

**CLOSE-UP:  
FACTOGRAPHIC ESSENTIALIZING DIALOGUE**

INTERVIEW WITH VICTOR MIHAI BOTEZ BY HENRIETA ȘERBAN

**VICTOR MIHAI BOTEZ** is journalist and he worked as radio and photo reporter, main editor, special correspondent at the Romanian Radio Broadcasting (1950-1958); 1957-1958, commentator of foreign policy correspondent for Radio and “România Liberă” newspaper, travelling notes. He conducted direct transmissions of high-level visits with Eugen Preda in Berlin and Sofia, author of radio scripts and literary news stories. During 1967-1978, he was deputy Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper “Munca”. He was also Bucharest correspondent of Radio Bulgaria (1957-1958; with the honoraria submitted to the Literary Fund of the U.S.). He functioned as Secretary General of the redaction, journalist commentator, member in the editorial offices abroad (1978-2010) and as MP Columnist 1990-2010.

Books published: *Informație, cunoaștere, acțiune / Information, Knowledge, Action* (Editura Politică, 1983); *Comunicare și valoare în presă / Communication and Media Value* (Editura Academiei Române, 1986); *Fotografia în clubul artelor / Photography in Arts' Club* (Editura Semne'94, 1996); *Privind înapoi fără mânie. Reportaj dintr-o viață / Looking Back without Anger. Story of a Life* (Editura Yes, 2004); *Nobilimea la români / La noblesse roumaine, Romanian Nobility* (with Cornelius Radeș, Editura Floare Albastră, 2007). For the essay *The Art of Watching Man* Victor Botez was awarded the First Prize and Gold Medal by Congress Jubilee (the twentieth) of the International Federation of Photographic Art (Brussels, 1989).

Affiliations: The Union of Professional Journalists in Romania — Romania Journalists Society, Romanian Society of Philosophy, The Union of the Photography Artists in Romania.

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Harmonizing a fortunate coincidence occasioned by the overlapping of the anniversary-homage of the journalist-analyst-philosopher Victor Mihai Botez (at the Academy of Scientists from Romania, Bucharest, March 2013) and the involvement of the mode or secondary node extending heteronymous personal research perspectives opened by the recognitions in the international sphere (that has a special way of re-writing the current core subjects), this interview may leave the impression of formalisation and conventionalism. But these are contradicted by what the philosophical and journalistic discourse of Victor Mihai Botez proposes original, as a cascade of constructive engagement, (re)viewing, scientific and creative effects,

and the ability to combine detail and “general synthesis”, as well as a view of the traveller with the view of the philosopher.

The declared intention of the interview is to detect or resituate the value, actually, operating from “projects” and all possible scenarios produced by the media, toward the side-effects and treatment offered for the obstacles of the *saeculum*.

Inside the coincidences among the journalist, the analyst and the philosopher, similar to the miniaturists collecting and interpreting accurate documentary evidence, Victor Mihai Botez confirms that the authenticity and honesty of gaze and the honesty of the commentary represent the decisive perspectives of objectivity; an interpretation properly dosed, with the same unit of measure practiced faithfully and almost ritually, both in evolution and intertwining judgments and value judgments, as well as in putting relating them to one another, with the inherent openings and the related points of resistance.

This interview proposes an analytic philosophy “reconstruction” of reality, a mediated and sometimes immediate approach describing the permanent fortunate “submission to the object” — the formula of reaction and treatment; in fact, in the terms of Constantin Noica an intentional way of monitoring the “intermediate tensions” of the specific difference that seems to return recessively in establishing cause — effect relationships<sup>1</sup>.

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**(Question 1) HENRIETAANIȘOARA ȘERBAN:** Your concern for photographic glance led you to a very interesting view on postmodernism, fragmentation and authenticity. What does this perspective teach us about man and world?

**VICTOR BOTEZ:** Photography attempts to capture something that is essential in the fluidity with which it attempts to drown in its waltzes various meanings concerning reality. If it captures the essential, the special aspects, the complexity, the emotion, the fixed image gets the attention, it also invites sensitive participation, remembrance, desire, comparison, providing suggestions for the meditations. The beautiful, the beatitude, the incomprehensible, the complicate thing are often better perceived and examined in their stillness than in their kinetics. Man and world gain at the level of introspection, of differentiation, and also at the global level.

By its vocation of art of the fragmentary, considered “an independent atom”, photography became one of the experimental training fields of postmodernism, a current of philosophic ideas and artistic tendency, where the subject becomes more important than the object, imposing itself in its bravery of deconstruction, reinterpreting, sometimes with “insolence”, the unparalleled values of the imposing modernist paradigm. The interesting fact is, as Angela Botez noticed, that the deconstructive postmodernist “attack” did not diminish the present value of

<sup>1</sup> This introductory text is a foreword of the ampler interview with Victor Mihai Botez, work in progress, conducted by *Henrieta Șerban* and *Viorella Manolache*, who both sign the common presentation of the author in Romanian, this intervention presenting just a part of the questions and answers directly relevant for the profile of *Romanian Review of Political Sciences and International Relations*.

modernism, but it enhanced it, paradoxically, through destructive deconstruction, increasing its timeliness, creativity and value. Although competitive, as I have also noticed in my book entitled *Fotografia în clubul artelor/ Photography in the Club of Arts*, the two cultural paradigms can function for a long while in a complementary duality, re-establishing the specific necessary equilibrium for the existence of great cultures and civilisations.

**(Question 2) H.A.Ş.:** *One of the authors which you have followed closely, Mircea Eliade, proposed the expression “planetary humanism”. How would you consider this phrase in the terms of contemporary European and world cultural realities, with and without ideological colour?*

**V. B.:** Eliade’s conception concerning planetary humanism is the result of a long process of creation through the inter-relation of his graduate studies on religion completed in India, through the initial experience of his spiritual formation in a Buddhist monastery in Himalaya, continued and developed in his scientific work of scholar of religions, anthropologist, philosopher, hermeneutist, a work that included also his literature with a planetary scope. The evolution of the philosopher from the plurality of humanism to the theorizing of planetary humanism was established on the hermeneutic method of interpretation of the symbolic culture, on the phenomenological method of historical presentation of religions, as on the archetypal method of anthropological reconstruction.

In his vision, the true humanism belongs to the equilibrium between intuition and reason, between identity and universality, which does not admit a cultural hegemony, even for the Western values of civilization.

The European and world-wide cultural realities register a progress since 1960 when Eliade launched the expression “planetary humanism” and, on a different level, since Garaudy argued that “the world is but a great village”. The cultural “frontiers”, as well as the spiritual barriers have given up territories in front of the spectacular evolution of *mass media*, global organisations such as UNESCO facilitate knowledge and the cherishing of certain national values of civilisation, culture, religion, or economic, scientific and cultural state aggregates, in diverse geographic spaces as the European Union, mediate relatively well knowledge and cooperation, through the aid system in case of disasters, epidemics, revolutions, injustice etc., although inside them discrepancies are often present, along with the costly and humiliating hegemonies. The world is nevertheless far from a convincing and coherent planetary humanism. Tell the sacerdotal figures that all religions are equal and you risk being cursed. Tell the diverse exclusivist elites, in whose laboratory “brew” monetary collapses, or the virulent ideological condemnations, or the demythicization of the politicians and intellectuals who sustain the eradication of endemic poverty, the equality of chances, the religious freedom, the right to image for men and countries and you will be labelled as retrogrades, past oriented, or inefficient, by the most destructive species, pragmatism, the only god, allowed to be venerated, and to whom you are obliged to be obedient. Not even the spectre

of apocalypse does scare away the anti-humanist arrogance of the still existing circles of power, whose members believe to be, on the short or medium term, invested with providential missions. Anyhow, certainly not the philosophers are responsible with the failure of the local or planetary humanism.

**(Question 3) H.A.Ș.:** *Mircea Vulcănescu was among these Princes of the human spirit who charmed you. He spoke of “land, blood, past, language, traditions, customs, mind, belief, virtue, work, settlements, folklore garments, pains, joys and signs of life altogether, rulings and oppressions (...)” in order to open for us an exemplary vision about the potentiality of the Romanian nation. How do you relate to such a potentiality?*

**V. B.:** Mircea Vulcănescu said: “Writing is, for me, one of the functions which maintain my continuity of self”. It is true that aside Mircea Eliade, Nae Ionescu, Lucian Blaga, I consider Mircea Vulcănescu the main founding thinker consider of the Romanian spiritual matrix in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I am going to say some things about his ideas on this topic, published in press.

His initiation was completed at “Cuvântul”, the feared newspaper edited by Nae Ionescu, out of whose quill were issued severe articles that did not spare either the political elite, or the business world, or certain directions from the movement of ideas and concepts of the time, attitudes “congruent” with his unconventional lectures, of “logician at watch for life”, as he was characterized by Vulcănescu. “Nae Ionescu did not understand journalism only as a passive enterprise of contemplating the events which are produced to discern their meanings, clarifying them afterwards for everyone else; but to see in the daily writing, an instrument of intervention in the everyday life, in collaboration with history, a direct creation of the event.

Vulcănescu did not remain though a prisoner to the vision of Nae Ionescu. He was “saved” by the admiration for his other mentor, the great sociologist who formed professionals and institutions, whom he followed in his field researches on villages, on rural civilization and on the mentalities of the Romanian peasant. Provided that Nae Ionescu and Dimitrie Gusti were not at all compatible, Vulcănescu alleviated the contradiction of these two influences in “a personal unity”.

He was a generous person, he was greeting without dissimulate joy the apparition of new values, the contemporary currents in philosophy, sociology, or arts, the experiments, but he also did that without dismantling the performances of his predecessors, how operated with pleasure and aplomb the modernists who have thrown in derisory *semănătorism*, a Romanian ideological, cultural and literary trend, sustained by the magazine “Sămănătorul” (1901-1910) starting with Nicolae Iorga, capitalizing rural traditions and investigating the peasantry issue. Vulcănescu did not contest the right to evolution, to renewal, as he was himself an enthusiast chronicle assessor for the mutations in the Western culture, but he could not share the autochthonous radicalism.

*A man of the system*, from a generation that rejected the idea of system and “tended to build its own system of values that would allow it to judge, equally, the social phenomena and the aesthetic and religious phenomena”, as wrote the

academician Eugen Simion in *Preface to Works*, Vulcănescu hoped to make a synthesis between the Romanian literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

A fortunate transposition of the philosophy concerning *Romanian man* in two emblematic personalities of the national culture such as Eminescu and Creangă we find in the text entitled *Ion Creangă seen by the present day generation*, published in January 1935 in the magazine “Gând românesc”/“Romanian thought” edited at Cluj. They were different and yet soul friends by their exemplary friendship, the fundamental convergence of their writings, or of their behaviour etc. “The link between the two writers — shows Vulcănescu — was made out of their passionate love for everything that is organic Romanian, and “enrooted deeply as the oak” in the Romanian soil. Creangă had a true cult for Eminescu and maybe he was the only one who had even during his life the conviction that he proudly wrote on a book which he received from him: ‘From Eminescu, the greatest poet of Romanians’”.

At “Gândirea”/“The Thinking” he debuted in 1927 with an article on the theatre movement in France. The collaboration was not lengthy and he explains us why. In the first stage, this appreciated magazine was “the cultural courier” of Lucian Blaga’s generation. “In its columns I found with the avidity for culture of the age 16 the honey of the Western culture, brought as in a honey comb” and then “we have learnt to love what it is ours”<sup>2</sup>. Later on, when the publication “Gândirea” reappeared under the leadership of Nichifor Crainic exacerbating the dogmatic Orthodox position, between the generation of Eliade, Vulcănescu, Cioran etc., and that of the new orientation of thought from “Gândirea” producing the detachment from the “philo-Orthodoxy” installed by Crainic, a strong personality in the Romanian culture during the interwar period, great poet, philosopher and journalist. “Criterion” was the closest to the soul of the young Vulcănescu, an ephemeris magazine as editorial apparition (only seven issues), but bearing the seal of the selected names from the movement “New Generation”.

The value of the journalistic work of Vulcănescu is increased by his spiritual attitude, as he was the man of a mission that reunited the profound Christian belief and theology and he was the visionary and the prophet of the recently edified Great Romania, shadowed by the inexorable course of historical events to come (see the articles *In the Eleventh Hour* (...) “And even the friendships seem to be transformed with time! And over the flimsy peace sermons, the desires are lit up everywhere, over the waters, around, bonfires into the night” or *The two Romania* (...) “Beyond the problem of state, beyond the problem of the two Romania: village or town. Beyond Mussolini or Lenin, are profiled, in the depths of the threads of the fabric of Romanian society, the face of Gandhi”, The Man of peace, of non violence”.

The lyrical vein of his essayistic and journalist writing surfaces also in the moving conference held at Radio Bucharest, in the evening of the 18<sup>th</sup> of October

<sup>2</sup> Mircea Vulcănescu, “Gândirism” și Ortodoxie. În marginea unei aniversări, in Mircea Vulcănescu, *Opere* I, p. 742.

1940, published in “Dacia”, year I, no. 3, 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1941, under the title: *Thoughts on the pain and hope of this hour*, a text oriented toward the brother astray, to whom he brings his voice of brother: “I descend within my darkness now and I attempt to guess, as I have left you behind, — beyond the squall of pain — the still face of yours following with tearful eyes the brothers who left you, into the night, while you remained strong and determined, to face storm alone, gathering in your fists the sufferance of your tears”.

As a son of the Romanian nation, Vulcănescu feels responsible, remorseful for the quick dismantlement of the country, for the desertion of garrisons “out of where none could cast us astray”, only if “the path of fight were chosen”. “Maybe we were superficial, light, under the pressure of the historic times of fulfilment that could have required otherwise” (...) “What have we accomplished within this blessed while, not only to protect the borders of our seen territory, but also to protect the integrity of our unseen spiritual being?” Within a similar emotional register, the author calls to belief, hope, and national will of reintegration. “We shall all step ahead, with our forehead held up, to fulfil our calling together. It is the calling to shine in the world in our own way the joy of presence in the world, the calling to reflect the face of God in a Romanian manner, the calling to complete redemption in a Romanian way”.

This is the manner in which Mircea Vulcănescu wrote, and this way he remained through his journalistic writing and through his essays an “effigy in concrete” (*apud* Mircea Braga). Although at a different level of creation, the captivating book of memoirs *Nae Ionescu as I have met him*, accounts with sincerity and rigor the sinuous and dramatic path described by the generation of Nae Ionescu and Mircea Eliade. As for his work *The Romanian Dimension of Existence*, that was for him a metaphysical *point de capiton*, even Cioran, the sceptic, found it “superb”, “a substantial deciphering of the Wallachia happening”.

In all this gifts left for posterity by Mircea Vulcănescu, during his unfairly short life, we find again, even today, a spiritual profile, the constancies and the hopes of the Romanian nation.

**(Question 4) H.A.Ș.:** *How do you think that one could relate the Kantian classical theory of cosmopolitanism to contemporary cosmopolitanism, resulted from the perspectives generated by the current phenomenon of globalization?*

**V. B.:** The word cosmopolitanism comes from the Greek word *kosmopolites* that means citizen of the world. Cosmopolitanism is defined as a conception from the epoch of Greek and Roman regimes based on slavery, which promoted the idea of “universal citizenship”; respectively a concept according to which homeland is the whole world and man is its citizen.

The first philosopher who used the term *kosmopolites* was Diogenes of Sinope, called the Cynic. When he was asked where he is from he answered that he was a citizen of the world. A few centuries later, the stoics, such as Marcus Aurelius and Marcus Tullius Cicero, considered that human reason unites people



under the same law of reasoning and thinking. This fact unites us all in a community of humanity. According to Cicero, anyhow we define man the same definition applies to us all. This is a sufficient proof that there is no essential within humanity. The origin of justice is derived from the law that is a force of nature and the criterion for justice and injustice. This law has the origin in nature, in other words, its origins already existed, before the apparition of man on earth.

Christian thought represented by Saint Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther continue the Stoic tradition and promote cosmopolitanism. The Christian thinkers are preoccupied with similar themes such as the dignity of man, the peaceful existence between men and the natural law. The most influent cosmopolite texts came from neo-Thomist philosophy, from the School of Salamanca, the texts of Bartolomé de las Casas, Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suarez. They promote universal right and mutual consensus and they influenced many philosophers from the period of Enlightenment such as Grotius, Puffendorf, or Locke.

In *The Critique of Pure Reason* Kant names the cosmic concept “that concept which concerns what interests everyone with necessity”. In *The Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View*, Kant writes that the rational purpose of nature is to unite the whole humanity in a global state where morality, reason and peace rule. A mature humanity coincides with a moral humanity.

Let us consider *The Eternal Peace — A Philosophical Project*. This is a political essay written by Kant in 1795, after he finished his epoch of critical writings. Immanuel Kant attempts to find the political means to accomplish a durable peace among states. Ion Petrovici considered: “Kant’s project remained highly relevant for the present times, not only as a regulative idea, but even as a concrete tentative to actually create something similar. The Society of Nations from Geneva corresponds, *grosso modo*, to Kant’s ideas: a federation of liberal states, settling their divergences without relating to war”.

*The First Article* devoted to the eternal peace, postulates that the states must be republican and have a constitution that observes the liberties and the equality of the citizens. The philosopher considers that only the republican states could guarantee a durable peace, because the citizens from such a state are not subjected to a sovereign, for instance, a monarch who would be also the owner of that state. In a republican state executive power has to be separated from the legislative one, thought the philosopher from Königsberg.

From the point of view of reason, to exit from a constant state of war, the only solution would be to build only one federative state that eventually, would include all the peoples on earth. The philosopher admits the impossibility of this suggestion and says that if countries cannot unite in one federal state, then, instead, each state should be allied stat in a federal union of peace”. He explains that only one peace treaty should be distinguished (*pactum pacis*) to end one war for the peace union (*foedus pacificum*), thus ending “all wars forever. This union does not tend toward any gain for the stately authority, but merely toward the maintaining and guaranteeing the liberty of a state for itself and for the other confederate states...”

*The Third Article* finally speaks about the cosmopolitan law, which is limited in universal hospitality. Kant sustains Rousseau's idea that in the beginning none will have more right over the land than the other. Each should behave in a hospitable manner with the foreign visitors, if the latter behave in a civilized manner are do not pose a threat to the respective state. Kant describes the horrors of colonisations and condemns the brutal behaviour of the colonialists against the indigenes.

It is nevertheless to remark the fact that Kant's ideas were predecessors of what it is named today the fight for the insurance of the human rights all over the world. Cosmopolitanism is very relevant for contemporary world that seems "to become smaller" and globalization is a concept that becomes day after day more adequate to contemporary times.

Globalization and media made human lives inter-connected to a higher degree than ever before in the history of humanity. This is seen also in the present day crises of world economy, in the threat of the nuclear weapons, in the war against terrorism, in the spread of epidemics etc. We consider that the globalist orientation can bring also other negative manifestations as are the imposition of foreign paradigms in diverse cultures of the world, but also possibilities for world understanding and cooperation. As we can see, a dramatic *contradictio in adjecto* between the great and surprising philosopher of the cosmopolitanism and the fact that he never left his home town. Maybe this was actually what helped him understand the World even more profoundly.

**(Question 5) H.A.Ș.:** *How would you describe the European dimension of our existence?*

**V. B.:** Romanians desired to be part of institutionally united Europe, convinced that it will be a good omen for their standard of life, for their civilization, for the enlightenment of democracy, for the security of the country, as a whole.

Even since the '30, in the last century, the great diplomat and jurist Nicolae Titulescu, the first president of the Society of Nations pleaded for the spiritualization of frontiers, but neither him nor any other of the Romanian edicts of the pan-Europeanism accepted that this accession to be realized in humility.

It is a good thing that the various schools of political science, economy, philosophy, warn about the viability of the European project as it confronts in the last years multiple drawbacks on levels concerning the management of resources, with the endemic financial crisis, with efforts to sustain euro competitively, with the increasing unemployment, with the crisis of pensions, with distortions between the central executive power of EU and the power of the authority of the member states and nations, sensing the hegemonic impulse of the "central" powers, structured in bi or tri-party manner — (journalistically, a "troika"). An immense bureaucracy suffocates the accession of budgetary allocations and the legislative construct of the newly EU entered states and the relations of the state and political powers, the constitutional functioning, as it was also the case of Romania in the summer of 2012, when Brussels practically invented aberrant



electoral “thresholds” at the referendum for the destitution of the President, reinstalled by manoeuvres practiced usually in colonies or in suzerain states. The equality of the EU states proved to be an empty word, as well as the “freedom” of justice whose leaders are “negotiated” at Brussels, according to the whim of the EU commissars, until the convenient persons are selected. Finally, even the greatly commended economic aid, comes in minute portions, so that Romania pays to EU a budgetary “fee” that is bigger than the minute part obtained from the EU funds for development, accessible with difficulty due to recession or crisis, to the tergiversations of approvals and payments. Where is, therefore, the *ideal of democracy*, when plutocracy is increasing at an alarming and suffocating pace, where is the respect for the Parliament and state, if the former is ignored, deprived of the recognition of its supreme authority granted by the Romanian Constitution? We see the supremacy of austerity, the disregard for the national interest, or for the right to dignity of man and nations. We have entered EU understanding and accepting the rule of consensus, but not the practice to establish in Brussels which people should lead the state and justice.

**(Question 6) H.A.Ș.:** *But the efflorescence of Dracula myth remains....*

**V. B.:** I have a personal experience concerning the “cultural” exacerbation of the model Dracula, through a *mixtum compositum* between myth and historical character. I was with my wife in London, and in the limited spare time left outside the professional obligations, we have chosen to visit the famous museum of the wax figures, *Madame Tussot*. Outside the main rooms with “positive” figures, from the Queen to Nadia Comăneci, a special gallery of “villains” was announced. By the access door toward this gallery was hosting the statue of Hitler, in kaki Nazi uniform, with a swastika armband. There followed a corridor in *claire-obscur*, with a terrifying sound of horrified cries, imagining through the graphic on the lateral walls a dark street in London of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The subject: Jack the Ripper and his women victims. Placed at two meters away from Hitler, exactly to the back of the corridor was Vlad the Impaler, in his costume of Wallachian Voyevod, in striking colours. After the first shock of surprise, I have thought of this triplet where our Țepeș has the honour place, and later I thought about the geographical neighbour, the Hungarian Princess Erzsebet, who bathed into the blood of the virgins sacrificed in the basements of her castle. At least Țepeș fought... corruption, with an instrument patented in Antiquity, as usual as the rope or cross even for illustrious historical personalities. During the following centuries of the short reign of Vlad, recognized as a brave army commander in the battles with the Turks that kept busy over the centuries Romanian princes and aristocrats, such as Ștefan cel Mare, Mihai Viteazul, Iancu de Hunedoara, Ioan the Terrible, martyrs, as Constantin Brâncoveanu and his sons, great scholars as Cantemir, member of the Academy in Berlin, known also by his Latin name *Demetrius* engraved on the frontispiece of the National Library of France, messengers of high culture, such as Miron Costin, who taught aesthetics

at the Polish University in Lvov and impressed in one occasion with his diplomatic discourse the king Louis XIV at Versailles, as documented in his letter to ex-Prince Gh. Ștefan and so on. In my opinion it is illusory to believe that we can do anything to alleviate the myth of Dracula in Western imaginary, not as much due to the book of Bram Stoker, as to the inflation of Hollywood and Central European movies that “framed” him in a world thirsty for thrills, compensating for everyday banality.

As for the attempt to resizing this local model, it is both an interesting and worthy challenge for the Romanian intellectuals, inside the country and in Diaspora. On the short run, though, I do not see too many ways, and on the long run we might consider the obstacle of this unending austerity, and the reduced possibilities for the cultural tourism. I have had an important British philosopher over and he asked us only one thing: to visit the tomb of Țepeș. There is no boat on Snagov lakeshore to get to the small Church on the island. When we got there, finally, a navigator showed up with a rowing boat, nevertheless, requesting an amount of money that neither us the hostess, nor the guest could afford. And then, what are we talking about?

**(Question 7) H.A.Ș.:** *Do you, as a philosopher and aesthetician of the glaze, consider the exotic original? What about the European relations to the exotic elements of a culture receptive to influences and, yet, so particular; as Romanian culture is?*

**V. B.:** Of course it is original. A term invented in the West of Europe, “migrated”, so to speak, due to the colonial powers, because “exotic” was for the Europeans something that comes from distant areas, with specific aspects, unique to these countries. Then exoticism was the “adoption” name for what was manifest in the Romantic tendencies in the European art and literature, privileging the description of exotic landscapes and traditions. I would go as far as to say that exoticism became integrant in musical modernism, in jazz for instance, where we can easily find exotic motifs. That Romanian culture is also receptive to influences, *aferim*, but which country is not, especially within the European landscape and in other continents, too? Take, for illustration, a specific Romanian extremely alert dance of men, creating the impression of flying in the air, the dance of *călușari*, related to both Latin terms *collusium* and *caballus*, possible to be categorized as an exotic dance, given its secular or maybe millenary existence, but it cannot be attributed to import from distant areas, but rather to an old cultural ancestry. The insistence on exotic landscapes and customs is central in the cult creations, not only at our last and genial Romantics, such as Eminescu and so on, but also in the enchanting versatile and musical prose of Sadoveanu, or in the music of forms that consecrated Brâncuși? And then, there were the Moldavian realms where originated the “revolutionary” Tristan Tzara, a founder of Dadaism? Eliade considered the ballads *Miorița* (*The Little Ewe Lamb*) and *Meșterul Manole* (*Manole, the Craftsman*), the masterpieces of the Romanian literature, although impregnated by pastoral exoticism, respectively, by the antique myth of creation through sacrifice. I

stubbornly believe that our ideal is not represented by a culture through imitation, as the European culture itself is founded on diversity, on linguistic pluralism and on the pluralism of models, from archetypes and tradition, to... ultramodernism.

**(Question 8) H.A.Ş.:** *And when we do not face the stigma of Balkans we face the label of "Byzantine"?*

**V. B.:** There is induced an idea — usually from those who are not exactly friends of Romania, that collective mind, politics, and institutions, suffer of the Byzantine influence with us. A. If Byzantine influence implies cupidity and cunning, then what is left to say about colonialism, starting even with ...*the cunning Albion*? B. I believe that it would be appropriate to be "accused" of Byzantine influence the conquerors and not the conquered. C. Anyhow, the various medium and superior ranks of rulers could be responsible for the Byzantine influence and not the ruled.

I refuse to believe that an objective analyst can find any "guilt" in the official existence of Byzantine Empire in the European history, as there is none in the mere existence of the Eastern Roman Empire. The prestige of the founders, the illustrious Emperors Constantin and Elena brought on the shores of Bosphorus, and in the vast Balkans Peninsula, the distinguished Court of Rome, with its generals, scholars and, especially, with its Christian prelates. In the succession of the following centuries, the clerks and even the official representatives of the state were selected from the ranks of the Greeks, talkative and corrupt, the ones about which antiquity warned that one is better off to avoid: transactional, volatile in respecting their word, cupidity. Words about these shortcomings were spread maybe to a greater extent than in the West. At the same time the echoes of the incontestable merits in the development of the Christianity in the East, by the cultivation of specific artistic tendencies (architecture, music, the diplomatic ability etc.).

The bad Byzantine habits were present also with their Euro-Asian predecessors, with the Central and West-European feudalism, only that there it operated in more astute forms and manifestations, by a more refined aristocracy and clergy than the Oriental ones. The Empire with the capital at Constantinople /Istanbul was supposedly undertaking by contagion the characteristic ills of the Byzantine world, but I definitely doubt that in the proximity as in the depths of Asia the ruling class was ingenuous, from Mediterranean Sea to Pacific. Anyhow, we can be sure that the Dacia-Gets, the Aromanians, or the Wallachians did not love and did not followed out of free-will neither of them, but they rather adapted to the course of history, to the Greek-Byzantine-Ottoman insertion, instituted with the yataghan or ability on the shifting thrones of the Wallachian Voyvodates, of the local laic and religious nobility and culture, at the North and South of Danube.

Forty episcopises functioned during the first centuries b.Ch., in the realm between Danube and the Black Sea (nowadays, Dobruja), "producing" great Christian theologians, such as Cassian, established after his peregrinations to Marseilles, where he wrote his work in a very expressive style, becoming one of

the historians of French literature... considered “founder of the French literature or Dionysius Exiguus, or Little Dennis, erudite professor of theology in Rome.

The monasteries were the centres of medieval culture for Romanians, and the most important Orthodox theologian in Europe was D. Stăniloae.

**(Question 9) H.A.Ș.:** *Is European culture a fascinator kaleidoscope, of values, ideas, themes and ideals shared by individuals with diverse nationalities, or a capital transferable at the socio-politic level? Does culture love difference or it is a hegemonic factor of uniformization?*

**V. B.:** Not the monarchies that still exist in a few countries of the “old continent” impede the good path of governance in the EU. It would be both untrue and unfair to tell the British, the Belgian, the Dutch, the Spanish or the Monegasque, but also to the Swedish and Norwegian people that they cannot be equal and active citizens just because they crown the head of state, part of dynasties with multi-centuries tradition. There is a saying: “in changing rulers, mad men rejoice”. One needs as well tradition and when the innovation de-structures everything in favour of the uniformity we need to ask ourselves what remains from the right to difference, a refrain on which Western democracy glossed for the last two centuries? My concern is that in the enthusiasm of removing institutional differences, and even the alterity...of the citizen for the sake of efficient uniformity, bottom line, we are left — God forbid — with a society of meat puppets speaking the same language, deprived of creativity, vocation, personality, and eventually, of competition, at institutional and political level.