

Lucian Blaga and the Rural Imaginary at the Beginning of the 20th Century

MARIA-ANA TUPAN

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Abstract

Contrary to the expectations aroused by the title, the point of departure in this essay is a desire to amend the perception of Lucian Blaga as the representative of a conservative school of thought and poetics, who designed a broad canvas of metaphysical speculations embedded in an architecture of unfailing systematicity and patterned symmetries reminiscent of the totalitarian ambitions of all-embracing structures such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*. His philosophical system—one of the last—is not, however, a “monument to dead ideas” like Milton's theodicy, but the prophecy of a new epistemology based on polyvalent logic and particle physics. The prevailing setting of his poems – nature tamed in the village community – was not a curtesy to the traditionalist poetics of some of his contemporaries (the “sămănătorist” group) but the poetic garb of his vitalist philosophical outlook inspired by Bergson's concept of the *élan vital*, as well as by his readings from German pioneers of ecology and advocates of organic, biological life in its universal connectivity (especially in the spirit of Friedrich Junge's *Lebensgemeinschaft* – Life's community).

Keywords: intuitionism, vitalism, rural imaginary, polyvalent logic, transfigured antinomy, particle physics, divine differentials, original phenomenon

Introduction

Lucian Blaga's place in the last century's literature and philosophy is still a debated issue and cause of disorientation among those who approach the author at a surface level. Even insiders hesitate between pigeonholing Blaga in a nationalist-pastoral slot and Calvin O. Schrag, for instance, who saw in his polyvalent logic (transfigured antinomy) a proleptic version of postmodernist understanding of rationality (Schrag 70). Besides Constantin Brâncuși, with his decentered, modular sculptures (such as the *Infinite Column*, an iconic work for postmodern decentering and anti-hierarchical signifying practices), Blaga is thus being assimilated to postmodernity. Our argument in this essay is that Blaga was actually a canonical figure of high modernism, who absorbed the spirit of the age with a remarkably open mind and intuition of novelty, which, however, is less obvious because he cast the ideas of his time, most of them revolutionary and causing much confusion among the intellectual elite (see Gaston Bachelard's amazement at the rise of quantum physics in *Le nouvel esprit scientifique*, 1934), into a language and a philosophical system of his own.

A teenager of genius, Blaga read all the books of philosophy that fell into his hands in his home library, which included classics (Plato, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Hegel) along with publications of the latest celebrities (Wilhelm Wundt, Henry James, Rudolf Eucken, Gabriel de Tarde, Friedrich Nietzsche, Hans Vaihinger, and many others). He haunted libraries looking for philosophy with a passion, reading journals which have always been one step ahead of publishers when it comes to new, fashionable ideas. It was in an Italian journal that he first read about Henri Bergson, an event which sent him on a Bergson hunt ending in the triumph of buying *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*.

By then he had become a well-read thinker, capable of passing critical judgment upon the Romanian philosophers of the day. It was with a text on Bergson that he made his publishing

debut and it was a volume of philosophical poems (*Poemele luminii* [*Poems of Light*], 1919) that launched him into the publishing world.

It was not uncommon for readers of philosophy in the late eighteenth century to read Kant and Hegel along with John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, David Hartley or George Berkeley, that is, empiricists along with metaphysicians and epistemologists. Contrariwise, the philosophical field around 1900 was an embattled theatre of competitive and opposite directions. On one side of the barricade, there were positivists, empiricists, relativists, while on the other, the prevailing one, there were pragmatists, fictionalists, phenomenologists, anthropologists. Blaga was dissatisfied with either side. He turned to Bergson who, as he writes in “Reflexii asupra filosofiei lui Bergson” [Reflections on Bergson’s Intuition] (1914), an essay published in the journal *Românul*, had broken with all previous schools of thought, engaging in a completely new direction from which he could have a total perspective on life, on being. Nevertheless, the avid reader who had become familiar with the whole movement of ideas of the time – which allowed him to discover analogies among discourses across the disciplines and consequently of a common spirit/episteme at work in all – absorbed them as “letters in his unconscious,” as Jacques Lacan says in his homonymous essay (*Écrits*, 1966) wherefrom they influenced his mental formation. Nevertheless, his system does not resemble Edmund Husserl’s *a priori* eidetic constitution legitimating a science of essence. Instead of abstraction and reduction, he discovers in Bergson the concept of *élan vital*, which spirals into a monist model of the universe, again in anticipation of the holist quantum world of postmodernity.

Nobel Award winner Philip Anderson is credited with the dismantling of the idea of stable states granting entities a precise identity. Through the process of localization, he managed to induce phase transition in metals from conductor to insulator. But a similar experiment had taken place in 1928, when F. Griffith had managed to activate dead viruses through infusion of active ones. Blaga remained faithful to his original option for evolutionism supporting

its successor, transformism, in “Diferențialele divine” [*Divine Differentials*], 1940:

Do species represent some kind of fixed ideas of a demiurgic spirit, or of nature, or are species found in endless guise? . . . Abstracting from some mythological conceptions that attribute magical possibilities of transformation to living beings, the idea of the gradual evolution of life in general, the idea of species transformation enjoys a relatively new circulation. Until almost a hundred years ago, the European intelligentsia still adhered, in their immense majority, to a static conception of species. Biblical mythology sees species as immutable forms of existence. This mythology had been cultivated for centuries and by official Christian philosophy. According to the scholastics, God would have created the species once and for all in the image and likeness of some of his Ideas from eternity. Due to an untimely progress of the natural sciences, especially of geology and paleontology, scientists were put in contact with some facts intended to overturn the traditional conception.¹ (Reprezintă speciile un fel de idei fixe ale unui spirit demiurgic, sau ale naturii, sau speciile se găsesc în necurmată prefacere? . . . Abstracție făcând de unele concepții mitologice cari atribuie ființelor vii posibilități magice de transformare, gîndul evoluției treptate a vieții în general, ideea transformismului speciilor se bucură de o circulație relativ nouă. Intelectualitatea europeană pînă acum aproape o sută de ani adera încă, în imensa ei majoritate, la o concepție statică despre specii. Mitologia biblică vede speciile ca forme imuabile ale existenței. Această mitologie fusese timp de secole cultivată și de filosofia creștină oficială. După scolastici, Dumnezeu ar fi creat odată pentru totdeauna speciile după chipul și asemănarea unor Idei din eternitate ale sale. Datorită unui intempestiv progres al științelor naturale, îndeosebi al geologiei și al pal-ontologiei, oamenii de știință s-au văzut puși în contact cu unele fapte menite să răstoarne concepția tradițională. (Blaga, *Diferențialele divine* 136)

Species came to be seen by Blaga as complex but temporary entities, generated from simple differentials, with a minimum content of substance and energy (physicists call them quantum singularities, quarks and other particles), which combine into

heterogeneous virtual structures (= wave functions). These differentials are minimum components of the divine circle, the Great Anonymous, a generative matrix whose code is never completely replicated. If the universe is a quantum system, then the Great Anonymous is the wavefunction or quantum state of the entire universe.

Ontological transgression is Blaga's constant game, the levels of existence, a Heideggerian paradigm of heaven earth, mortals and divine but with fuzzy boundaries, being redeployed in endless displacements of the animal, divine, vegetable, symbolic, specular, inorganic, and human orders:

The castle is the same
 in the air and in the water.
 Dashing through the gate
 the hounds leave it behind.
 Lilies walk on a road
 of playful searching
 as if carrying in the chalices
 their future ashes.
 Loosed from a coat of arms
 engraved on the gate,
 a raven is unravelling
 a fortune teller's riddle.
 The heavenly Bee keeper
 bends over the bucket
 in the fountain's honey
 His mirror to soften.
 A page is working out
 the gardens' labyrinth.
 A martin's flight
 is the prospect's signature.

(Castelul e-același
 în aer și-n apă.
 Trecutul pe poartă
 copoi și-i scapă.
 Crini umblă pe-un drum

de căutări jucăușe
 parcă-și duc în potire
 viitoarea cenușe.
 Scăpat dintr-o stemă
 tăiată în poartă,
 un uliu tâlcuiește
 rotire de soartă.
 Stuparul ceresc peste
 ciuturi se-ndoaie,
 în miera fântânilor
 barba și-o-nmoaie.
 Zăbovește prin rostul
 grădinilor pajul.
 Un zbor de lăstun
 iscălește peisajul.) (Blaga, “Peisaj trecut” [Past Landscape], in
Poezii, 124)

Blaga was sensitive to new directions in science and culture, anticipating future developments, while also deferring to the idealist philosophy of modernism. In the context of the age, that was the direction fostered by authoritative institutions such as the Nobel Academy. Rudolf Christoph Eucken got the Nobel Award in 1908 “in recognition of his earnest search for truth, his penetrating power of thought, his wide range of vision, and the warmth and strength in presentation with which in his numerous works he has vindicated and developed an idealistic philosophy of life” (“The Nobel Prize in Literature”). Two books in Blaga’s library, *Einführung in die Philosophie des Geisteslebens*, which came out the same year, and *Zur Sammlung der Geister* (1914), pleaded for what Eucken defended in his Nobel lecture (1909):

But even in its extreme form this life has neither purpose nor content in itself; it remains a conglomeration of disparate points. It does not coalesce in an inner community of life, nor does it constitute an inner world peculiar to itself. Thus action is never directed toward an inner purpose but toward the utilitarian purpose of preserving life. Naturalism, if it remains true to its purpose,

reduces human life to that norm. Idealism, on the other hand, maintains the emancipation of inwardness. (Eucken)

It was probably Eucken and a whole tradition of German writing that taught Blaga how to solve the apparent paradox of aligning inwardness/individualism and community, which appear as irreconcilable opponents in Western modernism.

1. Modernism and the Rural Imaginary

Celebrated for his adage “Eternity was born in the village,” Blaga was not, however, one of the traditionalist poets of the early twentieth century in Romania, nor a painter of pastoral landscapes, such as Anna de Noailles, following a fashionable literary trend of the moment. He turned to the Romanian countryside driven by an international turn to biology and rural landscape pitted against the soulless urban civilization that occurred in the late nineteenth century with offshoots in the twentieth.

Two books reviewed by Frederik Gregory from the University of Florida,² Robert J. Richards, *The Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and the Struggle over Evolutionary Thought* (2008) and Lynn K. Nyhart, *Modern Nature: The Rise of the Biological Perspective in Germany*, identify a “nascent ecological outlook” that would soon become a new discipline, especially in Germany. Natural landscape was one of the young state’s signs of identity, but the pastoral poetry in France (with de Noailles forcing into binaries the inside of the house and the outdoor garden as a space of freedom, modern cities versus the ancient vestiges visited by mythical figures while on her errands across southern Europe), or the rural landscapes constructing Englishness in the poems and novels of the early century in the British Isles, could not have had a political rationale. It bespeaks the poetics of the time, inspired by the biologizing of social sciences, heredity and atavism appearing as frequent epistemological sources of character construction. In *Meșterul Manole* [*Master Mason Manole*], Blaga follows Nietzsche’s Zarathustra in defining human destiny as that of a

creator of metaphors wherein the whole of being is revealed. As in Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* [*The Decline of the West*], where civilization appears to be dried up and alienated in the cult of material assets, it is a return to the spirit of primitive societies that an awakening may be deemed possible. The aesthetics of Wilhelm Worringer, Alois Riegl, Leo Frobenius, Nietzsche, and Spengler found the factors generating culture not in the history of the arts, but in the soul of the primitive and archaic, collective, imaginary – legends, epics. Blaga does not play with binaries, such as nature and civilization, dualistic thought being alien to him. His outlook was probably inspired by Friedrich Junge's *Der Dorfteich als Lebensgemeinschaft* (1985), a book he had in his library with its organic notion of the village community whose central pond – rather than church – gathers all of the dwellers around.

Country life also appeared in binaries which circulated at the time, such as Werner Sombart's "English Traders and German Heroes" (*Helden und Händler*), who polarize the fictional world of E. M. Forster's *Howard's End*, or the national epos/ international Art Deco divide in Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust*. As Lynn K. Nyhart argues in *Modern Nature: The Rise of the Biological Perspective in Germany* (2009), the third way was the emergence of a "biological perspective" in Germany in opposition to industrialization and urbanization in the late 19th century, which highlighted the dynamic relationships between organisms and their environment, also influenced the perspective on social relations and interaction with the environment, which were meant to integrate society into nature forming a functional whole.

In line with Ernst Rudorff's "Über das Verhältniß des modernen Lebens zur Natur" (1880), Junge tried to press home the conviction that studying biological communities helped children answer existential questions such as "what is my place in society?." Communities were perceived at many levels, the individual contributing through work to the health of the larger unit. A household was a community, just like a city. The answer to the question, "Who am I in all the diversity I see in nature?" was "You

are connected as a whole, you receive and give, you are dependent and you produce an effect" (Junge 178).

The politicization of biological life had started some time before, Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl being among the first who bridged nature and society in his *Die Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Social-Politik* (1854). He was succeeded by Rudorff with *Über das Verhältniß des modernen Lebens zur Natur* (1880). Although the period has generally been discussed in terms of post-industrialization, technology, the rise of mass culture, the onset of the consumer society, and modern neurosis induced by rapid change, this other face of modernism says much about its spirit and values. Natural science museums were opened, presenting the exhibits not isolated but in collectivities, in interaction and in the natural environment, as an antidote to the fragmentation of civilization and the individual's alienation in the modern civilization. Attention began to be paid to the conservation of natural monuments, tourism control, and the protection of historical monuments. Nature preserves and national parks were created across the world (from the American West to Russia's *zapovedniki*). It was not a matter of narrow cultural nationalism (there was, for instance, a European glance at the American Frontier in Karl May's *Winnetou*), but also an attempt at redefining man's relationship to the world of his habitation and his other fellow human beings. In his poem, "We were the Land's before the Land was Ours," Robert Frost spoke about a new kind of appropriation of the American land, not physically, by force, but mytho-poetically, through the imagination.

Blaga creates clusters of metaphors to render the sense of organic continuity between man and nature (the village is like a tree leafing in humans), of the antiquity of the individual's bond to the community (a Biblical tent), of the prehistorical setting, safe from the lures and harms of civilization, as in "Out of the leaves of the village/ I emerge/ as if from a Biblical tent" ("Din frunzele satului ies/ ca dintr-o biblică șatră") (Blaga, "Fum căzut" [Fallen Smoke], in *Poezii* 107).

2. Lucian Blaga and Phenomenology

We may say that Blaga's philosophical system is Husserl's phenomenology turned on its head. The Romanian philosopher disagreed with the representation of space as empty and filled with discrete objects of consciousness (noemata – things rendered intelligible through phenomenological variation). Whereas with Kant, space and time are *a priori* forms of intuition, for Blaga they are written in the unconscious. The way the world appears to consciousness is mediated by these stylistic categories. Whereas with Husserl the phenomenological method is a problem of conscious intentionality, Blaga speaks of "abyssal noology" (nous + logos). Husserl's morphological method implies eidetic reduction until the object of [n] perceptions is reduced to absolute, abstract and inalterable essences. The process is open, infinite, as the essential features of the object are never exhausted. Contrariwise, in Heidegger, the revelation of being is historicized, the perception of the world changing from one phase of civilization to another.

Blaga also defines as phenomenon the world's coming into view. However, the totality sought by Husserlians at the end of the process of phenomenological constitution is placed by Blaga at the beginning. The world is a phenomenon, but an original one. It is perceived and assessed according to the horizon of the framework of space and time to which one is born.

Husserl was trying to get rid of psychology. He distinguished between things and the feelings they arouse in the perceiving subject: things and things plus feelings, but never a disembodied affection. On the contrary, Blaga grants emotions a reality effect:

With a bold smile I look into myself
and take my heart
in my hand.
Trembling
I hold the treasure to my ear and listen.
It seems
that I hold in my hands a seashell
in which

long and incomprehensible
 comes the rumour of an unknown sea.
 Oh, will I arrive, will I arrive
 some day on the shore
 of that sea, which today
 I feel,
 but don't see?

(C-un zâmbet îndrăzneţ privesc în mine
 şi inima
 mi-o prind în mână.
 Tremurând
 îmi strâng comoara la ureche şi ascult.
 Îmi pare
 că țin în mâni o scoică
 în care
 prelung şi neînţeles
 răsună zvonul unei mări necunoscute.
 O, voi ajunge, voi ajunge
 vreodată* pe malul
 acelei mări, pe care azi
 o simt,
 dar nu o văd?) (Blaga, "Scoica" [The Shell], in *Poezii* 20)

In a lecture on "Things and Space," Husserl speculates on the effect of a subject's changing of the environment on his perceptions of phenomena:

In this same world, I also find other Egos [*andere Ich*]. They, like us, have their environment in this same world, and they also, by means of the givens of the immediate environment, draw conclusions about further givens. Furthermore, as beings with feeling and will, their comportment is similar to ours. Other Egos occupy other positions in the world than we do, and, accordingly, they possess another immediate environment and other nexuses of mediation. If they exchange their position for ours, or vice versa, then immediate environment, perceptions, and perceptual possibilities, to speak in general, are also exchanged. (3)

When it comes to the effect of changing the spatiotemporal reality over the field of vision, Blaga distinguishes between “the multiple and diverse landscape horizon of consciousness vs. the unique spatial horizon of the unconscious as an integral and organic part thereof”:

From the moment when a person's unconscious finds its first categorical expression in a certain spatial horizon, always structured in a certain way and not otherwise, the person's consciousness can move through any landscapes, however diverse; despite the kaleidoscopically changing circumstances, the self's consciousness will be penetrated by the deep and grave resonances of its unique, persistent unconscious horizon. (Din momentul în care înconștientul unui îns și-a găsit o întâie categorică expresie într-un anume orizont spațial, totdeauna structurat într-un anume chip și nu altfel, conștiința insului se poate deplasa prin orice peisaje oricât de diverse; în pofida împrejurărilor caleidoscopice schimbătoare, conștiința insului va fi pătrunsă de rezonanțele adânci și grave ale orizontului său înconștient unic, persistent.) (Blaga, *Orizont și stil* [Horizon and Style] 25)

With Blaga, the spatio-temporal horizon acting from the unconscious as a stylistic matrix, shaping one's view of the world, has not just a perceptual but an **ontological function**. In Heidegger's terms, the four-dimensional space is a world; it has a worlding effect on the ego, ushering it into a cosmic order.

In *Iberian Sky*, the poet feels estranged, alienated from his Vallachian landscape, which alone granted him a sense of being at home. The original phenomenon, the horizon he has brought along with him, steals into the present field of vision, displacing it and bringing a sense of relief:

I am a man of the forest and I like the leaf.
But in the pine forest
from Estoril, under the hot sun,
you can't find a shadow among the lights,
to protect one from the rays.
Here the springs do not open.

Blown by windmills
 hot smells kill.
 I fool myself for a moment
 with the ocean coming into view,
 but water has no shade either
 to wrap my sick heart.
 To wrap my sick heart,
 I need a soothing of the heart
 the dewing glory
 of the moistured grove
 in the thickly forested Wallachia.

(Om de pădure sînt și-mi place frunza.
 Dar în pădurea de pini
 de la Estoril, subt soarele torid,
 o umbră nu găsești printre lumini,
 să te apere de raze.
 Aici izvoarele nu se deschid.
 Vânturate de mori de vînt
 miresele fierbinți ucid.
 O clipă m-amăgesc
 cu Oceanul ce se vede-n zare,
 dar umbră nici apa nu are
 să-mi învelească inima bolnavă.
 Să-mi învelească inima bolnavă,
 mi-ar trebui de-aiurea dezmierdare,
 mult înrourata slavă,
 a Vlahiei deasă, largă,
 reavănă dumbravă. (Blaga, "Soare iberic" [Iberian Sun] in *Poezii*
 339)

The abyssal categories of the unconscious generate icons of Romanian-ness: the village, time as a river, the space undulating to infinity, the disinterested cult of beauty, the beautifully trimmed garden even in front of a humble cottage, in contrast to the man in the West seized with panic at the thought of poverty. The outward and the inward spaces are at odds for the displaced individual and coincidental among natives. The unconscious is the individual's

inwardness, yet space is given in common, like a Jungian collective archetype – this is Blaga's dialectics of selfhood and community.

III. Bergson, Blaga and the Quantum World

Having assimilated the new biologizing tendencies in the vitalist German writings of the previous half of a century, having learned his lesson from Junge that each individual should think of himself as a link in the endless chain of being, young Blaga grasped at Bergson as the authority legitimating his own trend of thought, publishing two articles, "Reflexii asupra intuiției lui Bergson" ("Reflections on Bergson's Intuition," 1914), and "Ceva despre filosofia lui H. Bergson" ("On H. Bergson's Philosophy," 1915). He reflects deeply on the French philosopher's ideas about memory, duration, and intuition, which meant knowing things, not as external objects and under the aspect of what they have in common, but through intellectual sympathy, in the absolute. Unlike intelligence, bent on practicality, matter, mobility and fixation, intuition was something new, in progress, a vital upsurge, an absolute and disinterested identification with the object.

Bergson moved beyond the horizon afforded through perception of an object, for, he says, we only perceive what is of interest to us (William James' pragmatist view) while ignoring whatever else that object might be. An object, therefore, cannot be reduced to what we know about it as it extends beyond its image in our consciousness. Bergson seems to imply that our representation of a thing should include an imaginary element, such as the imaginary i ($\sqrt{-1}$) number in the representation of Minkovsky's four-dimensional space-time:

This is as much as to say that there is for images merely a difference of degree, and not of kind, between being and being consciously perceived. The reality of matter consists in the totality of its elements and of their actions of every kind. Our representation of matter is the measure of our possible action upon bodies: it results from the discarding of what has no interest for our needs, or more generally for our functions. In one sense we might

say that the perception of any unconscious material point whatever, in its instantaneousness, is infinitely greater and more complete than ours, since this point gathers and transmits the influences of all the points of the material universe, whereas our consciousness only attains to certain parts and to certain aspects of those parts. Consciousness,— in regard to external perception, — lies in just this choice. But there is, in this necessary poverty of our conscious perception, something that is positive, that foretells spirit: it is, in the etymological sense of the word, discernment. (Bergson 13)

In quantum physics, any entity is a superposition of virtual and realized states. It exists in a process of continuous emergence. One needs to move beyond perception, therefore, to a virtual state where the object exists in relation to the infinite world of matter, connected with everything else. It is from here that the mind moves, through several planes of consciousness, to a representation of the object. As Blaga comments, that virtual state wherefrom real entities emanate was creation's dynamic heart, an integral notion of being that reaches to the dead point where the vital upsurge (*élan vital*) organizes matter, creating its own free, intelligent world and the most beautiful light – consciousness:

an art, a method, by which you know a thing by creating it, by which the subject is identified with the object – therefore absolute knowledge – by which you witness the great creation, penetrate into the "dynamic heart" of the world, transcending the narrow borders of intellectual categories. . . . (o artă, un metod, prin care cunoști un lucru creîndu-l, prin care se identifică subiectul cu obiectul – cunoștință absolută prin urmare – prin care asști la marea creațiune, pă trunzi în „inima dinamică” a lumii, transcendînd marginile înguste ale categoriilor intelectuale. . . . (Blaga, *Reflecții* 33)

This is the epistemic idea underwriting Blaga's poem, "Inscription":

The roads we don't walk,
the roads that remain in us,

also take us, without number, somewhere.
 The words we don't speak,
 the words that remain in us,
 also discover the infinite Being.
 The wars we do not wage
 the wars that remain in us
 also add to our land's concealed expansion.
 The seed we don't sow,
 the seed that remains in us,
 also multiplies life without end.
 The death from which we don't die,
 the death that remains in us,
 engulfs us in deeper silence.
 And everywhere and through everything
 poetry sets its foundation.

(Drumurile pe cari nu umblăm,
 drumurile ce rămân în noi,
 ne duc și ele, fără număr, undeva.
 Cuvintele pe care nu le rostim,
 cuvintele ce rămân în noi,
 descoperă și ele, fără de margini, făptura.
 Luptele ce nu le dăm,
 luptele ce rămân în noi,
 ne lărgesc și ele în taină patria.
 Sămânța pe care n-o dăruim,
 sămânța ce rămâne în noi,
 multiplică și ea fără capăt viața.
 Moartea de care nu murim,
 moartea ce rămâne în noi,
 ne adâncește și ea tăcerea.
 Și pretutindeni prin toate
 își pune temei poezia.)

Blaga's poetics in *Poems of Light* is grounded in this passage from Bergson's *Matter and Memory*: "To obtain this conversion from the virtual to the actual it would be necessary, not to throw more light on the object, but on the contrary to obscure some of its aspects, to diminish it by the greater part of itself, so that the

remainder, instead of being encased in its surroundings as a thing, should detach itself from them as a picture" (12). By enveloping the real thing in darkness, the unknown part surfaces not as a physical perception but as a "picture," a trope (imagination has to provide something of its own substance). It is true that reality was too much for the romantics and that they preferred, for instance, to imagine places rather than visit them (as in S. T. Coleridge, "This *Lime-Tree* Bower My Prison"), but, with Bergson, the substitution is a matter of **ontological conversion** with cognitive implications. Actually, Bergson's intuition is a regress to the original virtual state: "The truth is that memory does not consist in a regression from the present to the past, but, on the contrary, in a progress from the past to the present. It is in the past that we place ourselves at a stroke" (97). Blaga too has in mind a cyclical model of the universe, a self-sustained sort of cyclical deaths and rebirths:

Enduring in us
 more than in the graves,
 on their living way
 ancestors keep looking ahead, under the sun.
 Through the hot darkness
 of our sin of evening and morning,
 in quest of knowledge and eternal
 life, ancestors keep looking ahead.
 On the same road, sometimes we return
 to the midst of the hot, veridical light
 harbouring the snakes
 and Eve's fairy tales.

(Dăinuind în noi
 mai mult decât în morminte,
 pe drumul lor viu
 strămoșii se uită, sub soare, mereu înainte.
 Prin bezna fierbinte
 a păcatului nostru de seară și dimineață,
 dorind cunoaștere și vesnica
 viață strămoșii se uită mereu înainte.
 Pe-acelăș drum uneori noi ne-ntoarcem

până-n mijlocul caldei, aievei
 lumini, care-n ea ține serpii
 și basmele Evei. (“Înaintarea lor și-ntoarcerea noastră,” [Their
 Advance and Our Return]).

If the entire existence is to be embedded in a holistic theory, then the description should descend at the level of the smallest constitutive unit which partakes of a universal fabric. Blaga defines the divine differential (the latter, a term borrowed from differential calculus) as the smallest unit containing substance and Delta (variable) energy. That sounds like a quantum singularity – one of the smallest things in the universe, such as the timespace singularity containing all the information of the universe at the moment of the Big Bang (Stephen Hawking’s singularity theorem) or a gravitational singularity, of infinitesimal space and infinite density.

Unlike the differentials of infinitesimal calculus, Blaga’s differentials are virtual structures that need to combine with complementary differentials in order to realize their virtual potential in units formative of complex structures (individuation process). They resemble quantum states interfering in the wave function of a system that collapses in a temporary Eigenstate.

Analogies can be established also between Blaga’s generative metaphor of the Great Anonymous and the differentials which together constitute its code, never to be replicated in its entirety. These differentials or formative units intersect according to their potential for combination and complementarity. Autonomous and self-sufficient entities are replaced by processes of becoming. A virtual entanglement of formative units resembles the mathematical description of a quantum particle – a wave function. Like quantum particles, which do not appear and disappear but change their position, the divine differentials do not change. They only enter into combinations, generating complex structures or disassembling them (a process similar to quantum localization where an impurity can become an attractor changing

the system's properties). Therefore, complex structures, individualities, only have a temporary existence.

In "Diferențialele divine" [*Divine Differentials*], Blaga explains the difference between his cognitive metaphor and other monistic concepts, such as Johann Friedrich Herbart's *Realia* or Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's monad. If each monad is an image of the cosmos, why would God have felt the need to create so many that do not resemble each other, although they are supposed to be created in a unique image (of God)?

Besides, there are no stable states anymore, no permanent discrete and self-identical entities, as matter and energy are in flux undergoing temporary territorialization (to use a Deleuzian term) as complex structures. The states of a system described by the wave function are virtual, open possibilities before their interferences cause the system to collapse into a realized state, an Eigenstate. This too, however, is subject to change. There are no stable entities anymore, only processes.

Differentials and integration of differentials are presented by Blaga as functions that take various values. His mathematical representation of the values taken by series of differentials resembles the representation of quantum states in the wave function:

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 a & a & a & a & a & a & \dots & \infty \\
 b & b & b & b & b & b & \dots & \infty \\
 c & c & c & c & c & c & \dots & \infty \\
 & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \infty \\
 & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \infty \\
 & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \infty \\
 a_1 & a_1 & a_1 & a_1 & a_1 & a_1 & \dots & \infty \\
 b_1 & b_1 & b_1 & b_1 & b_1 & b_1 & \dots & \infty \\
 c_1 & c_1 & c_1 & c_1 & c_1 & c_1 & \dots & \infty \\
 & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \infty \\
 & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \infty \\
 & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \infty \\
 a_2 & a_2 & a_2 & a_2 & a_2 & a_2 & \dots & \infty
 \end{array}$$

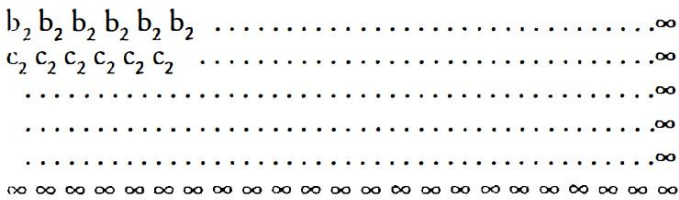


Fig. 1: Individuation process: integration of differentials generating complex structures

Similarly, Fig. 2 shows four wave functions of an electron for four energy levels depending on the values of the [n] quantum number:

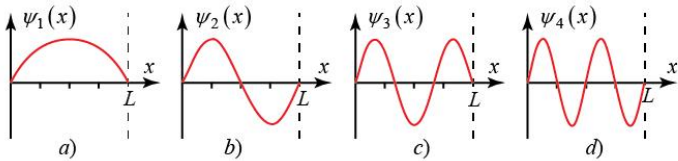


Fig. 2. Stationary wave functions for four [n] dependent levels of energy. (Rusu and Rusu 63)

Conclusion

The revisionist purpose of our essay has targeted a widespread opinion about Blaga’s attachment to a cultural nationalism that makes him appear ill at ease in the landscape of blooming modernism. Recent studies in modernism have somehow modified its perception as the creation of aesthetic inmates of *Axel’s Castle* as Edmund Wilson showcased them. Iconic figures of the age have been rediscovered as being deeply involved in social and political issues viewed with a critical eye.

Another legend worth revisiting is their presumably exclusive focus on urban turmoil, the “panorama of futility” image stamped by T. S. Eliot on the show of empty but fashionable life and pursuits. Modernism was indeed a time of opposite tendencies,

cosmopolitan coterie coexisting with devotees on a quest for signs of identity in the national landscape and culture, particularly after the fall of the European dynasties and the rise of nation-states after the end of World War I. Vital energies released into expressionist discharges of emotions, the turn away from positivist taxonomies to vitalist philosophy, revolutionary ethos (D. H. Lawrence), and the holistic turn to quantum physics draw a face of modernity as much worth taking into consideration as the wasteland foil with which it was identified until not long ago. Blaga's enormous erudition across disciplinary paradigms and his cultural sensitivity set him off as an outstanding figure of the century. His genius allowed him to intuit the insights of the future, such as the deconstruction of metaphysics, polyvalent logic, and quantum epistemology.

The village imaginary in Blaga's poetry is not the cosmos on a small scale, nor a well-defined historical world. It is a cosmoid: a self-sufficient aesthetic construction, a symbolic space crossed by the contrary currents of parabolic sage discourse and the pathos of the human plight.

Notes:

¹ If not otherwise specified, the translations are by M. Tupan.

² *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2011, pp. 227–236. C _ Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/S1479244311000138.

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