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LUCIAN BLAGA-DUMITRU STĂNILOAE. REVISITING INTERPRETIVE  
DISPUTES

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**Abstract:** The present study deals with an interpretive debate, dating back to the 1940s, between the philosopher Lucian Blaga and the theologian Dumitru Stăniloae. The fundamental studies on which this controversy is reconstructed are Blaga's *Religie și spirit/ Religion and Spirit* (1942) and Stăniloae's reaction in *Poziția d-lui Lucian Blaga față de creștinism și ortodoxie/ The Position of Mr. Lucian Blaga on Christianity and Orthodoxy* (1942). I demonstrate some interpretative collisions, emerged from hermeneutical misreading, from the different ideological positions of the two in the context of the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the last century and from conceptual differences, such as the relations between *religion-style* and *religion-revelation*. I also distinguish two different positions, that of Stăniloae, which refers to the ethical and ethnical relationship of Orthodoxy to "Romanianness", and the philosophical, poly-systemic, exo-centric and dialogical perspective of the Blagian gnoseological system, which places the mystery of creation and the metanoic force of faith at the center of existence.

**Key words:** Lucian Blaga, Dumitru Stăniloae, religion, theology, ideology, religious philosophy, poly-systemic knowledge, lecture codes, misreading.

## 1. Discourse on a method

A fierce debate, called “the war of the theologians” (Petreu 2021, 70), occurred in the Transylvanian Romanian cultural space in the fourth decade of the last century. Less than a “war”, but much more than a gentle theological-philosophical discussion, the ideological debate started from two studies of Lucian Blaga, *Diferențialele divine/ Divine Differentials* (1940) and *Religie și spirit/ Religion and Spirit* (1942), but did not ignore any of his cardinal points of the interwar period, *Trilogia culturii/ The Trilogy of Culture* (1936). The central point of the counter-offensive was represented by the position of the theologian Dumitru Stăniloae. In the previous period, he had already published a polemical article in the journal “Gândirea” (Stăniloae 1939, 197-202) on the Blagian study from 1939, *Artă și valoare/ Art and Value*, but later virulently countered Lucian Blaga’s ideas in books published in 1940 and 1942. The critical attack was first developed in a series of articles published in “Telegraful român”, during May-June 1940 and May-August 1942, and then coagulated in the 1942 volume entitled *Poziția d-lui Lucian Blaga față de creștinism și ortodoxie/ The Position of Mr. Lucian Blaga towards Christianity and Orthodoxy* (Stăniloae 1997).

Several possible readings of the positions that underpinned this conflict can be considered. We can propose a purely theological-philosophical reading, which can observe the given texts in a comparative way; an ideological/political reading, i.e. a contextual one, circumscribing the conflict to the aggravating situations of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> decades of the last century; a literary reading of the philosophical text, which investigates the hermeneutical effects of the texts, a “close reading”; or a poly-systemic reading (Even-Zohar 1978). The latter analysis, derived from Even-Zohar’s theory, is co-extensive, and is intended to identify points of convergence, rhizomatic nuclei (Deleuze; Guatary 2001, 1604) between the other types of reading. Such a reading demonstrates that any scientific discourse cannot disregard the socio-cultural system that generated it and on which it is based. For Deleuze and Guatary, “unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome links any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature [...]. The rhizome operates through variation, expansion, conquest, capture, ramification. Unlike graphic art, drawing or photography, unlike trails, the rhizome holds a map to be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, that has multiple entrances and exits and its own lines of flight.” (Deleuze, Guatary 2001, 1605). It is the dynamic map provided by the poly-systemic reading of the discourses instrumentalized in this debate that can help us identify the principles that generated the conflict, rather than the debate.

## 2. The socio-political collision. The ethical position in the fourth decade

This sharp polemic that animated the theological space of Sibiu, in particular in the years following the “Vienna Dictate” (30<sup>th</sup> of August 1940), when Northern Transylvania was no longer part of Romania, is more than a conflict based on “a theology of religions” (Rus In Ică jr. 1993, 521), a natural “liberal” ideological confrontation between a philosopher and a theologian on the transgressive theme of religion. Such quarrel between philosophy and religion cannot be detached from the socio-political context of the time, nor isolated from the complex and organic system of Blagian creation. The 4th decade was one of the most catastrophic in Romania’s modern history, in terms of territorial dislocations and, above all, in terms of humanitarian crisis, deportations, mass murders, massacres and pogroms. All this has been caused by the radical regimes that have ruled Romania, from the right-wing nationalism promoted by the Legionary National State (September 1940-February 1941), the military dictatorship of general Antonescu (1940-1944) to the left-wing nationalism established with the occupation of Romania by Soviet troops in August 1944.

In order to illustrate the need to analyze this debate in an extremely tense socio-political context in the background of the Second World War, it would perhaps suffice to recall the extremely difficult situation of the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) during the National-Legionary State, “[...] in relation to the new rulers, the Soviet Union and Hungary, in the provinces ceded to them, Bessarabia and Northern Transylvania respectively.” (Schmitt 2023, 162). Difficulties stemmed from the return of the policies of maghiarization and ethno-religious cleansing of the Romanians in the annexed regions, where “[...] the young Orthodox dioceses were severely shaken by the flight and expulsion of priests and hierarchs.” (Schmitt 2023, 163). In this context, the forced dislocation of the university from Cluj to Sibiu is rightly perceived as an involuntary exile, a persecution of intellectual life of the Transylvanian Romanians. The theological-philosophical conflict thus also becomes one of the Blaga and Stăniloae academics, positioned on this ideological, national battlefield of defining national identity. To question, even theologically, a religion persecuted and under political siege was perceived as an anti-orthodox, anti-Romanian gesture, which endangered efforts to preserve ethnic identity through religion in a region that was extremely fragile politically and ethnically.

The contextualization of the Blaga-Stăniloae debate also provides a framework for clarifying the role of the BOR in the context of the dictatorships of the period and, in particular, with regard to its (re)positions on political movements. Perhaps the “exalted” (Schmitt 2023, 153) situation of some high prelates, men of culture and professors, such as

Dumitru Stăniloae, can be nuanced even in the light of ideological and social radicalisms of the period and in a given region. In this sense, Sandu Frunză's observation, that "[...] the thematization of the relationship between Christianity and nationalism appears both in the texts of his youth and in his mature works" is "[...] inspired by the spirit of the era in which he lived." (Frunză 2016, 8), is right. Also, the temporal perspective could be seen as a reaction to the *Zeitgeist* of the 1940s, where time is seen "[...] as an interval of communication in view of communion" (Frunză 2016, 38), which would mean that, historically, this intensity of living Orthodoxy in the mentioned interval "[...] is prefigured in mystical experience, in liturgical time or time with maximum ethical intensity." (Frunză 2016, 38). How else could this "temporal movement" be explained, other than as a result of a militantly ethical and ethnical necessity, as a reaction to exile, persecution, contraction to the point of the repression of religious life? In essence, from the inter-war period onwards, even philosophy became an essential tool in the affirmation of national identity, where the myth of unity was one of the fundamental and sometimes fundamentalist pillars of the new state, which wanted to be more united than ever. "The modern nation, argued Mircea Florian in 1933, is organized in the state: the ideal is but the national state [...] The national state is the work of the enhanced consciousness of philosophy." (In Ornea 1996, 119).

In such a context of extreme ethical virulence, a sure target of the theological struggle is Lucian Blaga. However, he would not only be a target of orthodox nationalism of Legionary origin in the 1940's, but also of the communist movement around the National Popular Party (PNP), a satellite of the Communist Party (Petreu 2021, 123). Blaga had joined the PNP out of caution and at the insistence of his assistant, Zevedei Barbu, in 1946, and resigned after only a month, understanding the disastrous impact of his involvement in politics. Lucian Blaga, the exemplary canonical figure, who had played a minimal public role in the interwar period through his diplomatic activity, then retreated in the post-war years, became of major interest to radicalized public movements. The result would be his isolation and ostracism in the last years of his existence. The image of Blaga, which emerged from the involuntary conflict with the right and then with the left, is painted in "sensationalist" and "bombastic" tones (Petreu 2021, 125) by I.D. Sârbu. The portrait of "Blaga crying" in the autumn of 1946, on his hospital bed, is meant to represent the figure of the defeated in the historical turmoil of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> decades. Blaga confessed to I. D. Sârbu that: "All my life I have refused to do politics [...] my vocation is philosophy and freedom. I refused Charles II, leaving diplomacy. I refused the Legionaries, I also refused Antonescu. How can I now accept from the cathedral of my system to end up signing election posters in a Russian military tent [...]" (Sârbu 1994, 111-112).

The first Blaga-Stăniloae collision is based on two different positions towards Orthodoxy, both determined ideologically and through the political turn Orthodoxy took in the 1940s, often adopting the radical-conservative positions of right-wing nationalism. In the 1930s, however, the first Blagian positioning is visible in works such as the *Trilogia culturii* / *The Trilogy of Culture* (1936), which focus on the association between Orthodoxy and a stylistic pattern validated in a Romanian national spatial context, based on an equation of spatiality (national territory)-ethnicity (Romanianness)-religion (Orthodoxy), according to a specific *Zeitgeist*. In the 1940s, however, another Blagian positioning is visible: a heterodox, pan-Christian one, as a return to philosophical dogmatism, which offers him bridges of convergence, dynamic conjectures with various religious beliefs. It is a heterodox liberalism within Blagian thought, expurgated from the reminiscences of the radical ideologies that animated the period. In fact, Blaga confirmed Vasile Băncilă that “I am not anti-orthodox, I am only heterodox.” (Oprîșan 1995, 80), while, out of their epistolary debate, we find another eloquent position of the philosopher regarding his religiosity. Blaga replies to Băncilă: “It is very difficult to answer the question and the exhortation that you have included in a letter to me. Please believe me that I do not feel at all quarreled with God to have to reconcile and explain myself to him. My religiosity is a dosing element of all my manifestations. It has spread through me like yeast through dough. Probably also in my sins - of which I have little awareness. If you’ve read the *Discobolus*, you may have learned a few more things, and especially how ex-centric I am even in relation to what some think my dogma might be.” (Blaga 2001, 274).

Blaga’s ex-centricity was criticized by Dumitru Stăniloae in 1939. In his article “Orthodoxy and Latinity” (Stăniloae 1934, 199-202), published in the journal “Gândirea”, he anticipated the strict ideas of 1942 on the national character of Orthodoxy, and even opposed Blaga in 1936. He considered Latinity to represent “the positivist, practically rationalist pole of the sharp and cold precisions” which he related to Catholicism, concluding that “We, without Orthodoxy, would present Latinity without soul.” (In Ornea 1996, 116). He is “certainly more balanced in his views than Nichifor Crainic” (Ornea 1996, 116), who promoted a radical conservatism, visible even in his anti-Western stance, an ethno-centrist Orthodox movement, advocating rather a kinship with the Latinity of the Eastern Roman Empire, i.e. an Eastern Latinity. As Zigu Ornea points out, the impact of the traditionalist Orthodox thought promoted by Crainic was considerable, as the Orthodox ideologue and future Minister of Propaganda succeeded in creating enough followers “from the new spiritualist generation” (Ornea 1996, 117). “He has managed to attach others, including doctrinally (Vasile Voiculescu, V. Papilian, Pan Vizirescu, Vintilă Horia, Ovidiu Papadima, D. Stăniloae, N. Crevedia, Radu Gyr, Grigore Popa). Lucian Blaga, a contributor to the journal “Gândirea”, was not, however, as much as Crainic

would have liked, a thinker, and in the end he was separated precisely because of his ideological orthodoxy.” (Ornea 1996, 117). Lucian Blaga no longer belonged to this spiritualist generation created around Nichifor Crainic, although he had collaborated with the journal “Gândirea”. His separation from this generation was public, because in the 1940s he had refused to hold any public office, and conceptual, because he separated Orthodoxy from Romanianness. The break from Crainic is obvious, but his opinion is philosophical, not theological and in no way political. In any case, it is much more conceptualized and philosophical than that of Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, for example, who was also fiercely criticized by Crainic in 1935. If Rădulescu-Motru believed that “Romanianness and Orthodoxy cannot be united without affecting each other.” (Rădulescu-Motru 1992, 95), Blaga had an even more intellectualized position, being convinced of the trans-Dogmatic character of Christianity. He argued this in 1941. Here are two other reasons for the separation between Blaga and the group around Nichifor Crainic, both pragmatically and conceptually.

### 3. Interpretive collision. The hermeneutic position in a rhizomatic cultural system

Marta Petreu witnesses that Dumitru Stăniloae had during 1934 a favorable opinion on the relationship between Blaga’s initial metaphysical project and Christianity in his article “Metaphysics of Lucian Blaga” (Petreu 2021, 70). In *Trilogia culturii / The Trilogy of Culture* (1936) he had paid a great attention to Orthodoxy, in a contrastive analysis with Catholicism and Protestantism, speaking of the compromise resulting from “the struggle engaged between the Christian spirit and the local spirit”, i.e. the ethnicist spirit of Christianity, and which “took the form of a bipolar orientation of the spiritual life” (Blaga 1985, 205). Speaking of these “bipolar spiritualities”, Blaga argued in *Spațiul mioritic / The Mioritic Space*, that there are particularizations of the idea of the church. “The Catholic was modeled on the idea of the state, the Protestant on the idea of individual freedom, the Orthodox on the idea of the body.” (Blaga 1985, 212). In such a context, in “Conceptions of the Nation” he emphasizes the idea of a nation seen as “an organism” (Blaga 1985, 215) and states that “the spirit of Orthodoxy defines the nation according to its most organic criterion, that is, according to blood and language.” (Blaga 1985, 212). We can thus understand why he “unwittingly fed the expectations of Orthodox theologians” (Petreu 2021, 75). In contrast, in 1940, the commentary on “Diferențiale divine”/ “Divine Differentials” is totally different, considering Blaga’s philosophy as “backward”, non-Christian, with “intellectualist and objectivist” explanations (apud Petreu 2021, 71). The critical virulence will reach a climax in the volume *Poziția domnului Lucian Blaga față de creștinism și ortodoxie / The Position of Mr. Lucian Blaga towards Christianity and*

*Orthodoxy* (1942). So, how can we explain Dumitru Stăniloae's radical change of interpretive optics?

A non-rhizomatic core is undoubtedly the public position from which Stăniloae deconstructs the system proposed by Blaga in *Religie și spirit/ Religion and Spirit* (1942). His standing as a state official in the position of rector of a Theological Academy makes him responsible for establishing the state principles of the relationship between Orthodoxy and the state in the troubled and troubling decade of the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the last century. Stăniloae's position towards Blagian philosophy in terms of the state (Romania of the 1940's) - religion (inter and post-war Orthodoxy) equation changes in the 4<sup>th</sup> decade, one of the triggering and "catalytic" factors of the change being the socio-political framework of the time. The fact that Blaga's philosophy is suddenly regarded as 'non-Romanian', or that it is 'opposed to Romanianism' (Stăniloae 1997: 15), a phrase repeated obsessively, is reminiscent of the project of idolizing the nation, i.e. of the 'Filetistic doctrine' (Schmitt 2023, 122) of the Legionaries, the ethnicist cult of Nechifor Crainic and, last but not least, Nae Ionescu's radical positions on the indissoluble relationship between religious confession and the nation, public positions that led to the tragedies of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> decades. In such a context, reiterating the "anti-Romanianism" of Blaga's philosophy was to charade a deliberate antagonism of the canonical disobedience of Blaga towards an extreme political system. The effects on Blaga's destiny after the war are well known. Not being a "good Romanian" in the 1930's, 1940's or 1950's, no matter the radical ideologies of the time were called, had the same devastating effects on the biography of the accused. The biographical accident of Blaga's non-attachment to the collaboration proposals of Crainic, Minister of Propaganda in the Antonescu government, would be another biographical incident. However, reading it in a political-ideological key cannot be sufficient to explain Stăniloae's position towards Lucian Blaga.

In the second rhizomatic core of the Blaga-Stăniloae equation, we can identify at least two major conceptual differences in a poly-systemic comparative reading, which takes into account several layers of Blaga's creation, not only the philosophical system, but also the poetics of fragmentary aphoristic creation, posthumous lyricism, drama or novel. It is this Blagian poly-system, as Stăniloae himself saw it, also as "poetry, constructed by a soul with the predispositions of a poet" (Stăniloae 1997, 147). And, there is a system produced by a type of rationalism, which came from the past, a fertile rhizomatic construction on the temporal axis of gnoseology.

Two major conceptual differences emerge when comparing the two texts. The first split, which leads to the first interpretative collision, has to do with the *religion-style* equation, as perceived by Lucian Blaga. The process of accusing Blaga starts from a clarification he offers in an interview in the newspaper "Viața"/ "The Life" (26 May 1942), following the attacks

on the book *Religie și spirit/ Religion and Spirit* (1942). There, being accused of “anti-Romanianism”, he defended himself by claiming that: “It is a confusion that is made by identifying *Orthodoxy* with *Romanianism*, when in fact *Orthodoxy* is only a part of this *Romanianism*. It is a religion that has been assimilated by *Romanian spirituality*, its origin being *Greek and Byzantine*. *Romanian spirituality* is much broader, much richer. One cannot take a look at this problem by subordinating oneself to *Orthodoxy* - this look must be taken with the clear eye of the philosopher, who stands outside any constraints, in order to get an overall impression. Now, I think it has been seen from all my philosophical work so far that *my way of thinking is deeply Romanian*.” (Blaga apud Stăniloae 1997, 8).

The theologian’s selections, made by italic underlining, take into account the Greek and Byzantine roots of Romanian Orthodoxy, excluding two essential clarifications in the Blagian argumentation: a. that an overview (globalizing and rhizomatic) of the religious and cultural systems that participated in the particularization of a “Romanian” culture is needed; b. that to judge such a position from a distance, a systemic perspective on the whole of Blagian thought, from the *Trilogies* to artistic creation, is needed. For example, when he speaks of the relationship between Catholicism-Orthodoxy-Protestantism he refers to institutional stylistic categories that differentiate them. In fact, Blaga had already spoken of a stylistic matrix interpreted in a communitarian key, an abyssal category of a given culture, in the *Trilogia culturii/ The Trilogy of Culture* (1936), and he took up the idea in his 1942 essay *Religie și Spirit/ Religion and Spirit* (1942). He sees religion this time as “under the rule of the stylistic categories of the human spirit”, categories to which it is subject “like all other manifestations of culture.” (Blaga 1942, 188). Moreover, one of the cores of his criticism, which Stăniloae omits to cite, is that Blaga believes that when a religion is institutionally organized it will be able to impose “an institutional style” (Blaga 1942, 189). In this framework, he associates spatially and temporally the formation of an institutional style with a specificity of the Eastern spirit. He goes further, however, even revising an exponential stylistic comparison between Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant religiosity (Blaga 1942, 149), which he had also addressed in 1936.

Blaga also emphasizes a clear dissociation of philosophy from religion, as we can see in another explanatory and defensive article from 1943, entitled: “Despre viitorul filosofiei românești”/ “On the Future of Romanian Philosophy” (Blaga 1943, 1-5). This separation is made in the context of considering religion a framework of the unconscious, determined by “abyssal stylistic factors” (Petreu 2021, 74). This explained one of Stăniloae’s hermeneutical separations, which considered stylistic factors a mere framework, an expressive, temporally and structurally apriorist frame of Orthodoxy. Moreover, the understanding of the stylistic matrix is correct, being seen as “the filter placed in the path of the spring” (Stăniloae 1997, 20). For him, religion “is deeper than style, one with the human



being” (Stăniloae 1997, 21). He understands the causal relationship in reverse determination, for “Man’s religiosity is therefore the deeper cause of style and not vice versa.” (Stăniloae 1997, 22). The theologian’s “moral reading” (Pânzaru 1999, 90) states that “Romanian spirituality essentially reveals itself through Orthodoxy.” (Stăniloae 1997, 22), while the philosopher’s hermeneutic and systemic reading explains the style as “striving towards the elemental” (Blaga 1942, 21), where, as in Indic mythology, the gods “are rather stigmata of a pronounced impersonal character” (Blaga 1942, 24). This also explains the metaphor of Marele Anonim / The Great Anonymous and the whole Blagian predisposition in poetry or drama to access the force of the collective subconscious that determines the existence of a collectivity. Consequently, the key to this Blagian reading is that “The tendency towards the elementary, stylistic in nature par excellence, belongs to the collective unconscious, regional or ethnic, as a deep function that imprints its stamp on spiritual constructions.” (Blaga 1942, 24). Hence Blaga’s determination of religion by an elementary style.

Lucian Blaga considers stylistic coordination in terms of an “abyssal” cultural systematization and, above all, in terms of language, thus including metaphor, subjecting style even to an “allegorical reading” (Pânzaru 1999, 74), in the sense of a spiritual metaphor. For example, when he sees it as a “transcendent censorship”, style appears to him as an abyssal reality of the soul, functioning as a transcendent censorship of Marele Anonim / The Great Anonymous, a de-nominative metaphor, un-stylized in the sense used by Blaga. For Stăniloae, Orthodoxy is the abyssal value of Orthodox “Romanianism”, for Romanian spirituality is revealed in Orthodoxy, and “Orthodoxy is our depth.” (Stăniloae 1997, 24), a “depth” which, if lost, would threaten ethnic existence. In the same sense, Stăniloae seeks to argue for an Orthodoxy of the “full” as a response to the indeterminacy of the “void” in Blagian understanding, a broad cross-cultural metaphor. Thus, we can understand why “emptiness gives meaning to existence” (Blaga 1942, 69) and to creation, as we can see in lyrical and dramatic praxis. For example, in the spiritual transference accomplished through the creation of the church of Manole, from the drama *Meşterul Manole / Manole, the Craftsman* (1927). For Blaga, cultural creation is a vast process of indeterminacy in the natural world, because “Things only pulsate in their true fullness when they are filled with the indeterminate.” (Blaga 1942, 69). He considers art as polymorphous as mysticism, metaphysics or myth. The idea of placing mysticism at the center of the human spiritual system, composed of philosophy, religion and art, has the sense of the dissolution of the individual and “the soul’s longing for union with God” (Blaga 1942, 145). Blaga’s reading thus also receives an “anagogical meaning”, that is, “the most mysterious of mystical meanings.” (Pânzaru 1999, 92). “In the mystics, faith, however acute, aspires to something else, the goal they propose being the state of union, the annulment of the individual, the absorption of man in God or the Absolute. For mystics, faith is a path, the

goal remaining ecstasy.” (Blaga 1942, 147). Returning to the poly-systemic reading, this is also the stake of artistic creation in Blaga’s reading, which Blaga saw as such as early as the 1930’s. The message of a drama such as the *Cruciada copiilor / Children’s Crusade* (1930) is relevant. Blaga explains it, in a famous reply to Tudor Vianu, not as “the triumph of Orthodoxy over Catholicism, as someone thought, but the tragic triumph of the spirituality of the child, beyond the sterile Catholic-Orthodox dialectic.” (In Vianu, Alexandrescu 1992, 288-289).

The second major divergence, which leads to a dogmatic collision (theology-philosophy), has to do with Dumitru Stăniloae’s understanding of the relationship between religion and revelation in an Orthodox key. In response to Gh. Iftimie’s study (1944) on Lucian Blaga’s Christianity, the philosopher reconfirms his position on the mystery of “revelation”. Blaga states that: “Christian theology, as a supposedly closed and absolute system, does not satisfy my philosophical demands, my tact, my sensitivity. As a source of suggestions, I admit it for us Romanians, even in a pointed way. And in general, I speak of it only with respect, sometimes with admiration. All my texts bear witness to this. I think as I think, because I can’t think otherwise. The disappointments they produce are unavoidable. It would be totally disingenuous to say for example: I believe in revelation or something else (the divinity of Jesus).” (Blaga 1991, 183). Beyond the hermeneutic distance with which the philosopher speaks of Orthodoxy, the open and poly-systemic understanding of religion exposes Blaga consecutively in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> decades. In the third chapter of his book, entitled “An Anti-Christian Religious Philosophy”, Stăniloae problematizes Blaga’s agnostic conception. Here he criticizes Blaga’s non-recognition, his very denial of “divine revelation” (Stăniloae 1997, 32). Referring to the philosopher’s Christ perspective, the theologian takes a radical stand against the Blagian conception, which in his Orthodox reading means “the perfection of God’s revelation” (Stăniloae 1997, 35). But for Blaga, the Christic representation is much more than a simple revelatory anthropomorphism, for he also understands the communitarian, not only the individual, impact of the humanization of Christ. It is this Blagian perspective that allows us to understand Christianity as a form of metanoia. For Blaga, “The messianic myth has in truth taken possession of a human being and has realized itself through him [...]. The life of Jesus is mythically configured, because it was the exact realization of a myth, of a promise [...]. The myth, created to be realized, had to be realized, as soon as the being who had the superhuman power to carry it out appeared.” (Blaga 1942, 144). In this way, Blaga explains not only the rhizomatic link between the New and Old Testaments, but also metanoia and the impact of Christianity for two thousand years.

Blaga’s thesis is by no means agnostic, non-Christian, as Stăniloae firmly maintains when he argues “[...] Mr Blaga’s attempt to undermine the revelational foundation of Christianity, to stand against Jesus Christ-

God.” (Stăniloae 1997, 37). The Blagian construct is based on the metanoic mystery of the incarnation of divinity. Stăniloae’s reading is an example of obvious misreading, especially in the context of the 4th decade. Blaga argues, in a fully poly-systemic, rhizomatic spirit, in accordance with the Gospels, but also with the history of religions and with his philosophical-literary system: “The religion of Jesus was circumscribed by the idea of God as father of the world, by the idea of a filial relationship based on immeasurable love between man and his heavenly father, by the idea that earthly life is transformed into a kingdom of God, by the idea that people are brothers to one another, even enemies, by the idea that in the world miracles are possible, but above all miracles is the miracle of the love of neighbor, which bursts forth in man.” (Blaga 1942, 144-145). This is the understanding of the “deification of the historical appearance of Jesus of Nazareth” and it reveals in full not only Blaga’s philosophical position, but also his deeply Christian one, which opts for immeasurable love, for the transformation of life, for the miracle promoted by the apostle Paul himself, as metanoia. This is the whole mystical force of Christianity that transcends the dogmatic patterns of any theology and, ultimately, even the stylistic censorship of Marele Anonim/ The Great Anonymous.

According to the same rhizomatic, poly-systemic construct, the reference to the understanding of the Blagian revelatory metaphor in “Geneza metaforei” (“The Genesis of Metaphor”) as a direct expression of the “specifically human way of existing, from existence in the horizon of mystery and revelation” (Blaga 1985, 355), helps us to understand the catalytic place that Christianity has in the system of Blagian knowledge. For Blaga, who is convinced that “Man is the metaphorizing animal.” (Blaga 1985, 357), metaphor has the role of accentuating, of increasing the “volume of revelation” and of giving the measure of a “complementary ontological moment” (Blaga 1985, 365), metaphysically revealed. That is why one of the exponential revelatory metaphors in *Trilogia culturii/ The Trilogy of Culture*, but also in Blaga’s poly-systemic creation, is this one: “Soarele, lacrima Domnului,/ Cade în mărele somnului” (“Asfințit marin”). It can only have significance in the revealed mystery of Christianity.

In the case of the juxtaposition of the two perspectives on the function of religion in human existence, we witness a classic case of interpretive collisions. On the one hand, the Blagian reading of canonical texts is poly-systematic, anti-dogmatic, heterodox and ex-centric, while Stăniloae’s is conjunctural, dogmatic and canonical. The theologians’ quarrel is basically the quarrel of two different systems of reading. Stăniloae chooses a reading that is in fact rooted in the hermeneutics of religious texts and is basically responsible for the set of canonical texts in the public memory. Instead, Blaga adopts a globalizing reading of religions and theories of knowledge, establishing a network of correspondences, which I have called rhizomatic. For example, when he establishes systemic links between Brahmanism, Hinduism, Mohammedanism or Christianity,

based on the analysis of tropes and mobile symbols in different religions, or when he identifies corresponding elements between Catholicism-Orthodoxism-Protestantism. But the interpretive clash is not necessarily or not only methodological, between close and distant reading, but between a traditionalist-conservative reading, in the radical spirit of the nationalist orthodoxy of the 1940s in the case of Dumitru Stăniloae, and a globalizing, poly-systemic one, in the spirit of the German, Goethean philosophy of culture that animates the spirit of Lucian Blaga.

#### 4. Instead of conclusions

It is useful to point out that already in 1838, in his *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*, Eckermann mentions Goethe's interest in Chinese, French, Greek, Serbian, and Persian literature. When he refers to literature, he refers in fact to the whole cultural system that makes it up, in a complex network of correspondences, which anticipates Itamar Even-Zohar's poly-systemic theory. Goethe tells Eckermann: "But, really, we Germans are very likely to fall too easily into this pedantic conceit, when we do not look beyond the narrow circle that surrounds us. I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same. National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of World-literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach." (Goethe In Damrosch 2013, 19-20). This Goethean idea is in full anticipation and agreement with Blaga's interpretations of European religions in the modern age, which generated individualism (Blaga 1942, 12-13), which are self-centered, detaching man from the magical source of religious feeling. Also, in *Religie și spirit/ Religion and Spirit*, in the chapter "Religiozitatea-fior"/ "Thrill Religiosity" (Blaga 1942, 163), Blaga argues for a "religious polyvalence" in Goethe. He argues that "Goethe's religiosity is polyvalent [...] he even allowed himself a religious nomadism [...] he was a polytheist in his poetry, a quasi-polytheist as a natural scientist, a monotheist as an ethical personality, often a Christian." (Blaga 1942, 173). Dumitru Stăniloae was right when he uttered the regrets that "the nation and the Orthodoxy can follow" (Stăniloae 1997, 181) Blaga on this path of opening religion to dialogue with religions. Both the nation and Orthodoxy were against him in the 4th decade. Blaga's path was biographical broken during the controversial world of 1961, but his open, exo-centric, poly-systemic creation, based on an unshakeable belief in the transcendent mystery of creation, continues its path.

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