

The Concept of Time and Historical Experience

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By

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To professor Alexandru Surdu
(1938–2020)

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PREFACE

For more than 2500 years, history has remained an intriguing subject for European culture and a point of interest that has either brought great minds together or quite the contrary, it has alienated the most brilliant minds by sealing the peoples' destinies through political decisions. It seems that both possibilities got inspired by the truly subjective quality of man's encounter with the deep reality of his becoming, in which he wants to include everything that ever belonged to him within time, especially his experience with time. Reason forces time to fit into its patterns and suit this reality. Thus, when investigated, it becomes an abstraction. Man often forgets that he himself is time and that the most natural attitude towards it is to just let it run its course. There is no need to research time. Better yet, instead of confronting it, one must let time reveal itself. By allowing time to find you, you are meeting yourself somewhere in between the road towards understanding at any cost (especially at the cost of sufficient reason) and comprehending the communion with yourself, the closest, yet the furthest fellow we have got in history; this communion does not fade in time (in history), but on the contrary, it is our purpose – meeting our being.

We judge history from many different perspectives; we slice and divide it, and look for its principles and meanings, but we never let it forget us. According to Constantin Noica, when entering history, man does not want to forget, but the purpose of history, the reality of the *historical act* is precisely the act of forgetting. It is a synthesis of time. Seeing things from this perspective, the researcher's attitude (philosopher, historian, sociologist, anthropologist etc.) is that of a person wanting to forget while preserving what is relevant to humanity. Unlike the study object of science, the historical fact cannot be handled and moved as an object towards the epistemic subject, even though both are entities dominated by becoming and they have entered temporality. We subjectively manifest within the object of science while we attempt to catch the essence of this reality, which is the law or the universal. In the meantime, two types of subjectivity overlap within historical facts. The reason why history seems unstable is that as man moves forward in time, he also leaves the impression that he moves away from these temporal realities: the present, the time of his actions, and the historical present he only thinks about. Man wishes nothing else but to keep them. The reality of the researcher does not coincide with the reality of a

fact experienced by someone else in a different time, and both realities can confess and are deeply and hopelessly humane. Historical experience belongs to the historical time when people enter a communion and share their victories, fears and truths – which have no time – and the desire (the will to exist within history) to accomplish within becoming more than the becoming is pouring into mankind: the reason for existing within history. According to Noica, behind every philosophy, there is an *ingenium perenne*, the gate towards facing the world before becoming the thought of reason in conversation with itself, motivated to appoint a *philosophia perennis*.

We take Noica's question from *How is something new possible* and ask how it is possible for the spirit not to become redundant then we return it with a different meaning to history and to the experience gained while becoming within history. We ask: how is it possible for man, always new, to recognize himself inside history? A few thousand years of history cannot lead to a self-encounter nor to losing ourselves in the world according to the meaning we give or not to the historical experience.

This meaning is part of recapturing the human essence, no matter how many avatars it had to climb. Do we unify our present time with the permanence we seek inside history? And how else do we look for it either than through dialogue? What we search for in history is the connection with the universal man that inhabits each of us. Communion becomes a vivid history whose meaning unravels for us now, although we have forgotten it: time is no longer seen just as a rigid straightness but as a network of possibilities and historical meanings dialectically gathered to carry our message through time.

If we continue to comprehend time as a rigid one-way direction, forever lost in the immensity of space and think about succession without any connection we will become victims of history and risk remaining outside of it. Noica is right in not denying history to philosophy but differently: he does not contradict its becoming, just the becoming for the sake of becoming: "A history that explains the phenomena or one in which they explain themselves will portray them in a succession and their determinism if it is possible. But it is a virtue peculiar to the history of philosophy to be able to follow, more than the assimilation of the products portrayed by the spirit its inner necessities." (*Sketch for the history of How is something new possible*, p. 13–14). Starting from this reality of philosophical thought, we tried to reach an inner necessity of historical thought. Thus, we are trying to draw the coordinates of a possible experience for the man inside history. Experience seen in direct correlation to historical fact is a theory derived from the philosophy of the Stagirite. Experience connects us to the raw

deed, the experienced moment of life. The author of *Metaphysics* also says that the universal exists within and through the individual. In this case, the historical fact is not an individual but becomes a historical universal that belongs to everyone, and we rediscover ourselves in it: it is both a confession and a temporal connection. To overcome the straightness that does not inflect but alienates the deeds of the spirit by weakening the meaning of becoming, we need to return historical experience to its initial form: the communion of the being with itself inside the historical time. This way, time and history interblend and bring the deed into the present time of each thought. Having only this as a starting point, history does not intend to give the present time back to the time of each period because it cannot. No matter how much it tries, it will still be present in its *own time* inside the historical time. If it can find what Noica calls “that principle that keeps on giving itself – the spirit” within history and philosophy, it could re-establish the dialogue between history and the historical being.

The author

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Mihai Popa

CHAPTER I

TIME AND ETERNITY: ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODELS OF INSERTION IN TIME

Retrieved time and the historical chronotropy

There is a conflict emerging regularly within those societies determined to 'evolve' in time and to 'create' history, and it manifests between the time of becoming and the time of Creation. Mircea Eliade¹ did a lengthy analysis of this phenomenon. The eternal return, passing through different cycles in history, all of it takes into account the purpose of the universal Creation. Nothing gets achieved outside of this purpose. The things, the beings and the society man lives in and creates bear the symbol of Creation and the desire to acquire knowledge about it. Time no longer represents an indifferent shape for man, but it is this exact time when a deed, a thing or an experience gains significance in connection to a different time, the initial one of the Creation. It represents an indestructible bond between two moments, the current one and the one revealed in *illo tempore*. This bond created man, as it itself is a revelation of the sacred.² We will not follow a straight path in Eliade's footsteps because we also have other theories available and notions used by great thinkers to underline the specificity of the relation between time and history.

The conceptualization of time and how man (as an individual or a society) relates to time strictly depends on culture. We cannot understand the concepts of time or experiencing time outside a cultural model. Time – also a cultural model – cannot exist outside society, just as society cannot be conceived outside of time. Time patterns, their concepts and the cultures

¹ Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of The Eternal Return*, translated from French by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper&Brathers Publishers, 1959).

² Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and The Profane. The Nature of Religion*, translated from French by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace&World, Inc., 1959), pp. 99-113.

they are born in and which they represent form together a historical and cultural chronotropy. This concept comes from physiology and refers to the regularity and frequency of a rhythm (cardiac, anabolism-catabolism, reproductive etc., < from the French *cronotrope*). Using this concept to historically assess the cultural rhythms is not an exaggerated analogy because, in the life of society, there are certain essential rhythms that regulate it. There are general and individual rhythms, some that configure it and some that define it, or just unspecified ones that contradict the normal life rhythm of society, affecting its functions or even destroying it.

The *cronotrope* and *chronotropy* of a society (culture) represent a synthesis of rhythms, just like they would inside an organism, and this is fully justified if we keep in mind that in a society or a culture, similar to an organism or biotope, there are general and individual times, specific and non-specific times, as well as rhythms and tempos that intersect and collaborate to create a unique rhythm, proper to that precise organism or culture. So we can understand this concept as universal or particular, general or individual. There are also typical rhythms and atypical ones. If an atypical rhythm intervenes inside a system (let's say an organism), unfit for how it organises its vital functions, it can disturb its fundamental rhythms and finally lead to its dissolution or even death. Examining the principles and emphasizing the rhythms of a society or culture can be done using either universal or particular tropes, as well as contradicting tempi or colliding rhythms which oppose each other when they are not working together to maintain life. This reality of rhythms renders time not as much of a form of the universal becoming perceivable in one dimension and having a unique meaning, but rather as a more complex reality or form. To quote Vulcănescu, 'for Romanians, time has density, as well as content'³.

The science of rhythms (the Greek *rhythmos*), specific to arts as well, represents the expression of a much deeper reality, and has been a preoccupation of those with a higher level of spirituality, especially

³ 'Time has its particular dimensions. At first glimpse, time seems to have only one dimension: length. Things are placed one after another, thus forming a row, so the length of time appears as the only available dimension. After a closer look, time also has volume, meaning consistency. The world exists all at once, like the inclusion of many things given simultaneously, where all things have their own strings of specific successive events. [...] In reality, the world has all the dimensions of space, plus its progression in time. Therefore, time is nothing other than the world in a process of becoming, so for Romanians is not just a string, but also a content.' Quote from Mircea Vulcănescu, *Dimensiunea românească a existenței* (The Romanian Dimension of Existence), edition supervised by Marin Diaconu (Bucharest: Publishing of the Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1991), p. 104.

scientists and philosophers. In Romanian culture, only three great thinkers have turned rhythm (successions, vibrations, waves) into forms of expression and analysis, the fundamental principles of thought, existence and history: Vasile Conta, A. D. Xenopol and Vasile Pârvan. Concerning the last one (because the exegesis and the analysis of the first two are at hand) we should mention the importance the historical rhythm had, not just in one lecture, but in all of his work:

Within the infinity of variations of the cosmic rhythm lays the rhythm of human life, just like a lost note in the symphony of spheres. It is unique. Its shapes seem to create just as many diverse rhythms, but it is just an opinion. It is the rhythm of spiritual life: it goes up and down in steady beats, hurrying up or being late, in harmony or counterpoint, as categorical and fatal in art as in politics, in science as in religion, in economy as in philosophy. The rhythm of human life seen through its different spiritual becomings is the historical rhythm. Just like there is no body without a space, there is no spirit without a rhythm. The evolution of the human spirit is the history of a creative life's rhythm. The Romanian culture is rhythm solidified in actions. One can find rhythm by researching actions.⁴

The importance of rhythm, and in a more profound cultural and scientific way, the importance of chronotropy will be revealed when we will take into consideration the different *anthropological models of time insertion*.

For starters, we should make some preliminary observations regarding the relationship between temporal rhythms and the historical becoming, seen as an answer to the present historical challenges. Further on, we will expand this observation to the longer-lasting stages. Using these observations, we could also analyse the different theoretical or cultural, and historical approaches of the chronotropy as a reaction to the activity of universal time, cosmic time and historical time. Different perspectives have risen different analyses of the temporal model, either cultural anthropology, historiography or the history of philosophy. The first observation that stood out to researchers and has contributed to a deeper understanding of the relationship between time and history is the connection between cosmic and

⁴ Vasile Pârvan, *Scrieri alese, Studii și eseuri*, III. *Despre ritmul istoric* (Selected Works, Studies and Essays, III. On the Historical rhythm), opening lesson from the lecture on *Istoria religiunilor* (The History of Religions), held during the summer semester MCMXX at the University of Bucharest, read on the 4th of February MCMXX), introduction and notes by Alexandru Zub, preface (for the princeps edition) by Radu Vulpe (Bucharest: Publishing of the Romanian Academy, 2006), p. 535.

historic time. This connection was possible by questioning the bond between *time* and *eternity* – a tradition in metaphysics. For anthropology, ethnography and the entire prehistoric archaic mentality, the pattern of cosmic time was primordial. Actually, it appeared – how else – when man began to conceptualize the time of the historical becoming. This pattern's mark is the need for a centre (symbolical, archetypal) of creation.

Ancient societies have developed quite the symbolism for the centre. That is the symbol of time and space, with the role of a cosmogonic principle. The temple and the altar are in the centre; people gather all around it. Cosmic time is a recurrent time.

To us, it seems an inescapable conclusion that *the religious man sought to live as near as possible to the Centre of the World*. He knew that his country lay at the midpoint of the earth; he knew too that his city constituted the navel of the universe and, above all, that the temple or the palace were veritably Centres of the World. But he also wanted his own house to be at the Centre and to be an *imago mundi*.⁵

We might say that within the cosmologic paradigm of the universal becoming, time goes back to eternity because it is not identical to becoming, nor eternity is equal to the lack of motion. Eternity can be the undefined duration of a moment, the present taking over the past and the future or a permanent present in which everything is born, like in Plato or Plotinus. Noica's concept of becoming within being carries within the image of Plato's dialectics, where everything individual tends to assign itself traits able to pull it out of the irrational that lays within a becoming for the sake of becoming and redirect it towards the rational becoming *within being*.

As I see it, then, we must begin by making the following distinction: What is that which always is and has no becoming, and what is that which becomes but never is? The former gets grasped by understanding, which involves a reasoned account. It is unchanging. The latter gets grasped by opinion, which involves unreasoning sense perception. It comes to be and passes away, but never really is. Now everything that comes to be must of necessity come to be by the agency of some cause, for nothing can come to be without a cause.⁶

⁵ M. Eliade, *Sacred and The Profane. The Nature of Religion*, 1959, p. 43.

⁶ Plato, *Timaeos*, translated by Donald J. Zeyl, in *idem, Complete Works*, edited, with Introduction and Notes, by John M. Cooper, associate editor D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), p. 1234, 28 a-b.

The centrality of the universe is ontological. By definition, centrality is spatial. But this centrality has repercussions on time, and the event registers within a circular duration. Consequently, the major events, sacred, symbolic and with an ontological value, can escape regular time, properly historical. The circular ontological time is sacred.

One essential difference between these two qualities of time strikes us immediately: *by its very nature, sacred time is reversible* in the sense that, properly speaking, it is *a primordial mythical time made present*. Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the re-actualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, “in the beginning.” Religious participation in a festival implies emerging from ordinary temporal duration and reintegration of the mythical time re-actualized by the festival itself. Hence sacred time is indefinitely recoverable and indefinitely repeatable.⁷

Man truly lives within the sacred time, and he tries to ignore the historical one, which he needs to pass through – a historical necessity – and which he also regularly tries to obliterate, but actually succeeds in doing so only within the time and space of a religious celebration.

Hence religious man lives in two kinds of time, and the most important, sacred time, appears under the paradoxical aspect of a circular time, reversible and recoverable, a sort of eternal mythical present that periodically reintegrates using rites.⁸

This ‘waiver’ from the historical event, man’s refusal of the time that pulls him outside the horizon of the sacred event, has been of great importance in the period between wars in Romania. Escaping and denying history is specific only to Eliade, and we can notice this attitude in most thinkers who had Nae Ionescu as a mentor. The periodicity of the sacred event, and rethinking the significance of mythology in most nations are subjects that spiked Eliade’s interest in particular. Rethinking the historical event and the specific time of historical becoming, even if not from a speculative-metaphysical perspective, is something we find in Constantin Noica, Mircea Vulcănescu or Emil Cioran. One way or another, historical time is theorized, valued and turned into a symbol inside the horizon of the historical event. There is a certain bipolarity, especially theoretical, between event and historical time, but also an intrinsic specificity of the time-event relation in history, which is reflected by the definition of historical time. This way of approaching history and events in connection with time and its

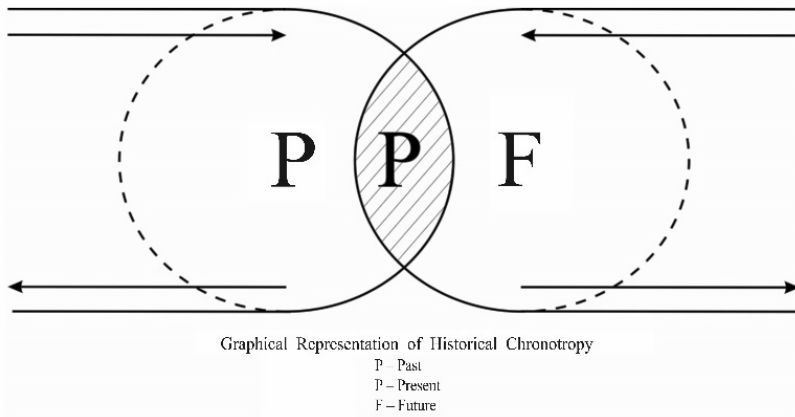
⁷ M. Eliade, *Sacred and The Profane. The Nature of Religion*, 1959, pp. 68-69.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

particular historical significance (related to the true *historical* event) has been considered a touchstone by historians, philosophers or simple narrators of history. Nicolae Iorga found himself in a continuous argument with historians writing ‘histories’ without substance, making rather literature on the event and ignoring the essence of the historical becoming, thus exiting the time of the event that had historical significance. He was trying to pull history from under the temptation of ‘romanticizing’, always referencing the event from the sources and its authenticity, recovered or not by critics. He pleaded for history written based on the historical fact and not about it, for a ‘historiology’ able to provide ‘with or without introducing the critique, the overwhelming whole of the sources that give, through their contemporary status, a colour and a freshness that the historian’s literary talent would never be able to reproduce.’⁹

Historians understood first and better the bond between event and time or the chronology of the historical deed because they were closer to the sources narrating it. Philosophers mostly speculated about time and understood it ontologically, but less historically. Thus, they were unable to study it within the horizon of the event. Time has no logic when separated from the event, so if logic is lost, only the ‘times’ detached from events remain. When time is detached from the event, it becomes an empty abstraction – useful in discourse – and attempting to fill it with something will only lead to another abstraction, ontologically complementary to time: space. H. Bergson tried to correct this inconvenience through the concept of duration. We can configure a chronotype from within the horizon of an event because time does not appear to be passing in one direction as a continuous string. Chronotropy (Greek *cronos* = time, *trópos* = way) sees the event plenary, intersecting with time (in reality, with times), where different rhythms, longer or shorter, closer or farther away, resonate to create an action. If we visually represent the *cronotrope*, unseparated from the event and at the intersection of rhythms, we obtain a lens-like representation of the event determined by time. The past and the future are no longer lines intersecting in the present, and they become intersecting spheres.

⁹ Nicolae Iorga, *Permanențele istoriei* (The Permanences of History), speech held at The International History Congress in Zürich, september, 1938, in *Generalități cu privire la studiile istorice* (General ideas on historical studies), 3rd edition (Bucharest: The Institute of Universal History „N. Iorga”, 1944), p. 239.



The surface within the shaded interior of the intersection of the two spheres represents the *cronotope*, with the two hemispheres forming the horizons of the event: posterior and anterior. Such a representation offers the possibility to imagine the actual event as a complex of possibilities produced from both the harmonics previously prefigured, done in the present and the bonds anticipated through the expectancy horizon of any event. This way, present time gains amplitude, content and direction, while it also suggests a dynamic and permanent retroversion due to the authenticity of the event being in a permanent tension between the spheres of incidence where rhythms interblend and get anticipated.

This visual representation was suggested by the ‘volume’, meaning the content of the temporal dimension captured by Vulcănescu in his ontology of time for Romanians.¹⁰ The complexity of the temporal models suggested here intuitively gains new dimensions by integrating cultural models when we are right in the field of historical events.

Lucian Blaga paid special attention to stylistic factors in defining the historical being, which only has significance as the revealing of a mystery able to ‘move’ the event from the temporal-historic transition into the existence of the deed as history:

[...] a historical knowledge fully attains its objective when it manages to reveal not just the emergence, duration and disappearance in space and time

¹⁰ Mircea Vulcănescu, *Dimensiunea românească a existenței* (The Romanian Dimension of Existence), 1991, pp. 104 – 105.

of historical actions, but especially when it manages to shed light on the stylistic aspects that characterize these actions.¹¹

There are times and ways of perceiving temporality. Each thing has its own history, but we only perceive its present time right here, even though we can think of it as consecution, a reunion of previous factors and just as many moments that have determined it. Everything has a story that does not coincide with its linear and unique history because that is not its complete history. There are as many times as there are consciousnesses, but time itself is a combination of rhythms or a purposeful path within a network of events; inside this network, the event is a knot connecting the past with the future; anterior and posterior are relative landmarks for a *right now* that has already disappeared as soon as we believe it got set. We talk about times and places inflicted with the mentioned time, but we rarely pay the deserved attention to the relative time of a place because we imagine time as a sovereign, identical to itself in any of its segments, regardless of space. At least, this is how science sees it, singling out just the succession and its direction. Time can deform space; man and things bend before time, as it is not an indulgent sovereign, but unmerciful and oppressive. It is just an illusion that time works in our favour. That is why humans have imagined a time machine.

The Evolution of the Idea of Freedom. Freedom is a privilege gained in time; it does not become it exists. Only our concept of freedom changed. The connection of time with history, seen through the perspective of all the changes endured after better constitutions and written or non-written settlements, does not involve a becoming of the concept of freedom. Freedom exists or not; it can be hidden or revealed in ideas. Nicolae Iorga tells us how can *our* notion of freedom *evolve*, how it appears or disappears wrapped in regulations or rendered by decrees. He does not use a philosophical definition, but its historical meaning, taking into consideration its moral function, the cultural ideals, the political target and even the economic necessity of each epoch.¹² For him, time binds everything and gathers in its stream ideas from different historical spaces, not so foreign or impenetrable regarding the lifestyle and even less regarding the world and life in general. Of course, this is not a new perspective. Hegel himself – which Iorga had read, just as he had read and appreciated Xenopol – understood the becoming of Idea as a way for the

¹¹ Lucian Blaga, *Ființa istorică* (The Historical Being), supervised edition, notes and preface by Tudor Cățineanu (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia Publishing, 1977), p. 191.

¹² Nicolae Iorga, *Evoluția ideii de libertate* (The Evolution of the Idea of Freedom), supervised edition, introductory study and notes by Ilie Bădescu (Bucharest: Meridiane Publishing, 1987), p. 65.

Spirit to manifest into the world. Yet the novelty lies in the manner of modifying everlasting ideas emerging from doctrines or born out of the interest of some cults. The ability to change these ideas proves there is movement, spiritual becoming and exchanges between apparently distant societies, not just in space, but also in time. As an example, we can consider the evolution of the Christian idea of freedom and the entire subtle transition (contradictory as well) of Christianity throughout the first centuries under the Roman tradition. To understand the phenomenon brought about by the social transformation of the spirit of freedom and religious tolerance under the influence of an ideology, we must also consider the intolerance imposed by the Judaic caste of priests in doctrinaire issues. This opportunity arose due to the Roman conquest. Reforming the Hebrew religion would not have been possible if the priests of the Jerusalem Temple had not conceded to the Roman administrative reform (opposition would have actually been impossible under political and military reign). The Romans themselves, as polytheist people, were in favour of the religions adopted by the conquered territories as long as they did not interfere with the official cult of the emperor, as well as the administrative organization. However, when the Western civilisation (the Romans) encountered the oriental one, represented by the Hellenistic culture and the influences of the religious beliefs brought on by the new cults, arrived with the new administration and especially the occupying army, it was almost impossible to isolate people based on their beliefs. 'If it had not been for this mixed dough of Hellenistic Judaism compliant with the Roman dominion and their proconsuls at the fore, and if Jerusalem was that of the single Levites, then the temple would have been quickly shut by scared priests so that nothing coming from the far sun of this new religion could get in'¹³ (Christianity – our note, M. P.).

These changes require many factors; besides the political, economic and cultural, there are also temporal ones. Each religion (not to mention the economical 'technique', even the political and ideological in applying it) also implies different ways of managing time. Iorga does not insist on this necessity to coordinate temporal factors but it exists and is presumed by a historian, if not explicitly seen. The fact is, behind any affirmation stating a change, of any kind, there is also a specific time. The Roman spirit, innovative in certain fields (art, ideology) and conservative in others (administrative technique, morals and especially law), represents the temporality of an organized deed, almost turned into law – regarding the law and the administrative system etc. The Judaic spirit had a different temporal dimension, 'canonized' in the revealed texts representing one field

¹³ Ibid., p. 126.

of the sacred, where the time of the revelation was one-way directed, and revelation itself was 'a contract' between divinity and the chosen people.

There is also another time, circular, represented by Hellenistic polytheism and the Indo-Aryan, Brahmanic and Buddhist religions in particular.

For the Romans, the pragmatic spirit (sometimes utilitarian) managed time, while for the Judeans, time had a historical dimension above all, and they were the first people to deliberately accept history as a way to 'consume' a divine promise. According to Judeans, the historical time gains a revelatory dimension,¹⁴ something that does not happen in other cultures where revelation does not require a human existence historically involved, but on the contrary, it can occur within the cosmic time, of a cyclical fashion.

Judaism represents a massive innovation compared to the archaic and paleo-oriental religions or the mythical and philosophical ideas of the Eternal Return, as elaborated in India and Greece. *For Judaism, Time has a beginning and also an end.* The notion of cyclical time has been exceeded. Yahweh no longer manifests in *Cosmic Time* (like the gods of other religions) but within a *Historical Time*, which is irreversible.¹⁵

However, the Hellenistic time was in a different cultural (and historical) phase compared to the classical and cyclic time, organized by classical philosophies like Platonism. The Macedonian conquest of the Orient represented not just an occasion for cultural and religious syncretism but also a major temporal debilitation which later will set the basis for a smooth incorporation of Christianity. The paradigm of Greek time, through its Platonic, Neoplatonic and even Aristotelian doctrine, continued to influence the Christian ideology even in its elaborated form imposed by the fathers of the church, and its essence was abandoned ever since medieval times. This rejection, even if not entirely, became noticeable in the modern era. The Creation was regularly brought back to life, just like Plato presented it in the myth of the destroyed Universe, yet periodically rebuilt by the Demiurge and got replaced by a new 'movement' in the post-Napoleon era. This movement sometimes had a pregnant catastrophic look, especially in the scientific theories, like the one belonging to Cuvier. Lucian Blaga also described the changes in the classical temporal paradigm, including its Platonic reminiscences, briefly but very suggestive, through *the style of the romantic culture*.

¹⁴ M. Eliade, *Sacred and The Profane*, 1959, p. 92.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 103 – 104.

Time and everything related manifested a profound inclination towards “movement”. God himself was taken down and placed on the barricades at the becoming of history. The Platonic “ideas” were leaving Mount Olympus, allowing change, action and the storm. No wonder Cuvier imagined the earth going through catastrophes followed by new creations. In the political life of the continent, the revolts and rebellions came one after another, just like the “punches” and “creations” of the geological conception of the great scientist.¹⁶

The already mentioned example, this time coming from a much further historical context than the moment we started in, is very significant concerning how the value of a temporal (cosmologic and cyclic) paradigm contributes to the restructuring of a traditional theoretical vision of time while coming in contact with a modern one. The time of ‘establishing’ the Christian spirit within history, together with its perspective on temporality (historical and cosmic) and similar to the concept of liberty, gains new value in Iorga’s analysis. That was possible because, during the first decades and centuries, Christianity had to recover, not just after all the different cultural and religious doctrines (especially Greek, Roman and Hebrew) but also because of the convergence of the times implied by these doctrines and cultures. That becomes obvious for us when Iorga brings into discussion the influence of the Aryan spirit along with its temporal factor intertwined in its spirituality, the cult models and the social reality. Within the life of the Brahmanic society, despite the caste spirit, there was a certain liberty cultivated, also reflected in the Vedic literature. Their worship style offered a certain liberty of the spirit. Indian literature stands as proof of this. *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata*, theatre and poetry are open to the cosmic miracle and the beauties of continuously changing nature. ‘This is not a religious theatre, with vultures circling above like the first Greek tragedy in which actors appear as gods [...]. The Indian theatre has something free, open in front of nature, humane.’¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Indic mentality was missing forms strictly regulated for a doctrine, the vectors of revealed faith. Despite the caste barriers, there were some sort of tendencies, if we cannot call them values, to render religion more democratic, and they started circulating right when Buddhism emerged. ‘The last pariah is as close to Buddha’s heart as the proudest member of Kshatriya, or the ‘most saint’ of the Brahmins.’¹⁸ While the ‘customs’ of the Judean tradition have been shaped by clergymen – more often than not under political influence –, Buddhism is tolerant of cult issues:

¹⁶ L. Blaga, *Ființa istorică* (The Historical Being), 1977, p. 111.

¹⁷ N. Iorga, *Evoluția ideii de libertate* (The Evolution of the Idea of Freedom), 1987, p. 122.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

the believer can choose his/her way towards salvation and the path towards the divine spirit. Buddhist humility transforms the social rhythm into a time of communication going downwards and upwards between the divine authority and the believer. According to Iorga, the suffering implied by the Christian message recommended to both masters and the subdued as a purpose or a path towards redemption was one form of the compassion preached by the scripture, but also *an entirely Indian trait* assimilated by the Christian doctrine on its way to get established. If Brahmanism was obedience, Buddhism pleaded for kinship and sympathy, changing the meaning of existence and divine revelation. This incipient humanism represented a new form of spiritual freedom and has influenced, directly or indirectly, the faith in Christ. There are many similarities between the moral beliefs preached by the scriptures and the humane conceptions of Buddha's followers:

And then the king's son transforms and becomes everyone's man, of every pain and instead of seeing that horrible caste of clergymen, in front of which everybody trembled as they had the members of the Kshatriya with their swords on their left and right, then some poorly kept monks started walking among them, eaten by disease and needs, without fortunes and barely dragging their bloody feet on the ground; a sort of barefoot Franciscan of the Middle Ages.¹⁹

The new Christian religion flourishes on its own and has its own time, a time of the man, recovered from history; throughout history, it continues to gather many other temptations that place doubt on it. Its true liberty is not the one based on doctrinaire forms. The Roman Empire ensured this kind of 'liberty' through religion (political, actual), introduced in its space of interest. Early on, the Greeks did it differently, by placing value on some more elevated forms of spiritual culture. One way or another, time configures these values, but it also makes them go out of fashion. The Christian message helped separate the political form from the one beyond time represented by divine grace under one condition: *participation* out of love. That could have been the condition (and, in reality, it was) of every great culture, precisely how not long ago, it was the Greek one. Even though Jesus was not imposing anything – besides loving thy neighbour – the perspective of almost endless freedom within the human condition could have had a moral limitation beyond its temporal one: 'In manifesting this liberty no injustice should occur, and no pain awaken.'²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 125.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 128.

This example partially illustrates the confluence of historical facts distant in space and time but brought together by their significance in human ontology, which foreshadows a new event (the emergence of Christianity). The concept of freedom is the constant element. There are also the time constants of the chronotype initiated through the synthesis of different rhythms, as well as some about time, specific to the cultural areas brought on by history, able to open up the perspective for the new event. All these spiritual and historical connections have their *model of insertion in time*: The Indian one, particular to the Brahmanic and Buddhist spirituality; the Greek one, rigorously structured and extremely rational, which had already taken on several changes through the oriental intrusion during the Hellenistic period; the Roman one, in full ascent, pragmatically and able to civilize by definition; the Judean one, similarly well-organized that fully values history. Judeans bring forth a linear and irreversible historical determinism, based on which every important event is the will of Yahweh. We can even state that Judean spirituality presents the concept of a historical destiny different from how it was understood by the Greeks, from a substantial perspective (the path of each – human or collective – is pre-established in its essence and will necessarily get realised despite any obstacle. This concept is also illustrated by the myth of Oedipus, among others.). The infiltration of Judeans within the horizon of history makes it possible for a revelation to happen *in historical times*.

For Judaism, the time has a beginning and will have an end. The idea of cyclic time is left behind. Yahweh no longer manifests himself in cosmic time (like the gods of other religions) but in a historical time, which is irreversible. Each new manifestation of Yahweh in history is no longer reducible to an earlier manifestation.²¹

Historical Chronotropy and Social Entropy

Let us interpret each social-historical event as a synthesis of some spiritual and humane vectors inside a culture, restraining the social entropy based on a cultural model of historical existence. The consciousness organizes reality according to its categories, culturally generated. It does not double the existence but coordinates it based on experience; it does not govern it (like a cause-effect type of relation) but *knows* it and creates its spiritual world based on it and inside of it. We do not raise the issue of spiritual metaphysics for now, just that of an ontological history. From the perspective of consciousness (seen in general, the transcendental one, according to Kantian apriorism), time

²¹ M. Eliade, *Sacred and The Profane*, 1959, p. 110.

is a category of the sensitive intuition given *a priori* and not resulting from either interior or exterior experience; time and space are forms preceding experience, based on which we can organize it. At this stage, by being pure intuition preceding experience, the transcendental theory of time brings something extra to the notion of time in comparison to that of space: we can ignore space for the internal phenomena of the consciousness, but we cannot do the same with time because it is one-dimensional, infinite and one-directional. There is just one uniform infinite time (according to Newton's physics); more times are parts of the same time. All of these data come from the critique of Rădulescu-Motru on the transcendental time,²² meant to do one thing: introduce the notion of *destiny* as the philosopher understands it. In reality, this notion – introduced by Motru in the context of his philosophy of energetic personalism – has its origins in some older attempts of the ancient Greeks to define the concept of time. For them, it was established on the physical notion of movement, introduced by philosophy, and it will end up in opposition with the psychological intuition of time (impossible to recover because there is no psychology, at least not how we understand that concept today). However, for social phenomena, movement is associated with teleology and the idea of destiny imposed by Greek tragedy and the historical narrative. The mythical cosmogony and later on, the ancient cosmology established the idea of organizing and able to unify the principle of existence, the ultimate one concerning the diversity of the world, capable of being material, unique or multiple, even ideal. The problem of the intuition of time, discussed even today, was whether it could be established based on a natural determinism derived from physical movement or is just a form introduced by an ideal nature, either objective or subjective. The ancient patterns have imposed a circular temporality resulting from following the periodicity of the outside nature or that of the cosmic cycles. Time exists in relation to eternity, but this relation is also built in a circular way.

Time experienced as destiny: the psychology of becoming...

We have chosen the concept of *destiny*, understood in its special sense given by Rădulescu-Motru in his philosophical system (the energetic personalism), to be able to follow the configuration of a notion of historical time because it completes his personalist dimension with a temporal one,

²² Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Opere alese, Timp și destin* (Selected Works, Time and Destiny), edition supervised by Gh. Vlădușescu, Alexandru Boboc, Sabin Totu (Bucharest: Publishing of the Romanian Academy, 2006), pp. 128 – 129.

pertaining to the becoming of self and also to the social becoming. The author states right from the beginning that destiny (representing here the experienced time of the active human, socially and culturally integrated) is not a contraposition of the scientific or philosophical time, rational and abstract.

For us, there is only one real-time, the experienced one, and we call it destiny; nowadays, the concept of time gets understood as a chronometer. This one is just a measurement instrument for periodical movements that lay above the experienced time due to their characteristic of uniform repetitions, just to record themselves on equal distances in space. The facts of life, however, bear inside the experienced time as a constituent factor. That lived time gives them uniqueness and reality.²³

Motru's intention is a critique of the concept of time – which he succeeds in doing – but he does not insist on approaching the almost entire issue of history, which is anyhow confronted in most of his works.²⁴ Instead, he is

²³ Ibid., p. 107.

²⁴ Here is a chronological list of his main works in which he fulfils his social historical and psychological ideas, organized under its own system of interpretation, the energetic personalism: *Știința și energia. Introducere* (Science and Energy. Introduction), Bucharest, The Institute of Graphic Arts „Carol Göbl”, 1902, 103 p. (second edition, 1906; third edition in *Studii filosofice*, I, 1907); *Cultura română și politicianismul* (Romanian Culture and Political Behaviour), Bucharest, Socec, 1904, VII + 192 p. (second edition, 1910; reprinted in 1984, 1995, 1998); *Puterea sufletească* (The Power of the Soul), Bucharest, *Studii filosofice* (Philosophical Studies), III, Bucharest 1908, XV – 245 p. (final edition, Casa Școalelor, 1930, XV + 416); *Elemente de metafizică. Principalele probleme ale filosofiei contemporane pe înțelesul tuturor* (Metaphysics Elements. The Main Contemporary Philosophical Problems explained for all), Bucharest, D. C. Ionescu Printing House, 1912, 295 p.; *Țărănimul. Un suflet și o politică* (Peasantry. One soul, one politics), Bucharest, National Culture 1924, 61 p.; *Personalismul energetic* (Energetic Personalism), Bucharest, Casa Școalelor Publishing, 1927, 272 p.; *Elemente de metafizică. Pe baza filosofiei kantiene* (Metaphysics Elements. Based on Kant's Philosophy), final edition, Casa Școalelor Publishing, 1928, 227 p. (reprinted in 1984, 1997, 2005); *Vocația. Factor hotărâtor în cultura popoarelor* (Vocation. Decisive Factor in the Culture of Mases), Casa Școalelor Publishing, 1932, 151 p. (final edition, 1935, 151 p.; reprinted in 1984, 1997, 2006); *Românismul. Catehismul unei noi spiritualități* (The Romanian Character. The Catechism of a New Spirituality), Bucharest, The Foundation for Literature and Art „Regele Carol al II-lea”, 1936, 215 p. (2nd edition revised, 1939; reed., 1992); *Psihologia poporului român* (The Psychology of the Romanian People), Bucharest, The Romanian Philosophy Society, 1937, 29 p. (reprinted in 1998, 1999); *Timp și destin* (Time and Destiny), Bucharest, The Foundation for Literature and Art, 1940, 254 p. (German version: *Zeit und Schicksall*, Jena, Leipzig, Verlag von W. Gronan, 1943, X + 190 p., Bucharest,

mainly preoccupied with the intuition of time. This subject is of capital importance in the history of culture. It originates from the consciousness of self, not the reflexive one, which will emerge later as a consequence of cultural becoming, but of the profound emotive self, ‘the creator of attitudes, used by man to anticipate the instigations of the exterior when instinct is lacking.’²⁵ Thus, an intuition of temporality as destiny was released right on the edge between emotion and reflection, into the remote history of mankind and the complexity of subjective experiences. Thanks to our need to anticipate becoming in the middle of complex events with an unclearly separated subject from the object, time got experienced at a different intensity. The later forms of time, the reflexive ones, originate from this primitive intuition of the irreversible passing of time. Therefore, the future and the past were reduced to an intense experience of the present, so they represented both a threat and a challenge to control them. That is how mysticism, art, magic and the mythological order appeared.

Today’s man, armed with a technique of culture, looks confident towards the future and sometimes with pride back into the past. Primitive man had other conditions. For him, the future was a terrifying unknown, and the past a grave of destroyed things. From him, time is like a destructive tooth. Saturn, the god of time, was portrayed as a monster devouring his children. Due to this powerful mix of subjectivism, the intuition of time originated from a subjective mosaic, certainly different from the homogeneous consistent intuition of today’s scientists. To reach the last one, the human consciousness had to go through a long period of preparation.²⁶

It is important to point out this stage of primitive consciousness because it is the origin of the primordial chronotropy. It organizes the different forms of the intuition of time on the level of subjective consciousness, forms out of which the reflexive reasoning consciousness will, later on, draw the sometimes-contradictory aspects of the concept of time. The abstract notion

Paideia, Vorwort, van Al. Boboc); *Etnicul românesc. Comunitate de origine, limbă și destin* (The Romanian Ethnicity. Community of origin, language and destiny), Bucharest, Casa Școalelor Publishing, 1942, 134 p. (reprinted in 1996, 1998, 1999); *Morala personalismului energetic* (The Moral of Energetic Personalism), Bucharest, Monitorul Oficial al Imprimeriilor Statului, 1946, 33 p. (*Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile Secțiunii Literare - The Annals of the Romanian Academy, Memoires of the Literary Section*, IIIrd Series, Tom., XV, Mem. 1).

²⁵ C. Rădulescu-Motru, *Opere alese, Timp și destin* (Selected Works, Time and Destiny), 2006, p. 167.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 168.