but it will be more complicated for those who passed through school, possibly too much school. This is also the reason why those who have studied the life of primitive people⁶ consider that these people not only are primitive, but have primitive thinking, logically un-evolved. It's true. They have a magical thinking, and magic escapes any logic. For them myths, stories, and the transcendent (read magic) are sometimes more important than food, in other words spiritual nourishment is in first place. They seem to us to be primitive and with pre-logical thinking because for them the mystery of the surrounding world is more important than well-conducted, logical thinking. We consider them primitive in thinking due to the conceit of those mastered by the demon of logic.

I will later say a few words about Luciferian knowledge. I would like to remember that for both Kant and Blaga there is an impossibility of knowing reality as it is. But we can approximate it with the help of the a priori categories; this explicitly for Kant, and more reserved but still very clearly for Blaga⁷. It is the reason why they were both considered by some philosophers to be *agnostics*. How funny, be named as “agnostic” of someone who gives a solution about the way in which we can know. It is true that the solution is doubled by the recognition that we cannot have an absolute knowledge.

The Dogmatic Aeon: the mystery

From here follows something which at first sight shocks: on the one hand we have a world which cannot be known in its intimacy, while on the other we can, with our mind, with our intuition, try to have knowledge, we don't know how correct, about this unknowable world. Why does it shock? It does because we are rational animals, because we think, because we have a strictness of this thinking,

⁶ Claude Levi-Strauss, *Mithologiques, Le crue et le cuit*, Plon, Paris, 1964 and *Du miel aux cendre*, Plon, Paris, 1966.

⁷ Blaga. *Cunoașterea luciferică*, p. 199: “...the theory of knowledge, the way Kant left it for us, a theory of basilical monumentality, which reduces knowledge to intuition, categories (transcendental aperception)... is in fact a theory of knowledge which we agreed to name <paradisial>.”

because we can have a strictness of our thinking which we name logic. In these conditions we obtain a great confidence in our mental faculties and we feel that we can become the rulers of the world. With our prying mind, with the logic that sustains it, we feel strongly and cannot believe that mysteries are around us. We cannot believe that we have a *ensorship of knowledge*, although the categories through which we know are, like our sensory organs, limited: a limitation even through their function. Does reason also have limits? Does the logic that we use? Of course. We found out that Cantor's set theory has a starting point, that of *set*, which is unclearly defined, and that the theory is contradictory in the transfinite, that mathematics as a complete system is contradictory. We found out that the diverse logics with which we hoped to cheat reality and infiltrate its intimacy, such as the logics with infinite values, Brouwer's intuitionist logic, fuzzy logic, modal logics, the logical schematism of Stefan Lupasco, all of them trying to surpass the limit of the Law of excluded middle, which functions in the logics with two values, we find that all these logics can be reduced still to a limit, to a logic with two values—we found out that we cannot restrain the contradictory reality in logical girths, that reason is not infallible.

All of these do not mean that there is a complete breach between reality and our minds, that it's no longer worth thinking and that we should trash the books of logic and mathematics. Instead it means that we will be able to approach reality easier with a mind able to accept contradictions and try solutions with the help of intuition, with the help of creative ideas. Here is what our lesson should be from Plato, who talked of a pure world of ideas which we cannot reach, and that we would be satisfied with a world of the shadows of these ideas; it should also be the lesson from Immanuel Kant who, as I have said, wrote about an unknowable world (a *noumenal* world), which we can approach with the help of the a priori categories of intuition. The same is the dogmatic aeon in which we entered or the contradictory domain of Stefan Lupasco. We should listen to these beautiful minds that brought our attention to the fact that *one is* and *another we think*, who gave us solutions to how to use our own understanding, to use logic, to use mathematics.

For Blaga, the existential domain, that which exists, is dominated by mystery. This means that we cannot know reality because it is unknowable in its ultimate intimacy, it is un-cognizable, it is hidden behind a curtain which does not let us approach, and that's why our senses do not permit us to decipher it. Kant, whom he critiques and

denies, but whom he follows even if he doesn't recognize it, proposed the *noumenal* world, where master is *the thing in itself*. Blaga speaks to us about a *world of mysteries* which we fought from the beginning of humanity to unveil, to reveal. It is indeed an important difference from Kant. We are no longer talking of an undifferentiated mystery, of "the thing in itself", of a universal mystery, but of a multitude of mysteries, each mystery having a description: this means that we know in which mystery we find ourselves, even if we cannot give a coherent answer. Do we find ourselves in the mystery of the last particles of matter, in the mystery of the composition of the world, in that of the brain, or in that of gravitation? If the existential domain means mystery, it is good to know that there are a multitude of mysteries, very many. I don't want to say *infinitely many* in order not to enter the transfinite aporia from the set theory. I couldn't justify why one infinity can have a greater or lesser power than another infinity, that one infinity exceeds in power another infinity, I couldn't find a proof for this statement, although the idea attracts me. Nor do I understand the notion of *power* of infinity, notion invented by Cantor in order to justify the different types of infinity. This doesn't mean that I don't respect mathematics, even Cantor's set theory, what I am trying to say is that human reason, intelligence has led us to splendid theoretical constructions applicable in reality, but that doesn't mean reality; reality is different, it remains a mystery however much we unveil of it, however deep we infiltrate with our intelligence. Without the mathematical binary system we wouldn't have computers, we wouldn't have any of modern technology, without physics and chemistry we wouldn't have any of what surrounds us. Mathematics, physics and all the sciences guarantee our civilization, but we would like to know more. We would like to know what we cannot know. Let's see what is taking place? Let's feel knowledge with the help of Lucian Blaga's mind.

Mysteries are the most important pillar which supports the theory of knowledge. In order to be able to approach, carefully, this field of mysteries, Blaga starts to tell us the story of the dogma, which starts with Philo of Alexandria.

We return: what does dogma mean in Blaga? ...*an abdication of the self* because *understanding (intellect) has evaded from itself in formulas which... are inaccessible to logic... Does Dogma imply a certain crisis of understanding...*⁸? Formula which in Philo sounds

⁸ *Op. cit.* pp. 15 și 16.

thus: *...from the primary substance emanate secondary existences, without the primary substance suffering any decrease through this process.* Unity is not altered if we take something from it, the secondary emanations don't minimize divinity (the primary substance is divinity for Greek philosophers), which remains unaltered. One generates the multiple? For our everyday mind it seems an aberration: how can you take something from a unity without lessening it? The everyday mind, the mathematical mind, seems to be the only one accepted by logicians, the one they consider to be correct. This is also our reason. It cannot accept that a being—we will later see what a being is—may have three persons, such as in God's Trinitarian dogma: a being in three persons. God seems to be unitary and multiple at the same time and in the same coordinates. Can we not agree with such a statement? Why not? This dogma came out victorious each time in front of those who tried to give Christian belief a rational form: that's what happened with Arie, who tried to make a hierarchy of the beings that take place in God, a God who took shape in time, in front of the pneumatics, who proposed a logical thesis, Christ being an incarnated divine being, in front of the Adoptionists for whom Christ was a prophet uplifted to divine dignity, or in front of the Manichaeans, who transposed contradictory and mysterious reality into the fight between a divinity of good and evil, between God and the Devil, both having equal power, thus introducing a dualist theology. The Christian view that was victorious after approximately 400 years of battle was that of trinity into one being. It is the Christian dogma that has its roots in Philo's dogma. Why did it happen this way? Blaga thought that there is a human tendency toward mystery, reason for which the dogma was preferred and chosen over an attempt to a rational, logically correct explanation, fact that appears to our understanding as a contradiction or an impossibility. Maybe intuition whispers to us that logical strictness is poor and that it is better to leave open the gate of understanding, to leave everybody the right to dream with open eyes. Sometimes the imaginary proves closer to reality.

In other words, Blaga draws the attention to a mismatch, a very important difference between what is real and what we think. It is a difference that I have mentioned already, noticed by thinkers as early as antiquity. The solutions, the attempts to surpass this discord have been and are diverse, varying between two extremes: rationalism and intuitionism; between giving total importance to reason, to our way of thinking correctly, and exacerbating the value of intuition,

which is closer to reality, and which tries to surpass logic. There are also diverse intermediary possibilities of approach between the omniscient logic and the fragile intuition.

It seems that the one who found the most efficient solution to understand how functions human knowledge was, as I've said, Immanuel Kant. Lucian Blaga follows closely the Kantian construction of knowledge, of course with some important modifications. Maybe the most important contribution is bringing the unconscious into the world of philosophy. In the *Dogmatic Aeon* and the *Luciferian Knowledge*, with which we will occupy ourselves in the following, Mystery is the central notion that replaces Kant's noumenal world.

Nature's mysteries, actually the reality that is given to us as a multitude of mysteries, which we can tackle one at a time in different ways, is one of the keys that can open the understanding of Lucian Blaga's theory of knowledge. Why mysteries, instead of a Kantian *thing in itself* (*das Ding an sich*)? Blaga feels the need to speak differently about this noumenal world (even if he avoids naming it thus), which we cannot know, but of which we would like to know as much as possible. That's why he will put in place of one unique and difficult to approach mystery, as I have said, a multitude of mysteries, each mystery having its own characteristic, a part of it which is given to us, which we know, and which is like a gate through which we can infiltrate as deeply as possible its knowledge. For example, light was and remains a mystery, even if its domain is familiar to us, just like gravity remains a mystery. We know, even if not precisely, what the subject is and we can approach each of these two mysteries in different ways, specific to each of them.

I believe that it is a great gain in our attempt to know. This is how it was in the beginning when we asked ourselves a question about what is happening in a certain real situation that appeared to us as a first mystery, which we felt the need to reveal. Thus we allowed ourselves to infiltrate deeper and deeper in the knowledge of each individual mystery, to infiltrate deep in what seemed to us at one point impossible to know.

Let's return to the *dogmatic aeon*, to that time without a precise limit in which dogma will have its place. What does this statement mean? Nothing else than: the fact that it is time for our mind, for our thinking, to free itself partially from logic's girths. To free itself partially..? Blaga's intention was not to free ourselves from logical strictness, but from the deformation of our thinking through logic,

from our erroneous thinking that logic can make us escape mistakes, thinking mistakes. This could lead to a partial liberation from logic, which would be well received for certain portions of thought.

It is true that without mathematics and logic we wouldn't have the technical wonders of today, but it is equally true that often our thinking, our thinking of best quality, makes necessary jumps, which no logician can follow. It is also true that mathematicians prefer constructions that have continuity without being interrupted by thinking that seems less rigorous. That's why it is very difficult to accept an interruption of a logical reasoning in order to change something, in order to be able to continue think while looking for the new, novelty, what we don't yet know.

There are attempts to surpass this situation by changing the true and false values of binary logic, or the intermediary values of logics with several values, with modal values, a logic of argument, of explanation; accepted – refused, approved – rejected, or other values. In general contradictory couples with a certain Universe of Discourse enclosed between the certain limits of an argument or an explanation. This attempt of the polyvalent logics does not change the situation too much because they still use a logic, be it bivalent or polyvalent, in a certain sector of reality. The limiting of logical action cannot mean the avoidance, the surpassing, of the fundamental difference between thinking and reality, but it can be useful just through the limits such logic gives itself.

We have, thus, a reality that cannot be easily captured in the thinking without intuition, without imagination, more exactly some portions of this reality escape the stringencies of logical thinking.

Here it seems I have to take another step deeper in order to have a better understanding. Our logical thinking wants to capture everything in its sequences. It is like a mathematical reasoning, which advances step by step and doesn't leave any gaps. This is the reason there appears a difference between what we think and what is. Being, existence, does not let itself be caught so easily. Something can escape us, due to absence of mind, or because the logical algorithm cannot capture that part, and we can find ourselves in the exasperating situation that we cannot know, although we proceeded correctly, logically correct, in our approach to the existent. Here Blaga pulls the alarm. Is it time for us to be scared and resign ourselves, as a consequence, to our impossibility to know reality as it is? Or to take for granted this difference as a reality that we cannot escape, that we shouldn't even try to escape, but instead to go forward, to continue

to know with our own powers all that we can steal from nature, to see everything that we can unveil, to have courage but not to be arrogant. If what we thought or imagined proves to be inapplicable to reality, let's not collapse, let's keep going, let's find a new way that could be more appropriate to our goal, that could bring us closer to the truth. Anyway, it seems to me that man, this weak and strong man, has always done this, has gone forward and has not surrendered to failures. One fact could change. If we know that what is hiding is more and more difficult to unveil and that eventually it will remain something impossible to know, if we know that we have limited powers, if we know that pride and false confidence do not help with anything: I think that we are better armed, stronger. The power of the weak is not an empty word if it is doubled by science, by knowledge, by the knowledge of one's own limits, if we know our limits.

It seems that this is the reason why Blaga will try to surpass this situation by steps which, at first glance, seem very complicated, steps which start with dogma, with the dogmatic, because dogma, the contradictory, is what attracts our attention that there is a certain *crisis of understanding*. Crisis about which we just spoke, crisis of a functional difference, of a *phase difference* between what there is and what we think there is: *a being in three persons; a person who is at the same time man and God*.

It is interesting that these dogmas of Christianity remain dogmas only in the expression through words. If we were to formulize them, giving words symbols, the so called dogmatic crisis disappears. If being = a, and person = b, respectively b₁, b₂, b₃, the 3 persons, then we can state that a=b₁ + b₂ + b₃, without anything being shocking. What we can say: *a* is formed by the sum of the three *b*'s, and it would have nothing to do with the main Christian dogma, which says that the unique God, who is a being, is at the same time three persons: God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Minimal algebra and arithmetic have nothing to do here because we are in the domain of words, of words with meaning, of notions, of concepts.

There is something else. The logical manifestation of thinking cannot come in contradiction only with reality, but also with language, the words of a language. As a matter of fact, the natural language of a people contains in it, without being conscious of it, the entire reality, the entire experience lived by that people. The words of a language, the notions, have a content that we cannot control and which depends on everything that is taking place, everything that has taken place, with those who speak the language that contains those

words, those notions. When we think, indifference of whether we think in words or images, we use at least three points of reference: we use words (or images that can be transformed into words), which are notions formed for the most part historically, we use certain rules that impose themselves in the use of these words – grammar – and we use a correct concatenation of ideas, which we materialize through words – logic.

Nothing is as simple as I am trying to present it. In old India, some believe that first was Panini's grammar, then logic. Both grammar and logic are linked because the rules of an understandable expression are necessary such that two people speaking the same language understand each other (some prefer to call these *rules of correct expression*, which is indeed so, but we should *understand* why a minimum of rules of a certain expression are also used by the illiterates of a people, who have no reason to interest themselves in a correct form of expression). Still, it is rather easy to differentiate grammar from logic. Grammar needs words, it serves words, in order to express rules of correctness, while logic can be formal, which means that it can dispense of the words it uses and replaces them with symbols. Socrates is a man. Any man is mortal, therefore Socrates is mortal: A is B, any B is C, and therefore A is C. A valid inference whether we use words or symbols.

The Dogmatic Aeon: the movement of understanding

Let's return to the *dogmatic aeon*, to dogmas, to the crisis of understanding. Blaga tells us that this crisis has a reconcilable aspect and an irreconcilable one. We can know, but we will never know the ultimate truth. Through *paradisiacal knowledge* we will approach the understanding of certain mysteries, explaining each of them one by one, we will succeed in unveiling the vastness of mysteries, explain mysteries in their vastness, just as Kant proposes, this being the Kantian knowledge (the efforts made in this type of knowledge are within reach of any man and may belong to the archetype of *remembering Paradise*). Outside of this extensional knowledge we can even infiltrate in the depths of certain mysteries in order to unveil what we can of them. This is the *Luciferian knowledge*, the creational knowledge, knowledge which can bring us light, something new from the depths of a mystery. Even so, we must know that we cannot have a complete knowledge, one until the last little corner. Something like that is forbidden to us, as Blaga puts it, something like that is not

possible because the world's mysteries have their impenetrable hiding places. Whether we want it or not, we cannot achieve more.

Another Romanian thinker, Stefan Lupasco, established as youngster in Paris, will speak of the *domain of the contradictory*, because reality is contradictory. Couples of contradictions make the law in what surrounds us. What sort of law? A law that refuses logic, refuses the excluded third, and accepts contradiction. How can contradiction be accepted? Simple, the new law of the contradictory replaces the values of *true* and *false* with other values, those of *actualization* and *potentialization*. Thus, a contradiction can be accepted be it presented formally or sustained by words, by notions.

A and Non A cannot be accepted together. If we *actualize* A and we *potentialize* Non A, this rapport changes. Actualization and potentialization are functions that vary between 0 and 1 continuously and inversely proportional. This means that the actualization of one term is associated with the potentialization of the other. More clearly, to the degree of actualization of a term is associated an inversely proportional degree of potentialization of the opposite term, and we can say that *truth* is potentialized, or actualized, in certain degrees. Truth loses its quality of absolute, it becomes relative to actualization and potentialization. To give another example, Jesus Christ was, at the same time, man and God. In what proportion, in each of his actions, he was man, and in what proportion God we can follow in the Gospel. During the trial, the martyrdom, and the crucifixion, the actualization of divinity becomes maximized. The contradiction between the quality of being man and that of being God is only apparent. He was truly both man and God at the same time, qualities independent of each other but united without the possibility of being mixed.

Blaga, writing about dogma, draws our attention that dogma is an antinomy, a *transfigured antinomy*. This means that even for Blaga this domain of the contradictory, as Ștefan Lupașcu puts it, is the contradictory of the real world, the trivial antinomies of reality. With one difference. When Blaga says that dogma is a transfigured antinomy, transfigured by the scission of certain solidary concepts, and he gives as example the notions of *being* and *person* (even if antinomies can be found at any step and dogmas can be built relatively easily with common notions, it is interesting that we find it easier to give as example the main dogma of Christianity as a type of dogma) he does it because here appears more clearly this fight between notions, this agreement and disagreement between

two notions which in the current language we cannot easily differentiate. Can we speak of *similar* notions? What would the similarity and differentiation consist of? Here is a rather beclouded limit, unclearly represented, just as a natural language functions. Maybe that's why, even if not only because of this, the human spirit was forced to bring into the world mathematics and logic, in order to introduce rigor where it doesn't exist.

Blaga introduces the notion of transcendent, which, we must admit, is a comfortable notion, but difficult to manipulate. It is comfortable because whatever surpasses our understanding may be placed in the transcendent. Even the surpassing means transcendence, they are equivalent notions, but used in different domains. Religious language needs the transcendent because we mustn't understand God too well, we must only believe and listen to those who understand the language of the transcendent. We must believe twice, believe in God, and believe in what we are told about him. This religious use of the word *transcendent* has made its use difficult in philosophical language. Blaga is not scared and he takes it saying that *the solution of the dogmatic paradoxes is postulated in the transcendent*⁹.

A lack of meaning full of another meaning, as Blaga says. It is a comfortable solution because it no longer means divinity, but it is, on the other hand, everything that surpasses our understanding as reason. Blaga will even say it in a footnote, *the transcendent surpasses by a great deal the idea of God*¹⁰. Maybe that's why he proposed a division of understanding. An *in-static* understanding, when thinking is in the midst of its logical functions, and an *ec-static* understanding (it is probably not a coincidence that the notion of ecstasy is close, but also that of exiting to the outside), in which thinking escapes from itself, being in an *irreconcilable mismatch with its logical functions*.

We will stop briefly because we find ourselves at a crossroads in Blaga thinking, point from which we may not understand anything (which unfortunately has happened), or understanding everything.

There are two ways of using the intelligent function of our brain, the thinking. We can think and understand, being led by reasoning with a certain logical strictness, or we can understand and feel more than think, which is familiar to us but escapes logical rules. One more time, I find it very hard to find try right words for something we do

⁹ *Op. cit.* chapter *Paradoxille metafizice*, p. 55.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.* p. 101.

regularly. We pass from one idea to the next without caring whether we trespass the rules of logic, in other words without linking correctly the ideas that we use. Sometimes we correct these logical deficiencies that don't bother us too much as we go along. Moreover, we are rather uncomfortable if somebody asks us to have a logical concatenation in an exposé. We use implied subjects without caring if our listener can catch all the unexplained meanings. We use contracted phrases, violating grammatical and logical rules because we find it more comfortable to our expression. Each time our thinking has to depart from itself a little bit, if the thinking's self would be logical correctness. Of course, the ecstatic understanding proposed by Lucian Blaga is not exactly this, but it's not far from this. Blaga writes: *Any dogmatic formula represents an intellectual ecstasy*¹¹, a departure from itself of our thoughts in order to make, as Blaga declares, the *jump into antinomy*, the jump into the incomprehensibility of the contradictory reality – but in order to understand it. This is where novelty will come from, the *Luciferian knowledge*.

Why does our thinking, our intellect, have to depart from itself, to evade from the strictness of a logical thinking? The thinking free of the constraints, the hindrances of logic may allow itself through the jumps it can make to become inventive, creative. Logic is very good when it corrects the sideslips thinking can create, but it can become a real hindrance when we cannot leave its ties. Isn't it true that it is very easy yet very difficult to explain? And especially: very difficult to prove.

Blaga gives us a definition of the transcendent being careful to also mention all the possible technical amplifications through which logic was descended deep into experience: *through <transcendent> we usually understand that which passes not only beyond experience, but also beyond all the possibilities of technical amplification of experience*¹². Indeed, only that which surpasses the rational, the logic, must be understood as being transcendent. In current use the transcendent is dominated by the antinomic, the transcendent is the *domain of the contradictory* mentioned by Ștefan Lupașcu: an antinomic, a contradictory, which escapes understanding. Both the thesis, which supports the terms, as well as the antithesis, which supports the contrary, is equally correct, equally credible, that's why

¹¹ *Op. cit.* p. 95. As I have written above, I translated each time the word *intellect* as *understanding*. Still, in Blaga, *intellect* and *intellectual*, as is our case, often have the meaning of correct thinking, of reason.

¹² *Op. cit.* p. 100.

we resorted to dogmatic formulations that would surpass any contradiction. That's why Philo resorts to a dogmatic formula: *The primary substance (the divine) emanates secondary existences without suffering through this process a diminution*¹³ translated in Christianity through the trinity dogma: *God as a being is unique, but he is at the same time the Son and the Holy Spirit, three persons in one being.* God the unique cannot lose anything from his substance, even if from him emanate the persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit. An antinomy without a solution becomes a dogma. Here an observation must be made.

Dogma tends to fix a mystery, be it individual or general, into its own character, which belongs only to itself. Blaga believes that we have a *dogmatic type* of thinking, which embraces mysteries. Our spirit needs to use this type of thinking in order not to sink into the unknown. More precisely and specifically, the mysteries of nature, of the world, be them individual or general, need to find a solution even though they are incomprehensible. For this we need dogmatic thinking, in order to give a shape and content to each mystery in turn. The shape is that which gives specificity to a mystery, and the content has a part that shows itself, which we know, and a part that hides, with which creators will fight, be those artists, writers, or people of science.

Because our intention is to remain, as much as we can, in the parameters built by Blaga, to remain in his Universe of Discourse, let's say a few words about what *direction in knowledge* would mean: a concept of an action we realize in every day life. When we take a few steps down a road, we know where we want to go, the same when we climb into the car, start the engine, and take off, when we climb into a bus or an airplane. The goal, the point of our action, the scope of an action, is the justification of that action. Everything we do, or almost everything, is on the direction of our action. Many times we prefer to hide in the step that we take the direction in which we are headed, especially when we have a certain interest, or we are not too glad for others to know where we are headed. Our Members of Parliament have found all sorts of little snags in the articles of a law that asks for the control of the wealth of statesmen. It is understandable, because they don't want others to know how they made their wealth, they don't want someone to be able to control their wealth. Moreover, a politician, a talented poet and head of a party, appears in mass media making fun of the aforementioned law, which has the pretension to

¹³ *Op. cit.* p. 14.

call itself *of integrity*. What purpose has morality as law? It has no purpose. We must push aside any possibility to control those who are above the law. Those who steal bread must be condemned, but those who steal our money, the public money, remain honored if nobody can control them. The scope, the direction of an action should be followed in the little gestures, which may seem naïve, or even cute.

For Blaga knowledge has directions. Leaving from the origin, from point 0, it can have a direction toward the *reduction* of the number of mysteries or the *potentiation* of a mystery. The first is called *positive knowledge*, which he denotes with the plus sign and names plus-knowledge, and the second, the dogmatic knowledge, which has in front of it a *mystery impossible to construct or rationalize*, he gives it the minus sign and calls it *minus-knowledge*. In this *theory of directions* of mystery (mysteries take on the value of real objects) our action of knowing can lead, in the positive case, to a numeric reduction of these mysteries, and in the minus-knowledge case, it *tends to fix, where it can and how it can, the cosmic mystery in its maximum of depth and relief*¹⁴.

Mystery is heterogeneous, complex, it has different articulations and can have diverse dimensions, a varied relief, which makes it no so important whether we use the singular or the plural when we talk about mysteries. The heterogeneity of mystery can mean a multitude of mysteries. This differentiates it from the homogenous, absolute mystery, one without dimensions, which Kant proposed. A filiation means, in many instances, radical changes: still Blaga did not consider himself to be a continuer of Kant. What is important is Blaga's statement that "The object of knowledge is mystery. The problem of understandable knowledge is the *reduction* or *potentiation* of <mystery>"¹⁵.

Mystery is an object, like any object from reality, and knowledge guides us to the *understanding* (*Verschland* in Kant) of these mysteries, these objects¹⁶, either through their reduction in number (knowledge as Kant constructed it), or through infiltrating the depths of a mystery, through which action of infiltration we will be able to

¹⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 106.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.* p. 108.

¹⁶ "The idea of 'thing in itself' is, in our opinion, one of the many variants of the idea of 'mystery'... Kant searched for the secret of the validity of exact science in the way of application of concepts upon intuition. He strived to show that science is born through the application of intellectual categories upon a material received through the senses". Lucian Blaga, *Despre conștiința filosofică*, Ed. Facla, București, 1974, pp. 145 și 33.

partially know that mystery, and at the same time we will be able to respect its quality of remaining a mystery. This second knowledge, the minus-knowledge, named thus in order to differentiate it from what Kant got us used to, is Lucian Blaga's contribution, the *radiant* Blaga. Maybe that's why he named it Luciferian knowledge, radiant knowledge, knowledge which brings light into the depths of the dark unknown. From here the need to speak of two directions of knowledge, because it is one thing to understand, to know what surrounds us, and another thing to search to enter with your thinking in the depths of a mystery, to evade with your thinking from yourself, self who resolves very well your day to day problems. What is essential is the new, the discovery of the new, in one word *creativity*, meaning fixing a mystery by finding its own character, without being afraid that we will not be able to resolve all its "equations". Physicists are upset in vain that they cannot find the last brick of the building of the world. If they look a little at the pats they will notice that in the last decades many discoveries have been made about elementary particles, discoveries of which they should be proud. We know more and more about gravity without knowing what gravity is. We have more and more remedies for many illnesses and we use them in a more targeted manner, even though we don't know everything about many of these illnesses and I don't expect we will know everything in the future. All these knowings don't really affect my daily life in which I need many other pieces of knowledge, some banal (if being able to use a computer is banal), about the objects that surround me. It is evident that the world of creativity, to which all humans have access, is something else than the world of daily necessities, with which it should not be confused.

Blaga will talk of a dogmatic type of thinking, another type of thinking than the logic, rational one, a type of thinking in front of which an *aeon* opens. It will be a different *spirit*, it will be a return of the Hellenistic, which is the founder of the dogmatic. This statement scares us a little, more through its misunderstanding. Through the examples give I have shown that we use this way of thinking rather often, Blaga himself gives examples that show the presence of this way of thinking. It is not a new way of thinking, maybe it is, and this is very important, a conscious form of our creative way of thinking. It is good to know what we cannot know! It is important because there is a fight between the domain of logic and that of the ontological. More precisely, a fight between the acceptance of logic, of the rational, as mode of thinking, which should be followed each time, and coming

up against the domain of reality, of the contradictory, as Ștefan Lupășcu says, domain which, according to Blaga, could be ruled through dogmatic thinking. Later, in the *Genesis of metaphor and the meaning of culture*, he will say that the most important characteristic of humanity is *creativity*, through art, literature, science, modality through which man was able to capture and make his own, even if only in part, the mysteries of the cosmos, the mysteries of the world. Creativity, the explanation of creativity, the need for creativity, this is the reason by Lucian Blaga constructed the knowledge with the minus sign, the Luciferian knowledge.

The contradictory and logic

Reality/ existence/ the antiquity's *to on* is contradictory, it is difficult to govern it with the use of logic if we insist on using an unfolding, without interruptions, of our correct thinking. That's why we find ourselves in a new *aporia* between logic and ontological. An *aporia* can't have a solution (like most situations in reality in which both terms are in contradiction) because both thesis and antithesis, are equally correct, even logical, sustained and valid. It is the reason, even if not explicitly felt by Blaga, for which he proposes using a different kind of thinking, a thinking used correctly, a thinking which cannot be accused if incorrectness, of invalidity, even if it no longer is dominated by logic, thinking which will open a wide road to the human specific, to *creativity*.

In this new millennium when the power of our thinking has grown exponentially, when we have, for a while now, besides binary logical systems that have roots in Aristotle's thinking, as I have already underlined, logics with many values, with infinitely many values, we have fuzzy logic, we have modal logics, which have replaced the classical values of true and false with other values; we even have the logic of contradictory from Ștefan Lupășcu, which proposes new logical values – of actualization and potentialization, values with which contradictory situations can be avoided by using infinitely many degrees between the new values; today when through the use of logic we travel with vehicles on the moon, when it is useful to have intelligent machines, which serve our power of thinking, I come to tell you, using Lucian Blaga's thinking, that we could tame the distance between logic and ontological by marrying them, giving them a new life together in our understanding.

How can we do this? We will elevate our way of everyday thinking to the level of science, which is not liked by mathematicians

and logicians: by using our correct, logical way of thinking, when we need this correctness, which we can interrupt, jumping from one idea to another, from one level to another, and to continue to be logical in the new chosen frame. This interruption should not vitiate the general economy of a process of thinking: on the contrary, it should ease it and make it more rapid than the power of the most efficient computers, no longer having logical barriers which we use when we don't need them. Could wrong thinking, falseness, interject? Of course. Listen only to the voice of politicians, especially the ones who are lawyers, how they play with sophisms in order to avoid a law that doesn't suite them. Listen even to the liars who sometimes lie beautifully, charmingly. Natural language has always been able to play such tricks. We cannot avoid them with only the power of logic or mathematics, because there will always be a skilled lawyer who will misrepresent the reasoning. Logic and mathematics will not be able to save us from incorrect person, and don't forget that "the wolf... does not change his bad habit". To be correct in thinking may mean to respect moral law, to refuse the incorrectness that can be born in reality and in front of which logic can be crushed.

Returning, these jumps, these surpasses of a level in order to enter easier and quicker into the depths of an idea, of a problem, can be a source of error, as I was saying, due to the escape from logical control, but they are also a source of authenticity due to the proximity to reality. Passing into a level of thinking, transcending between levels is very close to what Blaga says when he states that the solution to dogmatic paradoxes lays in the *transcendent*. The solution lays in passing from one level of thinking to another, having the respect of logic on one level only, and the refusal of logical strictness in the jumps between levels. This passing between levels can introduce dynamism in the process of thinking and can be achieved in both directions. The control? We can perform it, as humans, the ontological, our living. Maybe *Goodness*.

Even though what I have said is rather simple and is a usual usage in thinking, it is very difficult to express and understand. Paradoxes are near us but we use this thinking unconsciously, as if somebody is guiding the steps we must take. It seems that this guide is reality itself. We cannot bring to our mouths when we are hungry a logical rapport, a valid inference, but a piece of food. Reality, *to ov*, is a first instance for us, still, sometimes, it transcends our thought, and it surpasses the 'staying behind' due to a logical disagreement. What do we do then? Simple. We jump over what puzzles us, jump with our

thinking, and we continue to be logical in thinking on the new level that we reach, or we make a jump in experience, between levels of reality, we take a *reality bath*, which can be beneficial. In order not to be tempted by reality it would be good if after such a reality bath we were to return to the solid terrain of logic. I don't know if the words said what I was thinking, but at least I tried to be correct.

The Luciferic Knowledge

It would be good to travel a little further in Blaga's thinking of the *Luciferic Knowledge*¹⁷.

In the introduction to this chapter Blaga will think, in his own way, about the Kantian principles of knowledge. He will respect the schematic knowledge proposed by Kant but he says that he is not interested in the genesis of categorical concepts, although in the text he will publish in 1935, *Horizon and Style*, he will construct and propose a series of categories of the unconscious, which all originate from the two *a priori* concepts – *Space* and *Time* – that are the key of understanding for the philosopher from Königsberg.

Intuition and reason – logic – are the two cymbals of knowledge, from Kant toward us. Blaga will also speak of *spontaneity*, which is none other than the spontaneity of our intuition. Blaga will also speak of the irrational, of the contradictory encountered often in reality, contradictory, which surpassing logic, being incomprehensible, is not longer rational, it is the irrational. The rational, like the irrational, are objects of thought, but in order to have a rational understanding we must make a logical effort, while the irrational erupts, if I can express myself this way, into our thinking from the unconscious. Blaga points out that *mystery*, which is everything we do not know or do not understand, must not be equated with the irrational, it does not necessarily imply the irrational, because a mystery, something we do not know, can be rational, something we will be able to know only after it becomes known and maybe is no longer irrational.

For these reasons he will say that we should look at understanding knowledge from a dual perspective. A *paradisiacal* knowledge, quantitative knowledge (it removes mysteries one by one without entering each of their depths) is the knowledge proposed by Kant, through which what we don't know, the mysteries, are reduced numerically, quantitatively, using the analogy of what we have *a priori* in our heads, our brains, with space, time, and the categorical

¹⁷ *Op. cit.* p. 145.

concepts. This knowledge is achieved step by step through the knowledgeable elimination of mysteries (one by one), elimination through logical understanding, reason, and storage into memory.

The second type of knowledge is the *Luciferic*¹⁸, the knowledge which dives into mystery, which wants to know not only what is obvious, what is on the surface, it wants to know what is hidden in a mystery. It is a qualitative knowledge, which wants to rip out of mystery what is given to us to be able to know. (It is again difficult to separate the quantitative from the qualitative. Knowledge, whichever one of them, has qualitative valences, in the same way as a preponderantly qualitative knowledge, like the Luciferian one, has quantitative parts.) It is true that we cannot know what the limit of our possibilities to know is. What we can know, what Blaga tells us, is the fact that we know when we are in front of a *radicalized mystery*, a mystery that is antinomically formulated, reason for which it appears to be irrational. We know it has something irrational in it. Still, we have the possibility of using knowledge in order to enter in its depths. What is important is that we are able to know, and it is good to know something like this, that however much we will bring to the surface from its hiding place, there will still remain an irrational seed, an antinomy that we will not be able to remove, an antinomy that will be more and more profoundly contradictory, it will have in it a greater internal tension between the poles that are in contradiction. It is like a balance, a scale, whose pan of the unknown becomes heavier and heavier, a qualitative weight rather difficult to express and imagine (because it is an antinomy in itself, it is a *mystery within a mystery*, a mystery encapsulated in another mystery) the more the other plate lightens through knowledge. Luciferian knowledge means, in Blaga's acceptance, the opening of a mystery of which you know that it will not be completely transformed into knowledge, that it will remain something incomprehensible however far you advance in knowledge, you/we know that infiltrating the intimacy of the mystery, bringing it to the surface, successful knowledge will be paid by the thoroughgoing of the remaining mystery.

These two types of knowledge are complementary, they complete each other. Positive knowledge, bringing to understanding one

¹⁸ Maybe this Luciferian knowledge is not stranger to the fact that his name, Blaga's name, was *Lucian*, the one that shines, glistens, the knowledge that brings creativity into the human world (from the latin *luceo-cere*= that shines and *Lucifer-fera-ferum*= light carrier). In the late papers (after 1943), he prefers to name the *Paradisiacal Knowledge*, the Type I of Knowledge and the *Luciferic Knowledge*, Type II of Knowledge, pouched by priest Staniloaie critics.

mystery at a time being able to extend our knowledge to however many possible mysteries, does not oppose the possibility we have to linger within a mystery in order to “through” ourselves in its depths. It seems we usually use both types of knowledge. Maybe the most used knowledge is the positive, quantitative one, in extension. The knowledge that Blaga calls negative, maybe only due to the need to underline that it has a different sense than the positive one without opposing it, the knowledge that ransacks the depths of a mystery is the one that gives us data about the quality of that mystery, is it the one that will pull as much as it can from that mystery, it is the knowledge that guarantees creativity, the bringing of the new.

Knowledge depends on the man, on the power of his mind to penetrate the impenetrable, to pull out from the unknown the diamonds of thinking. Kant placed the first stone, in the modern world, in order to be able to approach the understanding of knowledge. Blaga follows him, even if he refuses this estimation¹⁹, trying to unveil more and more of the intimacy of this phenomenon (expressing ourselves in a Kantian way).

The understanding knowledge has this complementary duality, which it needs. Paradisiacal knowledge, positive knowledge, is the one that progresses *extensively*, by bringing new objects to understand, to research, to know. On the other hand, Luciferian knowledge evolves *intensively*, in the depth of the object to be researched, in the depth of the mystery. When it finds itself in front of a mystery, *Luciferic knowledge* opens that mystery, splitting it into a part that shows, the *bright* (the Greek *fanos*), and a part that is hidden, the *cryptic*.

In order to build the understanding of a mystery we need an idea, a *theoric idea*²⁰, an idea that can assure our jump into the unknown, into the *open mystery*. This means posing a problem, thinking something new. The idea goes together with the *categories of understanding*, with the Kantian categories as well as the stylistic categories, categories that are helpful for us both in the paradisiacal knowledge as well as in the Luciferian knowledge.

In the paradisiacal knowledge categories help us with the numerical, quantitative reduction of mysteries (extensionally). In

¹⁹ The only fact that draws us near Kant's philosophy is the fact that we accept to speak of so-called inaccessible “transcendences” in a way absolutely adequate to our cognitive aptitudes. ... we find that Immanuel Kant philosophied too much on „the thing in itself”, but too little on the idea as such of „thing in itself” Lucian Blaga, *Despre conștiința filosofică*, Ed. Facla, București, 1974, p. 145.

²⁰ It is the term proposed by Blaga.

the Luciferian knowledge they are *ideas*, ideas with theoretic function, which are like planks for jumping into the unknown of the mystery we wish to reveal. These ideas create an interior tension in the object, tension which is greater the further the idea is from the *bright* (the Greek *fanos*) of an open mystery, the more the idea that we launch is different from the bright (the Greek *fanos*), from what is known of the mystery that we opened.

What do we attempt through knowledge? We want, actually, to “rationalize” experience through concepts that apply to the intuitive, the existent, the ontological, giving it determination. That’s what Kant taught us, that’s what we also know today. The way we understand this may be different. This is what Blaga teaches us about the way Kant speaks of the understanding, the knowledge.

We return; we saw that our understanding, knowledge, is dual, is paradisiacal or Luciferic, but it is also *enstatic* and *ecstatic*²¹. In other words, closer to us is a quiet and common thinking, or, at the opposite pole, one that comes out of itself in order to subscribe to the *minus-knowledge*, the *Luciferic knowledge*. Common knowledge does not accept contradictions, while ecstatic knowledge subscribes to the acceptance of the anti-logical, the contradiction without solutions, of what Blaga called transfigured antinomy, or even the irrational.

If we were to gather our thoughts we could repeat by saying that reality and thinking are completely different. Reality accepts contradictory situations, which we can translate in our mind through dogmatic situations. We can remain in the logical domain, that of the non-contradictory, in which we may feel very comfortable, but we are far from reality. That’s why the solution could be to be logical when reason asks it, and to jump over logic, noting the place and reason for this jump, when reality asks it. If we would have such an un-folder in our mind we could have under control our apparently illogical thinking²².

If we accept the contradictory, we can accept the dogmatic thinking that puts us in the situation of our understanding leaving itself, no longer being *enstatic*, becoming *ecstatic*, which estranges us from logic but draws us nearer to reality, to the ontological. Moreover, it gives us the possibility, stopping, for a while, the flux

²¹ For Blaga *enstatic* as well as *ecstatic*, are not another ways of knowing, they are only another perspectives, another points of view for the same dual knowledge, Paradisiacal and Luciferic.

²² Subsequently it’s possible that a phase considered without logic to appear to us as logical.

of extensional understanding knowledge, to know mysteries close by close, one at a time, to deepen their understanding into only one mystery, a mystery that captivates us, it allows us to use an idea that we have and that we hold dear to ourselves in the knowing of this mystery. It is a way in which we will be able to mix logical steps with steps lead more by intuition, the intuition of the idea that is a plank in the understanding of a mystery, a plank in that which exists. This type of unfolding a way of thinking is our common thinking. We understand little by little all the events of a day even if we sometimes have time to stop at a certain idea, which, maybe, torments us because we cannot find a solution for it. Still, we search for the solution that we need and even if there are some steps of thinking that don't seem correctly built (in the flux of thinking we don't even notice), moments that contradict each other or jumps into thinking that are not justified logically, all these phases draw us nearer to an acceptable solution. This is what the thinking of a man of science is like, who wants to clear up an issue or conduct a mental experiment, which can lead him to important discoveries. Maybe this is how J.S. Bach thought when he composed the *great fugue*, reading his own mind made him run up and down notes and the counterpoint canvas. Listening to Bach, we listen to his thoughts materialized into notes. When you hear the last note of the penultimate passage (the 21st), a note that seems suspended in nothingness, it's as if your heart stops. I wonder if he had the same sensation. Maybe the sensation is only in my mind. How happy you are when your heart restarts to beat at the beginning of the 22nd and last passage of this great fugue! It's as if the power of music can give life and can also kill.

Similarly, reading Dostoyevsky, Balzac, or Plato, you are in direct contact with the way in which their thinking unfolded, which, at least in me, produces an indescribable sensation. That's why literature cannot die, as music and all arts, because we need to enter in contact, to dialogue with these illuminated minds. The trivial way of thinking, or that of creators, be they small or great, constantly comes up against the unknown, and that's what makes man satisfied, happy, or enchanted, every time he surpasses a difficult moment, every time creativity is at home. Our intimate way of thinking is maybe not interesting, but that of great thinkers is.

Maybe similarly trivial or common is that when you solve a life problem you have a satisfaction. As a physician I can say that I experienced the greatest happiness when I was able to improve a patient's suffering who had come to ask for my help, just as

sometimes I felt, like a suffering, the failure of the medical act. I did not like to feel *powerless* in front of a man in a difficult trial of health. Sometimes nothing is more difficult to solve than illness. In front of some cases beyond my control I could only resign myself to the situation, but there are cases when you *feel* that you should be able to find a remedy that you can't seem to find. It is the torment of a physician! Maybe the same torment happens to a painter, a musician, a writer, a mathematician, a chemist, a carpenter, a gardener, who feels that he cannot finish a piece of work, that he no longer has enough creative power, that his creative power has exhausted. Creative power, the maintenance of creative power, is maybe the key to man's being on Earth as Lucian Blaga tells us.

Bibliography

- [1] Blaga Lucian, *Eonul dogmatic*, in *Trilogia cunoașterii*, Fundația Regală pentru Literatură și Artă, București, 1943.
- [2] Blaga Lucian, *Cunoașterea luciferică*, in *Trilogia cunoașterii*, Fundația Regală pentru Literatură și Artă, București, 1943.
- [3] Blaga Lucian, *Despre conștiința filosofică*, Ed. Facla, București, 1974.
- [4] Levi-Strauss Claude, *Mithologiques, Le crue et le cuit*, Plon, Paris, 1964 .
- [5] Levi-Strauss Claude, *Du miel aux cendre*, Plon, Paris, 1966.