

THE WHOLE REALISM: THE CORNERSTONE OF IOAN MICLEA'S PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract: Ioan Miclea's so-called "meeting" with the Thomist philosophy took place in Tg. Mureș, (while he was a professor of religion), through the works of Jacques Maritain. What he had tried to find out until then in philosophy, he found in the work of St. Thomas. He felt that the truth lay beyond the surface of things, within their intimate reality. Lost in the scruffiness of the modern philosophy, Miclea finds the path and reaches to find Thomas, before giving up philosophy, as he was going to do at a given moment. The first reading of one of Ioan Miclea's texts (usually, any first reading is somehow superficial) shows us an exuberant author, a simple man who honors the writings of the Thomist writings or those of Maritain whose poor scientific training is hiding under the guise of a neophyte's exaltation. Not true! To avoid these mistakes we recommend going through the original texts of his work that will build a good relationship with Miclea's writings and will facilitate the study of the Thomist teachings.

Keywords: Thomism, Christian philosophy, truth, real, faith, reason, whole humanism.

THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY, A NATURAL SOLUTION OF THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON

There are several sciences which seek to enter and explain the true conception of world and life. In this respect, Ioan Miclea says that science we should accede to is where: "There is only one source of truth: God; from Him, two rivers – indeed, different, but not contrary, reason and revelation, or philosophy and faith – lead to mortals. They meet, as a whole and strengthened in the Christian philosopher's soul."¹

When the truth of reason (the philosophical truth), which springs from the evidence, and the truth of Christian revelation, which we gain it from the supernatural, namely God are together, we can talk

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¹ I. Miclea (1941). *Romanian Connections to Christian Philosophy*, Blaj: Seminar Printing Press, p. 9.

about a Christian philosophy. The essential notes of the Christian philosophy, whose existence and possibility is sustained by Ioan Miclea, are found in natural harmony with the conclusions of the debates in 1931 of the French Society of Philosophy²:

- a) the Christian philosophy is philosophy, not theology: So it's a *perfectum rationis opposit*;
- b) this work of reason has, therefore, its source, or origin, in the light of natural reason;
- c) the result of this activity brings forth some natural truths received through divine revelation.

“A Christian philosophy is equally or even more, a philosophy as any other non-Christian philosophy, which means it's a complex of truths demonstrated by all the demands of logic and reality and if its conclusions are still in agreement with the revealed truths, this does not happen because of the fact that the philosopher intentionally connected them, avoiding a priori any conflict, but because it is itself seen as a philosophy, faithful to its mission, and reaching the same conclusions of revelation.”³

The agreement between reason and revelation is possible because of the human nature itself which is just as natural as it is supernatural by the grace of Christ, so that the fruit of the truth of the two natures, is what precisely Miclea meant by Christian philosophy. In the structure of Christian philosophy, the two realities remain distinct, although the relations between them are intrinsic. Between reason and revelation there are collaborative agreements.⁴

This agreement between philosophy and theology, between reason and faith was emphasized long before by the great medieval thinkers. The medieval thinking made in philosophy the agreement between reason and faith: philosophy is pure theology if that does not contradict the truths of faith and vice versa: it is not necessary, on the contrary, that the truths of faith to be in opposition to philosophy, each with its very formal subject. After the peak of medieval philosophy, the distinction between philosophy and faith, between natural and supernatural order, between nature and grace was the most fundamental distinction addressed by the Thomist philosophers. The

² I. Miclea (1941), op.cit., pp.1-6.

³ I. Miclea (1996). *Theory of Originality in Philosophy*. Iași: Ars Longa Publishing House, pp. 153-154.

⁴ Ibidem.

ultimate origin of Christian philosophy is therefore to be found in the medieval period.⁵

Ioan Miclea supported Thomism as a Christian philosophy, not as a stand against Orthodoxy in front of the currents of thought hostile to faith, which were popular in that period. In other words, there could be compatibility between Thomism and Orthodoxy, there is not necessarily to be contradictory. An Orthodox may well be a Thomist, without becoming Catholic, as the Catholics are, quite respectable, even philosophers, without being Thomists. The truth sought by both Orthodox and Catholics is only one, the same for all, away of dividing and splitting, it must close and unite.⁶ Coming back to his *Teoria originalității în filozofie / Theory of Originality in Philosophy*, we remember that it is addressed, as we read in the preface, to those who fail to see evidence of this, either because they think Thomas as being the Latinized and baptized version of Aristotle and, or because they refuse his thinking due to their opinions “born of reasons which has nothing philosophical”.⁷

Consisting of four parts, the paper is made as follows:

Part I, where, after explaining the concept of *originality* in general, it deals with three various types of originality that we may found. Patiently, it lingers on each of the three types, supporting the examples with names in the history of philosophy.

Part II focuses on the originality of the Thomist work. St. Thomas is presented as the authorized supporter of Christian philosophy. The statements proved for the existence of a Christian

⁵ I. Miclea (1943). *Philosophies and Christian Philosophy*. Blaj: Seminar Printing Press, p. 37. The last chapter of this paper is a response to an inquiry by Ioan Miclea to Emilian Vasilescu (assistant at the Faculty of Theology in Sibiu), who, in *Gândirea* Journal, published a review on this paper. Emilian Vasilescu accuses the author that his writings would only be a literary form of proselytizing, a veiled attempt to attract the Orthodox Christians to Catholicism. In response, Miclea denies and says he had no hidden purpose, when he wrote that. “The recommendation of a philosophy which gives exactly the dogmas, indicating the believers and even the theologians, the way to follow, is seen as a procedure that fits with the saving mission of the Church; on the contrary, we consider a Church indifference to any philosophy reprehensible and a serious absence from duty to teach the faithful people. A church cannot boast that he had not condemned neither recommended nor a philosophy, when the faith is dug on behalf of false philosophy”, p. 51.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p.53.

⁷ I. Miclea (1996), *op.cit.*, p. 22.

philosophy are reinforced by presenting the philosophy of some marked thinkers of that period.

In Part III, which develops the “core” of the Thomist philosophy, Miclea focuses on the distinction between essence and existence. In the conclusion of this part, the author compares the Thomist existentialism with the authentic one: “The keystone of this metaphysics is the act of existence. This is the essence of the Thomism and of the authentic existentialism: St. Thomas’ existentialism is quite different from that of the philosophies that we are proposing today; and we say that, in our opinion, it is the only *authentic existentialism*, without thereby trying to rejuvenate it by a verbal trick, which we would be ashamed”.⁸

Part IV presents us the problem of the originality of Thomism in Romanian thinking. There is no concern in this respect in the Romanian philosophy, as the Romanian thinkers know little about the Thomist philosophy.

THE WHOLE REALISM, A FOCUS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF IOAN MICLEA’S THINKING

In his works, Ioan Miclea stops several times on the ontological aspect of being. The Ontology is part of the Metaphysics and studies the being as it is a being, *ens in quantum ens*. “We realize that there is no bigger or deeper metaphysical problem than that. All the ontological issues involve a third degree of abstraction, in which the being, stripped of everything that is sensitive and quantitative, is considered in itself, [...] it is about an analytical penetration in the recent principles or in the last expressions of the reality ground”.⁹

In *Realism in Romanian philosophy*, Ioan Miclea focuses on two Romanian thinkers in the first half of the twentieth century, Ion Petrovici and Mircea Florian. He states about the first thinker that he has a consistent thought, expressed in an organic work. The concept of Petrovici about reality stands for the moderate and critical realism: “a realism that is both at equal distance from the raw, materialistic realism, and from its opposite, the idealism of Berkeley, D.Hume or Kant”.¹⁰

In the second chapter of his work, he examines the theory of knowledge presented by Mircea Florian in his work, *Knowledge and*

⁸ Ibidem, p. 288.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 234.

¹⁰ I. Miclea (1943), op.cit., p. 7.

Existence in relation to the Thomism. Ioan Miclea does not understand why Florian rejects the Thomism, when in fact, he appropriates it. The common points of Florian's theory with the Thomist realism can be found in: the need of ideas, of perception and its representation in the act of knowledge, the role of concept, the last essence of the concept and the nature of knowledge; "in the Romanian philosophy [...] nobody showed profoundly the weakness of the idealistic conception of knowledge, view that he rejects it using stringent evidences as strong as possible, working for an ontological conception of knowledge".¹¹

A fact that delights Miclea is that in St. Thomas's thinking the expressions, terminology and phrases themselves are accurate, leaving no room for doubt or ambiguity. What is worthy of note, is that *realism* in our problem does not appear anywhere as a truth derived from a thesis or premise, as a conclusion, but as a truth or a major doctrine, stemming from the very heart of the specific reality: "[...] The modern philosophy decided to start from thinking, considered as the only truly safe reality. And you know where he got? Nowhere, because, after their own confession: thinking cannot stand of itself. For St. Thomas, the first principle of any philosophy cannot be other than: the evident existence of reality irrespective of thought".¹²

The relation of metaphysics and science supposes that the first is not "anti-natural" or "para-physical", but a "super-natural", but whose object is the immanence of the sensitive reality. If it is really studying the abstract or intelligible being, this abstraction comes from the sensible reality, from the operation of the human intellect. The human being is nothing more than the present reality in the sensitive, specific experience, a reality that encompasses everything, and which opposes to nothingness or to non-existence. For this, Ioan Miclea considers the notion of being as transcendental (with the most universal sphere and the least determined content), and as an analogous concept, i.e., neither unequivocal (it does not mean the same degree of reality in all beings it contains) nor ambiguous (it does not apply to facts which do not have in common other than the name). "What kind of scientist would deny that what he is given in experience is *something* of some kind and that something is *there*. However, which of them, remaining in that science, dealt with the existence of the experimental reality itself, or that of its existence? It has a

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 21.

¹² I. Miclea (1996), op.cit., p. 230.

metaphysical purpose. But if we ever wonder with consternation in front of the obtained results by the nuclear physics, by the wave mechanics, by the discovery in the atom field, our surprise is not less than that in the subtle analysis that we find in the metaphysics, seen as the queen of sciences”.¹³ We can be surprised, reading Miclea’s lines, by the insistence with which he stops on the being as the object of ontology. All the major systems of thought that he studied, start from the ontology, but they would be reductive, as well as the systems in which they arise. We must not forget that at the end of his life he had the opportunity to “meet” with the ontological conception of Constantin Noica, which has the object of study, the concept of “becoming into being”. Noica’s ontology is called by Ioan Miclea “a non-ontological ontology” because the contradictions of that exposure binds themselves according to the logic law of dialectics, unconvincing the neophyte in philosophy of a good reasoning.

THE METAPHYSICAL KNOWLEDGE AND ITS LIMITS

The metaphysical speech is specific to the human being endowed with reason, so this is why we say it is limited. These limits are due, says Ioan Miclea, to that lower obscurity (those dark shadows in which the reality is immersed) always in contrast with high obscurity caused by too much and too strong light, coming from God Himself. “The human thinking knows only this reality subjected to the Thought which thinking creates it, just as one thinks”.¹⁴

Here we are at the stage of disciplining our thought, which we observe, is acquainted only with respect to creative divine Thinking. A fact that we all lived when I learned something new, I said encouragingly: how much do we still have to learn! The common sense contradicts the pride of the semi-illiterates who claim to know everything, that for them the reality has no secret. The human intelligence is open to knowledge, but the aspects of reality are a true planetary obstacle to the entire human knowledge. “The lower limit of the metaphysical knowledge, its obscurity, flows of *matter*, which is a real potential; it can become air, water, earth, animal, human, plant, without being anything yet, but it is only real capacity, special from the *act* or received determination”.¹⁵

¹³ Ibidem, p. 235.

¹⁴ I. Miclea (1950). *Notes to the Whole Metaphysics of Reality*, Blaj: MS. p. 544.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 555.

In other words, the sources of origin of this inferior darkness are the error, inconsistency, absurdity and sin. The error will display a lack of conformity between reality and the icon which the intellect sets about it, born either from the sensory data or of a bias of intelligence; the inconsistency in knowledge, which also creates an incomplete picture of reality; the absurd which disagrees with the fundamental principles of reality and reason; and the sin regarded as generic for the crowd passions rising up our being, darkening both the sensitive, morphologic view, and the spiritual and intellectual one.¹⁶

The “Sons of Light” (*Luke* 16, 8), very careful to the world they live, will see the presence of the supernatural in nature and above it. The nature is, as St. Thomas taught us, the essence of being, the principle of its activities and it *naturally* will become what is proper to each being as condition, but it will stay in conformity with this. The other kind of obscurity is reported to the particularity of the supernatural, announced by Ioan Miclea as “limit”, but this time superior to the metaphysical knowledge. The bright light in which the supernatural private life mysteries are floating does not allow human knowledge eye weakness to resist their vision. Or, how something will be understood that escapes our power of perception? All the human attempts to unravel the mystery, to dispel any mystery, were eventually just some fragile attempts to eliminate the Creator out of the world and human life. Speaking of mysteries, Miclea calls them: “Realities and truths that not only are the limits of reason, that they are not non-senses, but their light is too intense, so for us they become obscure, which does not mean that for the superior intelligences than those of the human would be of a deep brightness. The mysteries of the natural world which are beyond the ordinary mortals are a proof, but they become clear for the intuitions of the great geniuses of mankind”.¹⁷

In the same area of the upper limit of metaphysical knowledge, Ioan Miclea also included the miracle, as a phenomenon that exceeds the power and order of the created nature: “[...] It can be known, because it’s great, or as it is the manifestation of the supernatural, because the supernatural is a phenomenon that takes place in the world of the senses and as such, its knowledge and verification can be done exactly the way in which natural phenomena are found. For it does not require any faith, nor benevolence, nor piety, but honestly, no reason

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 543-544.

¹⁷ Ibidem, pp. 544-546.

lacking a priori concepts, and sound senses, which can guess the phenomena that are taking place”.¹⁸ But if it is legitimate to speak of natural realism, then as well he will be able to talk about *supernatural realism*, which, however, must not be confused with the *counter-natural*. This kind of realism does not present us a hypothetical, fantastic reality, of illusion or hallucination, born of hypnotic states, but it speaks us of a *super-real realism*, that the common realism, although it is completely different, has some indisputable contacts.¹⁹

THE REALISTIC KNOWLEDGE

Ioan Miclea reconsidered the way in which the philosophical theory of knowledge, specifically human, was analyzed after each type of philosophical orientation. Thus, what he called *philosophies*, concepts that were reducing the existential reality of one or another of its aspects, were inherently reductive under a gnoseological aspect. In front of the materialistic and idealistic philosophical concepts, for which man cannot know but only the matter and its products, respectively, its own thinking and its building, argued and proved the *realistic* philosophical concept, in which:“(…) the initial act of knowledge, the leaving, *terminus a quo*, is not the thinking, for the record, because if: I think – this is an evidence, but not the first nor in the logical order and or, the less, in the ontological order, and therefore, starting here, you cannot get anywhere. There is evidence before it: there are things, which is the first record and the basis for thinking”.²⁰ This shows us the *real* possibility of man to know the universe in and around us, or, as Miclea pointed out, the human knowledge is real. For this reason, he will strongly reject the absolute skeptical thinking, which Miclea considered that: “(…) it was only possible for stones or dead, but not for a living being (…), according to metaphysics, skepticism is an absurdity, because the principle on which it rests – nothing can be known certainly – is either true or false; if it’s true, we know something with certainty, if it is certainly false, we have again prevailed; at least it must be sure that nothing is certain”²¹.

The skeptical conclusions are contrary to the human nature, which manifested a continuous desire in its thirst for knowledge,

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 524.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ I. Miclea (1941), op.cit., p. 7.

²¹ I. Miclea (1950), op.cit., p. 181.

always open to the horizons of cognoscibility. So the human knowledge has a real, objective value, an ontological value; the first object of intelligence is the being itself, that *real being*, provided that it (the human knowledge) should take place in normal circumstances. Ioan Miclea reminds us that the first principles have real, ontological value: “If the basic principles have not only subjective value, they are only laws of thought, and not of the reality, there cannot be a truly real knowledge, of any kind, any metaphysics, any sense, any science, ceasing or becoming totally illusory, a game of the poetic imagination”.²²

Ioan Miclea insists, saying that in one idealistic philosophy the truth differs only by thinking (an essentially logical truth), while in the realistic philosophy, things are completely different; here the truth is identified with the real thing, so, eventually with the real knowledge of the work (an essentially metaphysical truth). This is the view of the philosophical realism that assigns an ontological value to the human knowledge: “Even Descartes’ *Cogito ergo sum* in itself breaks up, the principle of contradiction being denied, because then it becomes possible for me to think and in the same time not to think, to be or not to be, to think or to sleep. St. Thomas includes this truth in the following sentence: *aliquid non potest simul esse et non esse*”.²³

The truth in the realistic thinking “*adaequatio rei et intellectus*”, will express the thing and the concept of it, so it will exactly correspond to what the thing is in itself. The realistic human knowledge will belong to the entirely human body and soul: “Knowledge does not carry out neither only by the senses, such as the pure materialists would like, or by only intellect as the pure idealists would like, but it is accomplished by *man*, a being, not only corporeal, but also spiritual. Therefore, knowledge would not be natural, but violent, hard whenever it ignores one of the two essential and indispensable factors in knowledge, or somebody will try to separate them in the process of recognition”.²⁴

Man is neither angel nor animal; therefore, he will have neither purely spiritual knowledge, nor only material. This knowledge will be completed through the term or relationship concept, it is the knowledge of human kind, a knowledge in which the “intellect predicts the

²² Ibidem, p. 243.

²³ Ibidem, p. 245.

²⁴ Ibidem, pp. 125-126.

sensible and the senses of the intelligible”.²⁵ From what has been said up here, we can argue that a true knowledge, the material and spiritual alike cannot be found but in the true philosophy, namely the Aristotelic-Tomistic one. It is the pure epistemological theory that reconciles the requirements of the object with those of the connoisseur intellect. While studying the theories of some of his contemporary Romanian thinkers, Ioan Miclea found common grounds with the realistic epistemological theory of Ioan Petrovici, Mircea Florian, and Lucian Blaga.²⁶

CONCLUSIONS

Ioan Miclea was a teacher who understood his mission as a trainer, who wanted that his alumni to be true and fervent Christians. In our turn, we wanted to make the philosopher Ioan Miclea known, also from a spiritual obligation that we have assumed almost twenty years ago, at the “separation” from Mrs. Dorina Miclea. Ioan Miclea did philosophy at the feet of his master, St. Thomas, and he tried to convey his master’s thought in his study, while attending conferences and in his writings. The philosophical idea that he sent us fervently consisted in that philosophical originality of the *Aristotelic-Tomistic realism*, which remains the only philosophical conception under the laws of reality and of the human thought. The whole knowledge of human within the body is the metaphysical knowledge and this realistic knowledge can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The human intellect immediately reveals the trans-objective reality, irrespective of the act of thinking;
- 2) The reality causes the knowledge and then the thinking;
- 3) The knowledge corresponds to the reality, meaning that between the subject and the known fact there is a certain adequacy;
- 4) If there were no world, there would be no thinking, as it would not be who to perceive it;
- 5) The science comes to support and meet the realism of the human knowledge.

In the history of the Romanian philosophy, the work of the thinker and philosopher Ioan Miclea stands next to the Romanian philosophers of the last century.

²⁵ I. Miclea (1996), op.cit., pp. 24-25.

²⁶ I. Miclea (1941), op.cit., pp. 10-11.

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