

The Contribution of the European Philosophy of the 17th-19th Centuries to the
Outlining of the Moldavian Culture of Baroque Type

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The art, as an exponent of the cultural but also social life, may take part to the drama experienced by the human being in moments when the stability or the axiological equilibrium no longer function at the same parameters in order to confer a sustainability of the present and a coherent vision upon the future. The styles, the expression methods, the messages and the visions change so fast; they are all good and malign at the same time so that, without landmarks, the human being no longer sees in art a modality to escape from a tiresome daily routine and thus it rejects art or minimizes it to such a great extent that any artistic production is reduced to the stage of object1 and nothing else.

It is normal that in such a carousel of the cultural styles, where everything is subject to relativity, there is a need for stability, a pattern which can be found at time intervals and which could give an image that is somehow easy to recognize for the human society. And what can be more stable than the limits themselves - "too little" and "too much". The issue occurs at the same time with the question: what is "too much" or what is "too little"? But that, in its turn, differs from one age to another and from one geographical region to another.

Therefore, the excess finally constitutes a stability factor, a limit. If we look at the world history, we realise that the saturation determined the change in any context. This is what happened in the art, too: the classic represented the "too little" area, of pure shapes, of exact proportions, of simplicity; on the other hand, the excess of the ornaments, the imposing shapes and the unusual dimensions were called baroque.

We emphasize in the first chapter that the baroque developed its semantics around three main research directions. The first managing line is represented by the idea of cultural baroque and presented itself as defining the art that dominated the cultural vision of the 17th and 18th centuries from the Western Europe to Russia. The advent of this new cultural template developed in the epoch the cultural effervescence needed by everybody.

The second tendency around which the baroque became more consistent is defined by the phrase typological baroque and wants to emphasize the fact that, when it found the necessary conditions to its imposition, the baroque was presented like a *modus vivendi*, by creating a

certain behavioral style, a certain way of understanding the world and everything in it. Thus, the baroque has a recurrent character within the history of the humankind, representing a treasure which can be used by the human beings when they feel that the contemporary reality no longer meets their expectations and requirements or when there is a hiatus among the essential parts of a society.

The universal character of the baroque also lies in the fact that we can easily find the deconspiration signs of the baroque style in the most diverse places and nations. Thus, we may talk about the baroque phenomena in the Jewish people, in the Phoenicians, in the Romans and in the Greeks or in order to be more exact, as it is shown by the Romanian literary critic Edgar Papu, the baroque stretches from Goa city, India to the pre-Columbian cultures in America. The second chapter, where we proposed to reveal the third research line and namely that of the philosophy in the baroque period, represents a thorough study of two key concepts defining for the baroque period: ambivalence and doubt, regarded as constitutive factors of the 17th century. Therefore, we shall try to present within this chapter the extent to which the ambivalence was constituted as being the main element of the baroque anthropology. Then, we shall try to present the fundamentals of the gnoseology in this period which proved to be an essential starting point in the elaboration of the future philosophical theories. Also, the last sub-chapters have as a topic the literature and the dream which were knowledge modalities used by the baroque man when he considered himself unsatisfied with what science or the Church were trying to propose as being universal and infallible truths.

Europe starts expanding its borders in the 17th century and, as it was shown by the literary critic Edgar Papu, it was the space between Portugal of Manuel, the one who will implement his own style and Moldavia of Dimitrie Cantemir, the philosopher prince. Although the two personalities cannot be found in the same temporal framework, they represent the two poles which can determine geographically the space in which the baroque proved its fecundity as an existence type as well as a new breath of philosophical thinking and artistic manifestation. Within the third chapter we offered an answer to the question: "Can we talk about a Moldavian baroque?" The question becomes legitimate when the complexity of the baroque concept is taken into consideration, as the latter is very complex from a semantic point of view because it refers and covers an impressive variety of themes and things, from the Oriental pearls of irregular

shape to the extravagant art which flourished in the Catholic countries overwhelmed by the breath of the Counter-reform.

However, regardless of the meanings that the baroque concept received, wherever it infiltrate, it managed to create emotion, to seduce the senses by its preference for the spectacular and for the shining by an exaggeration of the shapes. It has as a fundament a certain emotional attitude specific to the entire spirituality in Europe in the 17th century, which originated from a lucid awareness of the vulnerability and incertitude of the human condition. We must not forget that we are in a period of profound social changes when there is a visible decaying process of the former boyar families, in the favour of "new people", recruited especially from the group of small boyars who will take over the political stage of the 17th century which was dominated by new personalities who belonged to the baroque universe by their writings or manifestations: Miron Costin, Dosoftei, Varlaam, Duca Vida.

Such "a new man" to whom the baroque was a form of literary manifestation, an existence type but even a thinking type, was Dimitrie Cantemir, the one who will mark the Western, the Moldavian and even the Russian cultures, by his quality as a ruler but especially by his quality as a writer. Cantemir was the one who helped the Moldavian culture to be connected to the European expectancies and to become its constitutive part. We tried to emphasize this aspect by analyzing three essential works from a philosophical perspective: *The Sofa or The Row between the Wise Man and the World*, *The History of the Hieroglyphs* and *The History of the Rise and Fall of the Ottoman Empire*. Thus, in order to deconspire the baroque character of Cantemir's writings, we pursued in the second chapter the development of philosophical themes such as the ambivalence and the doubt, Cantemir's anthropology, the ephemeris feeling emphasized by the sinusoidal course of the greatest political and military power in that period. The baroque represents a period of effervescence concretized at the cultural level as well as at the philosophical level by the advent of personalities who outlined new leading lines which the contemporary society but also the posterior one started to follow due to the new breath spread by them and which seemed to be much more adequate to the requirements of the baroque man. The Renaissance by its knowledge reflexes of analogical "magic" type, in the meaning of the writer I. P. Culianu, no longer succeeds in offering credible valid answers with a certifiable truth, which makes the baroque society to feel abandoned to an unstable universe, subject to decrepitude but not at all an active participant to "the cosmic liturgy" which was preached by the

Roman Catholic Church. Neither did science succeed in offering it sustainability because of some mystifications which still represented the advantage or the far-off reverberations of the Middle Ages or because of an unhappy symbiosis between the rigours of science and some observations which could not be proved with convincing arguments.

Thus, the baroque tries by its representatives to create a fundamental cleavage between the former norms and the new scientific rigours which started to be imposed in the 17th century. But this approach required not only the courage and the intellectual capacity of some personalities but also a transformation process undergone by the European society because the difference between the Renaissance man and the baroque man is an obvious one. In order to emphasize this aspect, we tried in the first part to decipher the characteristics of the typological baroque and in the second part to present the fundamentals of the anthropology and of the baroque gnoseology: the ambivalence and respectively the doubt. In order to include the semantics of the first concept as completely as possible, we showed that this feeling represents the result or the prolongation in the baroque society of the generalized conflicts, of the interference between the scientific novelty and the traditional dogmatism but also the expansion of the conflict between the Platonism and the Aristotle's trend which caused a major division.

The baroque finds in Moldavia the favourable land and the necessary conditions for being able to manifest itself: a social ambiguous ethos fed by the reverse or depreciation of the traditional values, considered worn-out and redundant, which take the human being to the peaks of incertitude. This aspect is often conjugated by the tyrannical presence of a leader or by abuses of the Church, by the need of the State or of the Church to refresh its social, cultural or political domination, the exhibition of eschatological feelings by looking for signs that foresee the end of the world such as the identification of Anti-Christ with the different persons but also a preference for the magic knowledge taken to the Faust trend, the imposition of the culture's new dimension and namely the pedagogical one, by which the art had to preach the truth of the Scriptures to all the members of a society. Thus, the art no longer had a high society or exclusive character but it was a good of the community in its integrality. It is interesting to notice that Moldavia is so well represented artistically at the national level but especially at the international level throughout the 17th century. Nevertheless, it is not an artistic space to copy but it is an area where the artists knew how to combine the foreign influences with the autochthonous specific. This explains why although Moldavia was in the middle of ideas from the West and from the East, it succeeded in

keeping its cultural identity, without being deprived of everything that means an artistic progress and expression modalities but at the same time without owing anything to anybody. That is why the question: “What is Moldavia’s contribution to the development of the Moldavian baroque?” has a very simple but profound answer: “Originality and meaning”.

The personality who represented the western baroque very well is the philosopher prince Dimitrie Cantemir who managed to integrate the Moldavian culture among the European ones and received international acknowledgement. Cantemir may be assimilated as a pillar to support the Orthodox Counter-reform that started with the Synod in Iasi² in 1642, led and convoked by the ruler Vasile Lupu. The Orthodox Counter-reform will take place in Moldavia by an invitation to meditation because the ornaments of the culture places which are built in the baroque period on these lands are full of holy and confessing content. The lace-like stones of the Three Hierarchs Church in Iasi practically seem a dogmatic book open for eternity, waiting to be deciphered by anyone who lingers on the paths of redemption. Here, it is no longer about revealing the faith truths as they had been fixed for the Moldavian Christians once and for all, in the tormented period of the ecumenical synods, whereas now these dogmas required being learned and being lived.

Dimitrie Cantemir represents the synthesis between the East and the West, as an exponent of the byzantine trend with baroque influences and at the same time of the national conscience, by his Moldavian origin, which were not modified by the knowledge acquired during his more or less wanted pilgrimages. He intuited that the East meant the past whereas the West meant the future and this vision made him use his eastern culture to have access to the values of the Western Europe. Dimitrie Cantemir’s work was circumscribed to the baroque template as a shape and drafting style but it represents the essence of the philosophical themes which were implemented, used and developed by this cultural style. The famous author of the 18th century uses skillfully the new breath that overwhelmed the Western Europe but to which he gave a new meaning, and namely that of promoting his own national identity because we must never forget that delicate period for Moldavia both internally and externally. By means of the baroque, the small Moldavian state, subject to constant threats and to inclusion into the different great empires which developed around it, managed to connect to the western tendencies and exigencies but also to create a defensive system based on a false exuberance and shining typical to the baroque but especially by a national culture, sometimes easy to circumscribe to the European horizon.

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