

# LUCIAN BLAGA - PROFESSOR THE CREATOR OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

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**Abstract:** *Our inspiration for this article is based on the truth that Lucian Blaga is known especially as a poet and philosopher and less as a teacher – the creator of the philosophical system. He was not destined to teach, but he had a vocation for universality, and he was unquestionably the greatest Romanian philosopher of the interwar period. Through his seminars and courses Lucian Blaga formed a myriad of intellectuals who were integrated into our national culture.*

**Keywords:** *philosophical system, professor, creation, culture, metaphysics, the Mystery.*

Little is known and has been written about the teacher Lucian Blaga because in Romanians' mentality he is best known as a poet, philosopher, playwright, and diplomat. Moreover, in Romanian's consciousness, Blaga stands out as a model of a philosopher, the only one who created the philosophic system. At the same extent, he is not a model of a teacher, even if he taught for a while (1938-1949).

1. Lucian Blaga built, as it is well known, the most monumental and original philosophical system of Romanian thinking. Philosophical thought as well as the poetical one – interfering and complementary, were consubstantial to his intellectual nature since Blaga's first enlightenment, then very young, fascinated early on not only by the harsh world of order and disciplinary rigor of the theoretical truths, but also by the wonderful world, vitalized by the spirit of artistic truth. These two parts of his soul were so convergent that he managed to make the most productive and organic synthesis of the Romanian culture between artistic and philosophical dimension of a spiritual creation with a great ideational diversity.

Lucian Blaga was aware of the greatness and depth of his work. Regarding this, the Romanian philosopher wrote in 1959 an editorial testament, which we'll reproduce it below:

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“If I will no longer be able to publish my philosophical work, I wish that my offspring will take care of this issue. I consider that my philosophical <<system>>, consisting of fifteen volumes, has been finished. The following is a list of these fifteen volumes: *The Dogmatic Aeon*, *Luciferian Knowledge*, *Transcendent Censorship*, *Horizon and Style*, *The Mioritic Space*, *The Genesis of Metaphor and the Meaning of Culture*, *Art and Value*, *About the Magical Thinking*, *Religion and spirit*, *Science and Creation*, *The Divine Differentials*, *About the Philosophical Cognition*, *Anthropological Aspects*, *Experiment and the Mathematical Spirit*, *Historical Existence*. The structure of this system is a trilogy. My wish is for all these works to be published in four volumes divided as follows:

***The Trilogy of Knowledge***

1. On Philosophical Cognition (manuscript, lithographic)

I. The Dogmatic Aeon

II. Luciferian Knowledge

III. Transcendent Censorship

2. Supplement: Experiment and the Mathematical Spirit (manuscript)

***The Trilogy of Culture***

I Horizon and Style

II. The Mioritic Space

III. The Genesis of Metaphor and the Meaning of Culture

***The Trilogy of Values***

I. Science and Creation

II. Magical Thinking and Religion (1. About the Magical Thinking, 2. Religion and Spirit)

III. Art and Value

***The Cosmological Trilogy***

I. The Divine Differentials

II. Anthropological Aspects (lithographed)

III. Historical Existence (manuscript)

The basis of publishing should be the trilogies and the volumes printed, lithographed or the manuscripts that are in my library. Take into account the <<corrections>> that I had made to the texts of these books”<sup>1</sup>.

(Cluj, August 25, 1959)

Beyond the “Editorial Testament”, Lucian Blaga has left us, through Cornelia Blaga, his wife, other considerations on his philosophical “system”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Lucian Blaga, *Works*, vol. 8, *the Trilogy of Knowledge*, Accurate Edition by Dorli Blaga, Bucharest, Ed. Minerva, 1983, p.57-60.

2. According to D. D. Roșca<sup>2</sup>, Blaga, through his philosophical system, – “a dialectician master of all resources of his art”- was a part of the evolution of European philosophical thought, trying to carry on, in his own way, the path opened by Eleatics and continued by Plato, then in the modern era by Descartes and Hegel. The meaning of this path lies in the concerns for “expansion and continuous plasticity of the intelligence”, in order to assimilate the basic, sense giving elements of existence.

Lucian Blaga was concerned to legitimize, in a high degree, the "metaphysical coordinates" of his system. Therefore, in the work "On Philosophical Cognition"<sup>3</sup> Lucian Blaga was preoccupied to strongly bring out the spirit in which he had built his own system and to legitimize it, in the perspective of a universal philosophical experience. He had built his system in a metaphysical spirit by proving a general outlook on existence.

Blaga was a metaphysician in the traditional sense of the word, as Plato, Hegel, Fichte and Bergson were. In the above work, he also drew attention to his profile. Especially it was significant, in this respect, the picture of the great thinkers evoked. Praising the "great figures" of universal philosophy, from the angle of "their side of light", Blaga distinguished two columns of thinkers: one more visionary – constructive, the other more analytical - critical. First column paid attention - Blaga said - especially to the "total view on existence" (Thales, Anaxagoras, Heracles, Plato, Plotinus, Cusanus, Bruno, Descartes, Leibniz, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Bergson). The second column had a particular interest riveted on man (Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle and sceptics, Montaigne, Descartes, Hume and Kant, as well as phenomenology and contemporary existentialism).

Lucian Blaga exemplified both columns. His system had an analytical-critical profile through "philosophical coordinates" (respectively by his philosophical anthropology, by the philosophy of knowledge, of style, art, culture and values) and a visionary -constructive profile through the "metaphysical coordinates" (the Myth of the Great Anonymous and the idea of "Mystery").

Human issue, at Lucian Blaga, takes the appearance of a phenomenology of human historicity in the perspective of knowledge and cultural creation, while the "total view on existence" overlaps this

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<sup>1</sup> Ibidem, *op.cit.*, p.58.

<sup>2</sup> D.D. Roșca, *Philosophical Studies and Essays*, Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1970, p. 135-141.

<sup>3</sup> Lucian Blaga, *On Philosophical Cognition*, vol. 8, Bucharest, Minerva Publishing House, 1983, p.72-190.

phenomenology as an explanation, in a metaphysical argument, of the historicity of man. In the entwining of these two types of theoretical discourses, lie the originality and the value, as well as the limits of Blaga's theoretical construction.

Of course, his monumental system was the prerogative of his complex personality, but also of his very intense intellectual activity. Blaga was not a poet, playwright or a philosopher, he was all those together, along with a formidable erudition and a remarkable scientific culture. Blaga was a versatile creator but he was based on the knowledge acquired through a very methodical reading of the great literary or philosophical works. His literary creation - very consistent - was not only the result of his poetic genius but it was always loaded with the anxiety of the philosopher. Philosophy was a brilliant example of a correlation between a solid philosophical system, his cultural bias, and last but not least his poetry.

It is no accident that in 1938 Blaga returned from abroad to start his lecture class of philosophy of culture, a newly created department at the University of Cluj.

Testimonies about Blaga as a teacher are not many. Based on the statements of those who knew him, we intend to build an authentic portrait of professor Blaga, who still had the chance (unfortunately, for a short time, being abusively removed from the chair in 1949) to share his ideas, that were composing his philosophical system, to young people. Through this, he was participating to the spiritual education of the Romanian people.

"His behaviour was of a man who had a very clear and very strong sense of personality, of a man who knew perfectly well what to do and how, and what he represented for our culture, in particular for the Romanian philosophy. His great mission was to finish drafting the philosophical system. In relations with other faculty members he was honest, very cordial, and respectful according to their scientific value (but especially with their character), without getting too personal with his colleagues. He was courteous with students and colleagues, but too exuberant. Regarding the material that he prepared for his classes, he was not the type of an erudite that would agglomerate his students with a lot of reading. Of course, he was perfectly aware of the essential information of the issues that he handled.

He was not interested in his oratorical skills - understood as a way to capture the sympathy or admiration, or to gain public applause. He was mostly concerned to communicate his thoughts to those interested in

philosophy, culture, and the philosophy of culture (giving to this term the intendment that the German word "kultur" has - that is culture plus civilization) and not to entertain the public. While appreciating his auditors, and respecting their genuine intellectual curiosity, he was convinced that he could capture their interest only with an exposure, the more sober the more effective. Obviously, he called for complete students' attention, throughout the 45 minutes lesson. He was happy of course when the classroom was packed, but it seems that he was most pleased with the presence of only ten or twenty students, who followed him with great interest and with the utmost spiritual profit"<sup>1</sup>.

He was not concerned about how he presented the course. He read to them without adding anything<sup>2</sup>. He was quiet, and he believed only in what was written. He didn't influence: he was radiating culture, but only to those who were radiating a bit of vocation. He was a guiding light, and Cluj felt his glow. He was dreaming of an Institute of philosophy of culture out of the university, a kind of a free Academy, where to focus spiritual forces of elite of science, art, morals, history, folklore and more. Transylvania was for him a spiritual, moral concept, before being a historical or demographical concept.

The fact is, Blaga was not a speaker, his lectures were ready prepared, and the way he read them did not rule out certain monotony. Hence, he didn't have a large influx of public, but instead he was followed by the most serious students who wanted to familiarize themselves with the profundity of thought, with an appropriate philosophical climate.

Even if at the chair Blaga didn't shine by words, he shone by his mere presence, through the seriousness of his spiritual being, through the density of his lessons. He read the course, from the beginning to the end. He rarely stopped, taking his glasses off in order to make a statement, or to add something. He made no concession of sought after effect. What he read was long thought and perfectly formulated to the latest nuance of expression that the text of the lesson could have gone straight to the printer. He believed that „of all the arts, the art of oratory is the hollows"<sup>3</sup>. This explains his style of teaching his courses. He had assistants, but they didn't hold any seminars, because Blaga believed that the seminars are far more

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<sup>1</sup> Ovidiu Drimba, *Conversations with I. Oprișan in: L. Blaga among contemporaries*, Bucharest, Minerva Publishing House, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Victor Botez -*Blaga-the man- as known by: Ion D. Sarbu, M. Eliade etc.* in *Knowledge and Creation*, Collections of Studies, Bucharest, Ed. Romanian Book, 1987, p. 483.

<sup>3</sup> Ovidiu Drimba: *Lucian Blaga: The man, professor, philosopher, and poet, op.cit.*, p. 427.

important for professional formation of the students than the course itself. He felt it necessary to hold personally all seminars. The fact that he had a very distinguished group of students was inciting for him. He inspired an intense and passionate love of culture to his students, who formed the most valuable generation of Sibiu. Many young people that were intellectually formed at the school of Lucian Blaga have become - as it is known - famous personalities of our national cultural life. Unfortunately, on December 29, 1949 Blaga had to quit the teaching career, which he cared very much, being removed along with Rosca, Liviu Rusu, and Ion D. Sarbu. He managed to get a position as a librarian helper at the Library of Cluj Branch Academy.

Not many teachers, through what they teach, succeed to create real culture.

Lucian Blaga was able to teach the philosophy of the culture because he had an original vision on it. Moreover, the meaning of human existence, in the view for the Romanian philosopher, lies in culture. Along with Nae Ionescu, whose universal concerns and rare metaphysical vocation has been familiar to all students from 1920 onwards, Lucian Blaga had exalted the Romanian culture on its true level. Vasile Băncilă, which Blaga considered the most exegetical young man of his philosophical work, was right considering him a model of "Romanian energy"<sup>1</sup>.

3. He didn't create a philosophical school as Nae Ionescu or C. Radulescu-Motru, but his influence on the philosophy of the Romanian culture is indisputable. Thus, Constantin Noica continued in a certain way Lucian Blaga's positions, even though he criticized some aspects of his philosophy. This fact becomes evident in his preference for the eternal and historical aspects of Romanian culture<sup>2</sup>. In fact, through his studies of the specifics of the Romanian spirituality, Blaga influenced Mircea Eliade in certain respects. For example, from Lucian Blaga he took over the concept of *sabotage of the history* to define the attitude of defence of traditional and primitive societies against the threats in history. We recall that Lucian Blaga studied philosophy at the University of Vienna, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1920. In 1936 he became an active member of the Romanian Academy. In an article published in 1937 in Time magazine, Mircea Eliade pointed out that he was astonished by the importance which Lucian Blaga

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<sup>1</sup> Vasile Băncilă, *Lucian Blaga-Romanian Energy*, Timișoara, Ed. Marineasa, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> C. Noica, art. *What is eternal and what is history in the Romanian culture*, in the Magazine of the Royal foundations, 9 / 1943, p.527-541, resumed in: Id. *Historicity and eternity*, Bucharest, Ed. Capricorn, 1990, p. 20-40.

gave to the act and courage of creation and then to the obsession for universality as a feature of the Romanian romantic tradition. In addition, Mircea Eliade pointed out that, unlike Frobenius, Spengler and Riegl, for Lucian Blaga the stylistic matrix was not in the surroundings, but in unconsciousness.

In the philosophy of culture, Lucian Blaga<sup>1</sup> supported the idea that the cultural activity is <<a specific of the human being in the Universe>>. It is an *ontological shift* which distinguishes man from animals: seeking to penetrate the mystery in dimensions where he leaves, the man creates culture. Designed in response to the attempts to penetrate the mystery of human existence, culture differs from civilization, which attends to the need for self-preservation and safety. Finally, for Blaga man becomes man when he is seeking to know the Mystery, when he creates culture. Because any culture is independent, we can not say that a major culture is superior to a minor culture.

In a 1938 study *Lucian Blaga and the meaning of culture*, Mircea Eliade wrote the following: "Blaga is only one among the philosophers of culture that did not hesitate to ask the ontological question, in connection with the spiritual creation and style. This metaphysical courage has significant results. Let us note the first one: remove the culture from a series of historical facts and give it a metaphysical validity. Although the creation of culture represents a failure of human trying to reveal the mysteries, it has, in itself, enough ontological evidence, that can be classified by history, but understood only by metaphysics"<sup>2</sup>.

Also, in Mircea Eliade admiration for Lucian Blaga was the article "Lucian Blaga's silences"<sup>3</sup>, entitled so because Mircea Eliade wanted to explain some of the silences of the philosopher, for example, the reason for which Lucian Blaga wrote only in Romanian language and that was due to the centrality of the *categories of the organic* in his philosophical work.

The discussions of Mircea Eliade with Lucian Blaga are reference for understanding the complexity of Blaga's philosophy, which Mircea Eliade characterized it by encyclopaedism and universalism. It is courage of creation, testified Eliade, which since Hegel no other European

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<sup>1</sup> Mircea Eliade, art. Conversations with Lucian Blaga, in: *The Time*, year X, nr. 501, 22 August 1937, pp.10-11, resumed in: Id., *Romanian Prophetic 2*, Romania in Eternity, Bucharest, Ed. Roza Vânturilor, 1990, pp.199-211.

<sup>2</sup> M.Eliade, *Euthanasius's Island*, Bucharest, Ed. Humanitas, 2008, pp.157-162.

<sup>3</sup> M.Eliade, *The Silences of Lucian Blaga*, in: *The Word in Exile*, October 1961, resumed in: Id. *Against Despair*, Bucharest, Ed. Humanitas, 1992, pp.159-199.

philosopher had had it. In this regard Mircea Eliade concluded: "The courage of creation and the obsession for universal form the finest tradition of the Romanian romanticism"<sup>1</sup>.

He was not destined to teach, but he had a vocation for universality, and he was unquestionably the greatest Romanian philosopher of the interwar period. Blaga remains for posterity, as he was known by the people who have been living for several years in his shadow, "having the grandeur of a Gothic cathedral"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Eliade, art., *Conversations with Lucian Blaga*, *op.cit.*, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> Ovidiu Drimba: An interview with the historian and literary critic I. Oprișan published in the book "*Lucian Blaga among contemporaries*", *op.cit.*, p. 590.