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SELF-DEVELOPMENT AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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Abstract: Review of Ioan Chirilă, *A învăța să trăiești veșnicia. Un dialog cu Sandu Frunză* [To learn how to live the eternity. A dialogue with Sandu Frunză], Cluj-Napoca: Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2019.

Key words: autobiography, biographical investigation, self-development, counseling, Christian conscience, Jewish spirituality, Babes-Bolyai University, Sandu Frunză, Ioan Chirilă.

After the release of a first book (*Israel. The return at home*) containing several interviews (Chirilă 2017), warmly received by the readers and reviewers (Morariu 2018: 185-189; Frunză 2017), Ioan Chirilă, professor in Faculty of Orthodox Theology and President of "Babeş-Bolyai" University Senate of Cluj-Napoca, offers now to the readers a very interesting dialogue with the philosopher and professor Sandu Frunză from the same institution (Chirilă 2019). Of course, while in the first of the aforementioned works he speaks about his experience as a student and scholar in Israel, questioned by his partner of dialogue, the professor and priest reveals his biography, offering in the same time important and useful aspects for a reader that seeks for self-development in the 21st century and needs a model for this.

Honest and in peace with the self, an aspect that is very important for each self-biographical investigation, Ioan Chirilă starts to present his childhood in a clear, simple and honest way that in some situations reminds to the reader of the image of one of his mentors, the Archbishop Justinian Chira of Maramureş (Cira 2012), while in others, it brings him closer to the Proustian stile. Coming from the space of biblical scholarship and from the area of Old Testament investigation, he proves that he really knows how to use image in order to describe himself and to send a deep message. We have for example an evocation of his way of telling when is asked by Sandu Frunză to refer to a strong image that comes in his mind when he speaks about his childhood: "If I have to invoke an image, you shall know that an image that left to my mind – and which I have latter discovered, weirdly, when I had the opportunity to see Van Gogh's works in original – is the image of the field. In our village, there was not such a great culture that to allow you to see the sunflower field. But I will never forget field's image. There is in my village a space where there is cultivated wheat and there were some fields where the wheat was very tall. They were extraordinary. And to this image there can be added a contrast. The neighbour's village was on the limit, in the same area, but with an uphill ridge where there were some apple orchards. I kept in my mind this idea of the wheat and of the apple, red and full" (Chirilă 2019: 5).

For him, the self-development is related with school and education. That's why, the first part of the presentation contains a lot of references to the topic and the author reminds how much his family wished him to study and tried to stimulate him. In the same time, he also has sad memories with education or culture suffering. Using like before, an image, as it is suggested from the title of the chapter, called "Childhood's images" (Chirilă 2019: 5-30), he therefore speaks about such an episode, when in an attempt to enrich the local library, people brought a truck of books and threw them down inside the cultural house: "It started in those years, '65-66 to be created the village libraries and I remember from there the image of the book, but not in a happy way, despite of all my love for books. They

brought there a track of books packed in bags and they have been thrown in big bags in the middle of the room from the cultural house of the village. I remained from there with the image of the crushed book, that I could not realize it, at that moment, in its plenitude. But afterwards, writing something, it came back into my mind and I think I even used this expression: "the crushed book" (the author refers there to his poetry books, namely: Chirilă 2000; Chirilă 2014; Chirilă 2016 and to his homiletically essays, see: Chirilă 2017a). The ones who brought them where the ones that were bringing the bread. It was the same with the bread too. At the cooperation store, it was a big box, wooden made and they came with the car and just threw down the bread from bags there. Well, the same image, was a parallel one, that shocked me" (Chirilă 2019: 10).

Of course, other fundamental aspects are also approached, like the role of mother in the formation of the young boy in his or her first years of life. Questioned by Sandu Frunză about his relationship with his parents, but also about the role of family in youth's education, he will underline the need of a mother to be "the teacher of love" and, to certify the relevance of this aspect comparing it with the image of the "guardian angel: "Indeed, the mother is, if you want, the main teacher of love. She teaches you how to love in a real way and it helps you to love totally throughout what she is doing starting since that very moment. I can never separate the love of the mother, thanks to my theological formation, from this posture of guardian angel" (Chirilă 2019: 15-16).

Gratefull to the role played by his mother and father in his formation, but also to the richness of images that remained in his memory which explains, at least partially, his predilection for poetry, metaphor and Biblical theology, Ioan Chirilă remains until today, as he confesses, deeply related with his native village, Măgoaja (Chirilă 2019, 19-20).

The same abundance of images that defines also some of his theological writings (like Chirilă 2017c, Chirilă 2000a, Chirilă 2010) which directed him even towards the understanding and investigation of the icon (Chirilă, Pașca-Tușa, Trif 2018), can be found also in the second chapter, where the questions are dedicated by Sandu Frunză to his theological formation (Chirilă 2019: 31-86). In the 3rd one, they are oriented towards his practical activity inside "Babeș-Bolyai" University from Cluj-Napoca (Chirilă 2019: 87-116), where the two professors of the aforementioned institution speak about some projects, their genesis and their destiny inside the Romanian cultural space while the last one is dedicated to the relationship between theology and spiritual counseling in contemporary world (Chirilă 2019: 117-147).

Known for his concerns in the developing of philosophical counseling (Frunză 2019; Morariu 2019: 171-175), that will for sure make him to remain among the pioneers of this domain in Romanian scientific space, Sandu Frunză does not hesitate to ask him about this topic. The answer is

interesting and shows that the two dialogue partners are open-minded people. For its beauty and relevance, we offer it there: "Sandu Frunză: "Although in Romania does not appear as a structural need, the Romanian cultural space opens very much to all that is brought by the new global fashion of counseling – from the counseling in business ethics, to the psychological counseling, to the philosophical or spiritual one. How is the cultural fashion seen from the perspective of the Christian conscience that you bear it? Ioan Chirilă: "I could rather tell you how it is seen by a professor who teaches sapiential literature. So, we, in the composition of the Old Testament, we have a group of books that have as the main theme the wisdom. They are known in the Latin version with the name of sapiential literature"". (Chirilă 2019: 117-118).

As it can be seen, Ioan Chirilă not only does he agree Sandu Frunză ideas, but also proves that they are not part of a new fashion, but of an ancient tradition, with roots in the Jewish spirituality, offering new reasons for its use and for a deeper understanding of it.

Together with this aspect, there are many others that can be surely considered very important for a reader who wants to find more aspects about self-development and its defining elements in the 21st century, about "Babeş-Bolyai" University, future of Romanian education or about the way how theology can be understood in an interdisciplinary context. Due to Ioan Chirilă and to the questions well addressed by Sandu Frunză, the scientific area can now not only discover a sensitive and complex personality, but also to find interesting and useful things about different actual topics. In the same time, it can be for sure, a book that changes ones' life.

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