

Intellectual Elasticity as a Blagian Episteme:
The Basis of a Modus Vivendi between
His Philosophy and Dramaturgy

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Abstract

The article proposes for debate a new perspective on the work of Lucian Blaga. Following a suggestion from Blaga himself that his literary and philosophical works are not co-planar and therefore should not be reduced to a common denominator, but judged according to the intrinsic norms of each, many critics of Blaga's work have tried to keep this distance. The result has been a dialog of the deaf. But there have also been authors who, blurring the boundaries between the two genres, have reduced either philosophy to literature or literature to philosophy. The result is a chimera. The author of the present article, aware of the autonomy of the two fields, attempts to find a comprehensive middle position that sheds new light on Blaga's work. By placing philosophy (the systematic-Blagian one) and dramaturgy (represented in this text by the drama *Zalmoxis*) in parallel, the article tries to capture a certain modus operandi of the Blagian spirit, associated with a meta-disciplinary spirit, a creative spirit, which is not absorbed in any disciplinary practice, but operates freely within each of them. The point of this essay is this: whether writing theater or philosophy, Blaga manifests a spiritual elasticity that overthrows the rigid principle of identity, responsible for many sterile philosophical and literary practices.

Keywords: Lucian Blaga, logical identity, supramethod, Hegelian dialectic, mystery, metaphor, spiritual elasticity, *Zalmoxis*

There is not just one world. There are worlds. Each world locks Being into the equation of a single identity. It is therefore one world and not another. He who belongs to only one of them continually utters the mantra *Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'intrate*. We are talking here about the functional man. The functional man works best when he becomes one with the world, to such an extent that it becomes *his world*. He neither knows of other worlds nor wishes to know of them. An inner voice is always telling him that this over-knowledge would be of no use to him, even harmful, that it would slow his brisk pace and reduce his efficiency. Efficiency means everything to him. For understandable reasons, most people are functional. They are always working in the sense of their world. You could call them "identity employees." Even if they are capable of initiative and novelty in their actions, there is still a distance from the Center that they will never overcome. Their footsteps will not wander through a Vale of Lamentations.

Beyond them are the people who live between worlds, moving endlessly between them without entering into their rest. They are elastic spirits, with no commitment to the identity of any of them. From this transcendence they draw their substance. They are metaphor-men who communicate meanings only as they stand above the worlds, removing them from their identity and making them resonate by bringing them together. Blaga's concern with understanding metaphor is not accidental. A spirit that metaphorizes incessantly, even when it proposes scientific texts for our understanding, is itself configured metaphorically. The way in which Blaga characterizes the "revelatory metaphor" in turn characterizes himself. The portrait of this metaphor is in fact a self-portrait:

But there is a second type of metaphor, "revelatory metaphors". While type I metaphors (plasticizing metaphors) do not enhance the

meaning of the facts to which they refer, but supplement their direct expression, the word as such, type II metaphors enhance the meaning of the facts themselves to which they refer. Revealing metaphors are intended to reveal something hidden about the very facts they refer to. Revelatory metaphors attempt in some way to reveal a 'mystery' by means made available to us by the concrete world, by our sensory experience and the imaginary world (Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei și Sensul Culturii* 279). Revelatory metaphors amalgamate or conjugate two analogical-disanalogical facts in order to reveal in this way an x, or the hidden side of a mystery. Plasticizing metaphors express, on an analogical basis, the fact "a" through the fact "b"; "b" is accepted as a metaphorical factor exclusively thanks to special equivalences in relation to "a". Revealing metaphors try to reveal an "x" by amalgamating two analogical-disanalogical facts (a and b). (*The Genesis of Metaphor and the Sense of Culture* 310)¹

We will not pursue further the coordinates of the Blagian analysis of the *Trilogy of Culture*, although it would not prove fruitless to do so. For our purpose, it is sufficient to suggest that some of the perspectives opened in this work may serve to uncover consonances between the philosophical and the literary creation. In the parallel between philosophy and dramaturgy, through which we try to capture a certain *modus operandi* of the Blagian spirit, we will bring to light some ideas from *Experiment and the Mathematical Spirit*, a work which, in its thematic and discourse, seems to have nothing to do with literary issues, though still Blagian. Or, it is precisely the identification of common operators in disjunctive cultural discourses (science / literature) that would plead more successfully in favor of the idea that we will support. Our idea is that there is a meta-disciplinary Blaga, a creator who is not absorbed in the confines of any disciplinary practice. Whether he writes poetry, theater, or philosophy, Blaga manifests a spiritual elasticity that plays with the rigid principle of identity, like the little girl with a doll. One after the other, the stuffed toy is the little girl's mother, her friend, her teacher, without arousing the slightest suspicion that such a thing is impossible. I would like to talk about this elasticity in this article, about the way in which Blaga not only

conceptualized it, theorizing it philosophically, but also launched it in all his cultural battles, as a conceptual generator. It is present from his earliest philosophical texts, specifically from the essays found in his doctoral dissertation, *Culture and Knowledge*, to his final philosophical work, *The Historical Being* (written in 1959-60 but published posthumously in 1977). This elasticity is also partly responsible for the avalanche of feelings that his theater awakens in the reader, from his very first play, *Zalmoxis*.

In an article in a collective volume dedicated to Blaga's work – *Lucian Blaga. Relecturi critice* [*Critical Re-readings*] – starting from the primary meaning given by Blaga to the "supramethod" in the work *Experiment and the Mathematical Spirit*, I have resized the parameters of this concept, so as to provide a new perspective on the reading of Blaga's creation (21-38). The suggestion to approach Blaga from Blaga, i.e. to be "within" him (we have in mind here the meaning that Constantin Noica gave to this preposition), I found in his work *On Philosophical Consciousness*:

A metaphysical vision representing a whole must be judged in its own perspective; and if any criticism is to be applied to it, it is and must be primarily an immanent criticism. It is very wrong to approach a metaphysical conception only with ideas from outside of it. Only critics without sufficient metaphysical sensibility and without a proper philosophical consciousness do so. An immanent critique always takes into account the intrinsic criteria of a metaphysical system or conception, and these are useful both for emphasizing the value of the construction in itself and for revealing its places of minor resistance. A philosophical critique that fails to adapt itself to the inner criteria of a metaphysical conception remains, in essence, inoperative. (*On Philosophical Consciousness* 24)

In order not to show ourselves lacking either "metaphysical sensibility" or a minimal "philosophical awareness," the absence of either of which would invalidate the success of an effort to understand a work saturated with metaphysics, we will heed Blaga's invitation. Strictly speaking, highlighting the field lines of a work

so vast and varied demands such a critique. Otherwise, we are casting our nets into empty waters.

In a strictly Blagian sense, with the term "**supramethod**" the philosopher defines a trans-methodological construct meant to explain the crucial way in which Galilean-Newtonian science succeeded in imposing itself definitively in the face of other physicalist conceptions, proving an unprecedented effectiveness and becoming, since the 1600s, a true *modus operandi* of modern science until today:

The most intimate meaning of the supramethod in relation to nature is to exploit to the maximum the possibilities inherent in each method, guiding them by combining them each time with mathematics toward a supreme performance. (*Experiment and the Mathematical Spirit* 104)

According to Blaga, modern physics (which also extends to contemporary physics) earned its fame by being led by this kind of supramethodical guidance. This kind of guidance did not aim at the pan-mathematization of reality, which would have been both useless (since it would be devoid of content) and impossible, the phenomenal field being impossible to grasp in the manner of the mathematician alone. Instead, in deciphering the secrets of nature it aims to use all the resources that are available to the physicist: directed observations, experiments, laws, ways of theorizing, analogies, and new facts, provided that all these achieve a coupling with mathematics. In this way, by providing them with rigor and a common ground on which to compose their own forces, mathematics would lead to a solidarity and a reinforcing of the strength of the methods of physical science, which would be able to form, according to Blaga, a "common front" in the face of nature.

Blaga is a visionary thinker. If the communist camp had not prevented the free circulation of ideas in Europe, French post-structuralism would not have seemed so revolutionary to contemporaries. Context notwithstanding, we can consider what Michael Foucault would later refer to as 'episteme' as an analog of

the Blagian supramethod. For Blaga, the supramethod is the unifying factor that has unconsciously driven the efforts of physicists towards the grand edifice of physics today. For the French philosopher, the episteme is also a guiding factor of subjectivity within a given epoch, an a priori, which unitarily grounds truth and discourse, representing the condition of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or implied in a practice. Formally, the two philosophers speak in different languages about the same fact. However, because Blagian thought had anteriority, we will grant it exclusivity.

By the time he wrote *Experiment and the Mathematical Spirit* (1949-1953), the trilogies had been completed and the conception of mystery and the Great Anonymous had become fixed. The twine seemed twisted to its last thread. And yet the spinning was not completed. *Experiment and the Mathematical Spirit* gives us the third Blaga (after that of his youth, of the "groping," and of the trilogies), a Blaga freed from the aura of dogmatism he had begun to take hold of. Blaga had begun to repeat himself. And he felt it first and foremost in himself. He was always deepening and widening the thematic horizons, incorporating as many themes as possible, but he was repeating himself. He had become a sort of Hegel of the *Encyclopaedias*, i.e. quite predictable, an image not at all in keeping with the poet's demands, for whom the only way to repeat oneself was not to do it at all. This new work devoted to modern science does not merely widen the vision: it opens new vistas. Nowhere in its contents does it make any reference to the "irrational," "mystery," "censorship," "abyssal categories," "ontological mutation," "the Great Anonymous" etc., that is to say, to the concepts that had consecrated him, and which, on the occasion of various anniversary events, we also present as constants of the One Blaga. The latter Blaga, that of the *Experiment*, has lost his "stylistic aspect" and strengthened his rational one. If style accompanied him for a time on the path of his thought, **his personal concept of rationality** did so for a lifetime.

First of all, it should be noted that the emergence of rationality characterizes a late period in human history, appearing

and developing in competition with the forms of spiritual life exercised within the frameworks of mythical and magical thinking. By acquiring its autonomy from these two, rationality will build a new operating system, from which contact with empiricism (experience, intuition, the concrete, the sensible) will not be absent, even if we also witness attempts to break away from the source of the senses and from the theoretical constructions built up in their extension (see Parmenides and the Eleatic school). Yet this is not a normal state of mind, but a disease of the spirit, which comes at a huge price: the immobilization of experience. In this extreme case, rationalization is only possible on the template of absolute identity.

The effect of this exacerbation is the "serious mutilation of existence" and its "coagulation." All judgments based on it become tautological, incapable of providing knowledge. If the human spirit had remained captive to this form of rationalization, modern science as we know it today would never have arisen, and the mind would have remained trapped within the empty identity of "A is A," from whose gravity nothing could ever extract it. But the human spirit did not stop there.

Rationalization alternatives by which the spirit succeeds in collaborating in the realization of "understanding" knowledge, which differ from rationalization according to logical identity, are rationalization along the line of attenuated identity, rationalization along the line of mathematical equality, and rationalization along the line of contradictory (dialectical) identity. The common element of these new ways of rationalizing reality is their capacity, each in its own way, to grasp the complex and dynamic reality and to conceptualize it.

Rationality of the Blagian type is a rationality along the lines of an *elastic identity*. Blaga himself describes this type of rationality in his last work of epistemology in order to open a door to the understanding of his work by his contemporaries and descendants. He justifies not only the corolla of concepts that appeared throughout the creative stages, but also their dynamics, it being obvious that Blaga does not always use the same words with the same meanings. He operates with elastic concepts, and this

elasticity is directly responsible for the extraordinary ability of the intellect to cooperate with mythical thought, artistic imagination, and magical thinking. It takes a great deal of intellectual elasticity to encompass under the same canopy of thought such heterogeneous directions of the revelatory spirit:

The tendency of this kind of rationalization is to abolish the rigidity of concepts, to keep notions in uninterrupted flux or to give them an elasticity which makes it possible to enrich their content without interruption. . . . Concepts cancel their rigidity in order that they may assimilate predicates that are at first extraneous to their content, but that with time may in many cases become integral elements of that content. Such a mode . . . augments knowledge with concepts of particular mobility. . . . Our empiricism finds itself constantly expanding. (*Experiment and the Mathematical Spirit* 164-165)

In trying to grasp the universal in and for itself, Hegel ran up against the same rigidity of concepts that philosophies before him had operated with, but he blamed it on the "reflexive intellect." The reflexive intellect abstracts from the living flow of the world only frozen elements that are incapable of recomposing the whole. For this reason, these philosophies do not understand each other, each seeing this whole only from a narrow, one-sided perspective. To think of the Absolute in an indirect way requires the activity of reason, and not intellect, as intellect kills the object of thought. Only reason, said Hegel, through the dialectic immanent in its concepts, becomes capable of linking the subjective spirit to the objective spirit of the world, achieving "absolute knowledge." In Blaga's language, this knowledge implies a rationalization of empiricism along the lines of contradictory (dialectical) identity.

The type of rationality that underpins Blaga's philosophical creation is also present in his dramatic creation. Both pursue the same aim – the revelation of mystery. Only the methods differ: while in philosophical creation "abstract construction" and "schematic visions" are used, in dramatic creation "Art uses

concrete intuition for the same purpose" (*On Magical Thinking* 274).

Blagian theater is expressionist. If for most of his contemporaries, expressionism was more of a fashion that was being attempted, even clumsily, in certain countries of Western Europe, for Blaga expressionism was a milestone in defining a future historical epoch.

A contemporary of Blaga's, Ion Sân-Giorgiu, describes the expressionist movement and its intentions. Disillusioned by literary critics who only hunted down his shortcomings and failed to see in him "the seed from which a new literature would later grow," Sân-Giorgiu reviewed the most relevant points of view that he had spotted in the culture of the time and which belonged to the most prominent protagonists of expressionism: "the tendency towards Christian mystery and religious ecstasy" (Hauptman), the heralding of a "new humanity" and the cry to God of the "spirit-man" (Kasimir Edschmid), the spiritual connection with the whole, with the cosmos (Richard Blunk), the "desperate call to the God who comes down out of nowhere" (Franz Werfel), the twinning of fantasy and reality (Strindberg), the tragedy of youth in conflict with rigid laws (Wedekind), rebellion, the overthrow of false idols and cardboard statues, etc. (qtd. in Popescu 45-47).

In *Philosophy of Style* (1924), Blaga, speaking about Van Gogh's painting, observes how Van Gogh "instead of again photographing reality with its abundance of shade and shadows, he distorts it" (84). The immediate reality is annulled to give way to a higher order. A viewer fed for years on the principle of identity will never be able to see in the new creation anything other than mystical irrationalism and caricature. But Van Gogh is not completely unique. His manifestations in painting are matched by similar manifestations in other fields—in poetry, where they sing of "the great powers of the visionary spirit," and in the new, relativistic physics, where stylization reaches a high degree of abstraction. We are witnessing, says the philosopher, a process of stylistic completion, of the shaping of a *nisus formativus* centered on the value of the absolute. A succinct formulation of the new

artistic vision (whether literary or sculpture) can be found in the statement: "Whenever a thing is rendered in such a way that its power, its inner tension surpasses it, transcends it, betraying relations with the cosmic, with the absolute, with the unlimited, we are dealing with an expressionist artistic product" (*Philosophy of Style* 127).

For Blaga, the expressionist theater is defined in several essential coordinates: the metaphysical background, drawn with mythical-magical elements of different religions; characters pierced by existential torments of ontological dimensions, by spiritual impulses with visionary transcendences towards another world; the flight from reality, with effects on the technique with which the characters are built – unreal, of hallucinatory proportions; the author's ego, multiplied in various masks, often competing.

But, for Blaga, expressionism is not only a literary-artistic current, but it is the debut, in these fields of art and literature, of a new episteme. In his early works, the philosopher called it the "new spirituality":

The new spirituality exists. So much so that I don't feel I exist except through it. I am, as far as this new spirituality is. For my part, I have tried to enhance its myth in all my poems, the metaphysics of sleep in the last, Zalmoxis' Blind Man, Jesus-Earth, the anonymity of Luke, the sacrifice of Manole. To what extent I succeeded, I don't know. What is certain is that all my friends wear the halo. (qtd. in Vulcănescu 45)

In works of systematic philosophy, he tried to conceptualize the new episteme. In the first of these (*The Dogmatic Age*), enthused by the novelty of the point of view and blinded by it, the episteme is endowed with the attributes of a new aeon, a new historical epoch of revelation of Being. Later, its impetus would be tempered. He introduced the concept of luciferic knowledge, and, in his later works, as we have already mentioned, he saw in the new episteme the product of a certain kind of rationalization of the world. It is interesting that most of Blaga's plays were written before his trilogies were published (the last of the plays was written in 1930,

and *The Dogmatic Age* appeared a year later). We are sometimes tempted to think that Blaga first tested his new form of conceptualizing in the imaginary material of his theater of ideas and then formalized it in his philosophical essays.

Where do we find signs of this spiritual elasticity in Blagian theater? Everywhere. For reasons of space, we will refer only to his first play, *Zalmoxis*. But all his dramas are built on similar principles. We shall see how the spirit that drives the thread of the drama constantly constitutes an attack on the demands of logical identity. The personages and conditions by which they are animated are contained by spirits that relocate them from the static rationality of nature into the irrationality of the spirit.

Zalmoxis expresses the drama of a people victimized by the times and desperately trying to find a place in History. The people were nothing more than "a monad asleep," as Blaga later called it (in *The Historical Being* 511). The Magus urges the Dacians to be silent and calm. The religion, in whose name he spoke, was a domestic religion — with temples adorned with the faces of gods asleep in the materiality of hewn stone, in excessive Apollonian beauty.

The only purpose the Magus recognizes for himself is to put to sleep the "powers" lying unconscious in the Dacian. "Dormant powers," he kept repeating. And how could this be done? By erecting a temple in honor of the gods. By making offerings to the gods, they would calm the storms within man and without. By erecting the temple, the god will be elevated to heaven, that is, made transcendent. The Magus' trick is clear: the idol, the statue, and the carved image sooth all spiritual crises, because by worshipping them, man leaves all his worries to the god. We purify ourselves of the "powers" by erecting churches. An occasional sacrifice is brought to the powers "above" and all is right again. The powers must not be left in our proximity. They disturb balances and bring suffering with which we can no longer cope. They must be kept as far away as possible. The Magus recognizes the energies that threaten our ordinary existence.

The key to understanding the drama *Zalmoxis* is Dostoevsky's "The Grand Inquisitor" poem. The Grand Inquisitor is Blaga's Magus through and through. With what question does the Pope's representative repeatedly whip the living Jesus, descended for the second time among men?

"Shut up, say no more. What else could you say? I know what. Thou hast no right to add to what thou hast confessed. Why did you come to trouble us then?" (*The Brothers Karamazov* *The Brothers Karamazov* 364).

"You have entrusted everything to the pope, and therefore everything is now in his hands; you have no more place among us for the time being." (*The Brothers Karamazov* 365)

"Go, and come no more... come no more . . . never, never." (*The Brothers Karamazov* Idem 383)

Do we not find the same questions in the Magus, posed to Zalmoxis, who has also descended for the second time into the city?

The Magus: Zalmoxis, I know you.

Why did you come back?

You tried to rid him of the gods

And today you have a stone face among them!

Zalmoxis: And you, you are my priest!

Ha-ha, unbelievable! What revenge . . . ! (*Zalmoxis* 44-45)

The freedom Jesus gave people is, for the Inquisitor, the cause of their unhappiness. This freedom is a curse. All our misfortunes stem from it. People do not need freedom. With freedom, the energies within them would cause them only suffering. They are powerless to be otherwise. He who truly loves man wants his happiness, not suffering. And happiness is obtained by freeing him from God, throwing him into Heaven and placing between him and God a priest who will tell him what he wants to hear. With the presence of God beside you, you cannot be happy. With freedom in you, troubled by ultimate questions, you cannot find peace. This is the message of the Great Inquisitor. At the price of his own

unhappiness, he will succeed in bringing happiness to all men. He lies because he must. He will achieve happiness by sacrificing his own happiness.

Blaga, consistent with his expressionism, subtly suggests what Dostoevsky explicitly narrates. But the experience he provokes is no less intense. On the contrary, the less impression, the more expression. Dostoevskian realism keeps the reader at a distance. From there it provides all the elements necessary for comprehension. Expressionist drama, and implicitly Blagian drama, links the spectator to the stage. He is part of the play. His experiences make the play achieve its finality.

This justifies the above analogy. The Magus knows of the powers. In the presence of Zalmoxis, he feels them trying to erupt in him like a volcano, taking him over:

The Carver: There is no other people to devour
life like yours, high Priest! . . .

Power wrested from the chalice of the giant being.
Here I understood that all that is must be.

The Magus: Your word stirs up new fears in me. (*Zalmoxis* 34)

Like the Inquisitor, however, he also knows a little something else –the Dacians have a "child's imagination." They are too weak to cope with their huge inner energies. Dostoevsky's "helpless," Blaga's "child": this is man. In front of them is the divinity with its huge infinity poured out upon them. How can one resist?

Zalmoxis seems to say: "release the demons, laugh when a spear pierces your chest, be lightning, live. Don't hold back!" On the other hand, the sober Magus reiterates his exhortation to be prudent, find measure, abandon the adventure that only leads to perdition. It is suggested that the earth is better than the dream. On the one hand, we have a blind God who does not know where he comes from and where he is going, feeling his way among thorns, often falling and spreading storms of light around him. Next to him is man. On the other side, we have a cold, distant God, dwelling only in the sky. Without having any direct connection with man, the

god provides man with an unproblematic, banal, poor but . . . happy existence.

Two distinct existential realities. Two ideals of historical life. Is there no way of communication between them? Blaga also puts this third way before us, a way embodied by the female character Zemora. Like the other characters in the drama, Zemora lives an impersonal life. She is the embodiment of the Romanian soul that synthesized the Slavo-Thracian and Roman blood. In her conduct, we find both Mag and Zalmoxis – both in an equation that represents the chances of our history.

Blaga is not saying "Be just like Zalmoxis, Dacians, strong and dark, like his Blind Man," but "Be as you were, but do not forget your blood brothers!" Emphasis does not mean exclusivism, but, as we said, a correction with balancing ends. That is why, we believe, the new model of spirituality for which the playwright advocates is not embodied by the Blind Man but by Zemora. From this point of view, both the conduct of Santa (to repudiate Zalmoxis) and that of Zalmoxis (to demolish the temples in which the Magus serves) are both wrong. Let us not forget that in the end of the play the Dacians, having lost Zalmoxis-man and statue, regain their own selves. All along they had the solution at hand, but they did not know it.

The being of the Dacian is affixed to him; it is his. Hegel would say that this is only in the manner of "in itself." To become "for-itself," the mediation of a whole dialectical process of becoming must be brought into play. The Dacian is "in-self" Dacian, but not "for-self." He is alien to his self. He behaves as if he were not himself. He behaves with himself as if he were another. He does not accomplish this closeness to the self "by himself." It is Zalmoxis the prophet who will do it. In this dialectic, a clear expression of the kind of elasticity that characterizes the Blagian spirit, the Zalmoxis moment is the first negation. He knows that the Dacian has the essence of his dacity. But this essence does not manifest itself as such. The Dacian behaves like another. He worships not his own nature but foreign gods. He does not let his springs flow out. He closes them in, freezes them. He is "frozen in design." The statue he worships is this frozen project.

The Watchman (a follower of Zalmoxis): “. . . you'd rather remain
 a slave
 than to besiege with new cunning temples
 empty of faith.
 Our feet are getting fat from laziness on these holy slabs.”
 (*Zalmoxis* 7)

Zalmoxis is the next moment: he defines himself as a negation. For this reason, the idol-worshipping Dacians perceive him as an enemy. That is why they stone him when he talks about . . . them. “They” were not what Zalmoxis was talking about. They do not see themselves in his words and . . . they strike him. Their inauthentic existence is perceived by them as authentic. They were ontically close to their selves and wanted to stay that way. They were “too lazy” to attempt a change. Zalmoxis showed them how far from themselves they were. His words disturbed them, and, to be rid of this discomfort, they removed the source: Zalmoxis. This was the prophet's first descent among them. The result was negative on both sides. Only the temples enriched themselves with new idols. The more temples appeared in Dacia, the fewer Dacians there were. There were one or two followers of the prophet. This is also the case of the surface guardian, who chooses death over the dishonor of living outside his own self. The others “flourished underground like house rabbits” (*Zalmoxis* 7).

At the end comes the third moment — the moment of the second negation (in Hegelian terms: the negation of negation). In the language of drama, it is addressed as the second descent of the prophet into the city. Both terms (affirmation and negation) have changed their initial meaning: the Dacians have completely lost their freedom, worshipping the stone images, and Zalmoxis has given up the rebellion of the beginning, becoming “wiser”: “There was a time when I howled. I wanted to rebel even the mountains against you . . . but today my venom has subsided and in my endless days a thorn of wisdom has settled” (*Zalmoxis* 4).

The terms — the people and Zalmoxis — have each acquired their opposite meaning: the Dacian has moved maximally away

from himself, and Zalmoxis has begun to behave like a Magus. In the Hegelian dialectic, when such dialectical becomings occur, the "leap," the negation of negation, is performed. In the play, Zalmoxis destroys himself and thereby restores the beginning, along with the mediations that have occurred.

Me — god?
 Fist fight!
 The enemy?
 It's you — only you, only you, stone-face crowned with
 immortality . . .
 Lord Zalmoxis, how white you are, snow.
 But my dream is warm and melt you . . .
 He lunges at his statue
 and knocks it down with his fists.
 The people rush upon Zalmoxis,
 overthrow him and they hit
 with pieces of the broken statue. (*Zalmoxis* 50-51)

The result of this moment, according to the transfiguration so characteristic of expressionist theater, is the rediscovery of the self:

Zalmoxis is dead.
 But it brought us God.
 The Blind Man is among us again.
 And in us. (*Zalmoxis* 52)

Who is this Dacian who is at peace with his essence? Thracian and Latin at the same time. A rushing river and a well-built riverbed. It is Zemora, both Dionysian and Apollonian, both in perfect harmony. An event from the drama seems doubtful. Zemora and Zalmoxis have two encounters. The first time, Zalmoxis is very young and Zemora is also young and very beautiful. Years go by. Zalmoxis retreats to the cave and spends "a long time" there. The Sorcerer gives an earthly equivalent to this period which seems, from Zalmoxis' perspective, infinite — "It is just seven years since you made the world banish him" (he reproachfully tells the Magus)

(*Zalmoxis* 12). Zalmoxis and Zemora face each other without recognizing one another. This time Zalmoxis is silent. The Magus greets him with the words: "So changed?" But Zemora is unchanged. Bewitched by the song she has just sung, Zalmoxis greets her with the compliment: "Virgin, fresh as the fall mornings, what song do you sing?" (*Zalmoxis* 42).

Zemora expresses the collective soul of Romanians. There are many places in which the older Blaga (after the writing of the trilogies) defends this eternal youth, our capacity to give, when the times allows us. In fact, he says we have 'adopted' the age of childhood. This soul that Zemora embodies has a double nature: it is both Apollonian and Dionysian. In her first encounter with Zalmoxis, she demonstrated her mastery (in contrast to the young prophet) of the technique of catching a hive of bees.

Zalmoxis, you are very young,
And I'm beautiful,
But don't be scared.
I'll teach you how to catch the swarm,
you tell me about the beginning of the world.
You're better at that. (*Zalmoxis* 38)

After catching the hive of bees, Zalmoxis tries to keep his promise and replies:

Oh, I must tell you something:
you master it not with your mind
but with your wild beauty. (*Zalmoxis* 39)

Zalmoxis and Zemora are both young, and what binds them is precisely this "wild beauty." They address Zalmoxis, not the mind. The mind is the seat of our *techne* (Greek=ability). Zemora, irrational soul (wild beauty) and rational soul (perfect technique) alike, will only be able to make contact with Zalmoxis—the prophet of the volcanic Blind Man—through the common background of irrationality. And, let us not forget, the question he asks him is not just any question, but the eternal metaphysical

question concerning the understanding of the ultimate foundation of the world: how can a limited mind comprehend the infinite mystery? This was the first argument. The second is drawn from the essence of Zemora's song, contained in the opening of their second encounter. Zemora metaphorically expresses her deepest desires:

Wandering toward the sun —
from the foliage
he falls in my harp
I can't sing anymore. (*Zalmoxis* 41-42)

The Magus, when he sends his daughter to safety from the fury of Zalmoxis' followers, sends her to "the mountains that hold mysteries and treasures" (*Zalmoxis* 33). The place of the Dacians is the forest, as dark as their inner essence. The Dacians do not live on the plains. There, we meet only the Magus, the Shearer, and their temple. The openness of the space is the essence of the Apollonian, the luminous, the clear. In the verse of the song composed by the Dacian Madura, Zemora comes "from the foliage," from the forest. The first time they met was in the forest, and the second time it was in the orchard. Zalmoxis came down here from the forest. The orchard is a synthesis of darkness (the forest) and light (the plains). Only here could the two meet; never on the plains, only in their common element.

Zemora does not seek only the Apollonian element of reason, but also the Dionysian one. The soul cannot be fulfilled purely purely in the logical-rational dimension our Latinity is not sufficient, a sense of rebellion is also needed. It may give it the power to measure, to calculate, to master nature by means of technique, but never the power to sing. Drawn into the mysterious forest, the soul, with thorns stuck in its flesh, with snakes encircling its legs like vines, Zamora begins to sing:

Hawthorns are in the hand,
snakes slither through the twilight
And from the wounds on my thighs
spurts of blood flow.

Strings begin to sing the dusk in your ears
Drops fall over and over old mysteries. (*Zalmoxis* 42)

Zemora's conclusion to the question of the idol-worshipping Shearer of logical reason is flawless:

The sculptor: "Still sun, still sun?"
Zemora: "Still towards the sun and into the forest." (*Zalmoxis* 40)

In order to give consistency to the arguments here advanced in support of my thesis, I reserve the right to highlight in a future work the presence of elasticity, which is a defining trait of Blaga's thought and artistic expression in the plays that he published before the Trilogies: *The Troubled Waters* (1923), *Daria* (1925), *Ivanca* (1925), *The Master Manole* (1927), and *The Children's Crusade* (1930).

Zalmoxis is Blaga's definitive proof of cognitive elasticity. Although the work is overflowing with metaphors, the evoked elasticity can be identified at all the levels of the play. As a final conclusion, the reader must show the same intellectual flexibility to decode its message.

Note:

¹ If not otherwise specified, the translations are all mine.

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