

LUCIAN BLAGA DESPRE DIFERENȚA DINTRE CULTURILE MINORE ȘI CELE MAJORE

[CU UN FRAGMENT DIN *FIINȚA ISTORICĂ*, CAPITOLUL 3]

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INTRODUCEREA TRADUCĂTORULUI

Deși interesul pentru cultură ca temă filosofică datează încă de pe vremea sofistilor antici, dacă nu chiar dinainte, interesul modern pentru filosofia culturii pare să-și aibă originea în Germania secolelor al XVIII-lea și al XIX-lea, îndeosebi în romantismul german. Romantismul poate fi văzut ca o reacție la anumite excese ale raționalismului iluminist. Scopul său era de a contura un spațiu pentru valori într-un mediu intelectual care devenise dominat de logică, matematică și știință. Discuția asupra locului culturii în *lebensform*-ul omenesc constituia o parte a acestei mișcări. Aici era uneori făcută o distincție evaluativă între culturi, considerate „mari” sau „mici”, civilizate sau necivilizate, distincție care interpreta culturile mai primitive ca fiind inferioare celor ce erau mai dezvoltate. Alți romantici s-au situat pe o poziție opusă, afirmând că, dimpotrivă, culturile mai timpurii sau mai puțin dezvoltate sunt mai naturale ori mai autentice decât cele mai dezvoltate, care erau uneori descrise ca prea moderne sau prea superficiale.

Deși filosof al secolului XX, Lucian Blaga a fost incontestabil influențat de romantismul german. Filosofia culturii ocupă un loc de mare importanță în gândirea lui Blaga¹. Cred chiar că se poate susține că, de fapt, cultura ocupă locul central în filosofia sa. Chiar dacă Blaga consideră că metafizica este încoronarea filosofiei și chiar dacă își începe sistemul filosofic printr-o tratare amănunțită a epistemologiei, se poate argumenta că reflecția asupra culturii este acel aspect al filosofiei sale care influențează cel mai mult restul sistemului. Filosofia culturii apare întretesută în toate domeniile filosofiei sale – nu numai în metafizică și epistemologie, dar și în filosofia științei, a religiei, a istoriei, în antropologia filosofică și în estetică.

Filosofia culturii este adevăratul domeniu de specializare al lui Blaga. Această aserțiune este sprijinită de faptul că o catedră de filosofie a culturii a fost creată special pentru el la Universitatea Românească din Cluj. De asemenea, este sprijinită și de faptul că discursul său la primirea în Academie a fost despre cultura română: „Elogiul satului românesc”. Numeroasele sale scrieri despre cultură întăresc și mai mult această afirmație. Începând cu disertația sa doctorală (*Kultur und Erkenntnis – Cultură și cunoștință*) și încheind cu penultimul capitol al ultimei sale cărți („Oswald Spengler și filosofia istoriei”, în

¹ În filosofia lui Blaga, termenul „cultură” se referă la produsul colectiv al creativității umane, activat prin intermediul unei „matrice stilistice” date și în cadrul unei mulțimi particulare de circumstanțe concrete.

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Ființa istorică), Blaga explorează în mod repetat problemele filosofiei culturii². De aceea nu este deloc surprinzător că, în scrierile sale filosofice, filosofiei culturii îi este dedicat mai mult spațiu decât oricărei alte arii de investigații filosofice.

Blaga consideră cultura drept cel mai însemnat factor care distinge umanitatea (și tot ce creează umanitatea) de restul existenței. Cultura influențează, potrivit lui Blaga, întreaga activitate omenească³. Așadar, orice aspect al filosofiei suferă înrăurirea culturii. Din acest motiv, toate operele filosofice ale lui Blaga se ocupă, într-o anumită măsură, și cu filosofia culturii. Într-o perioadă în care mulți dintre cei mai remarcabili gânditori se străduiau să evacueze culturalul și subiectivul din filosofie, Blaga se pronunța răspicat în favoarea culturii ca manifestare umană fundamentală și omniprezentă.

Blaga însuși atrage atenția că filosofia sa a culturii este un curent în fluviul mai larg al filosofiei culturii inițiat de filosofi și gânditori precum Nietzsche, Simmel, Riegl, Worringer, Frobenius, Dvořák, Spengler, Keyserling și alții, dintre care mulți erau romantici⁴. Pe de o parte, influența lor în această privință asupra lui Blaga este evidentă și incontestabilă. Dar pe de altă parte, filosofia lui Blaga este mai mult decât o simplă reformulare ori o sinteză a ideilor altora⁵. Blaga are de oferit idei noi și integrează filosofia sa a culturii într-un sistem filosofic încheiat⁶. În plus, el izbuteste să evite unele dintre dificultățile întâmpinate de către predecesorii săi. Cred în special că el reușește să evite judecățile de valoare care ierarhizează culturile pe baza unor criterii care sunt ele însele fatalmente culturale.

Atunci când Blaga a introdus, în *Trilogia culturii*, distincția dintre culturile „majore” și cele „minore”, mulți l-au înțeles greșit, considerând că face tocmai acest gen de distincție

² Lucian Blaga, *Cultură și cunoștință*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Institutul de Arte Grafice „Ardealul”, 1922; *Ființa istorică*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1977.

³ Blaga, *Ființa istorică*, ed. cit., p. 406.

⁴ Lucian Blaga, *Orizont și stil*, București, Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă „Regele Carol II”, 1935, p. 75. Pentru o discuție asupra câtorva dintre asemănările și deosebirile dintre Nietzsche, Spengler și Blaga, vezi capitolul „Blaga, Nietzsche și Spengler” al lui Alexandru Boboc din *Dimensiunea metafizică a operei lui Lucian Blaga*, ed. Angela Botez și Argentina Fîruță, București, Editura Științifică, 1996, pp. 276–280.

⁵ Se afirmă uneori că filosofia blagiană a culturii nu este decât o preluare cu prea puține modificări a filosofiei spengleriene a culturii ori o simplă aplicare a acesteia la particularitățile culturii române. Acest al doilea punct de vedere ar fi de înțeles dacă ne-am mărgini să citim numai *Spațiul mioritic*, însă o lectură completă a lucrărilor lui Blaga de filosofie a culturii nu îngăduie o asemenea interpretare. Blaga însuși recunoaște că îi este îndatorat lui Spengler, dar îl și critică în multe privințe pe acesta. Spengler își expune filosofia sa a culturii într-un mod poate mai amănunțit decât o face Blaga (vezi Oswald Spengler, *Decline of the West*, traducere autorizată și note de Charles Francis Atkinson, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, vol. 1, 1926; vol. 2, 1928), dar el nu reușește să integreze filosofia culturii într-o filosofie generală sistematică, așa cum o face Blaga. Există și câteva deosebiri foarte precise între cele două filosofii ale culturii, inclusiv ceea ce Blaga consideră ca fiind o supraapreciere din partea lui Spengler a importanței concepțiilor privitoare la spațiu; vezi *Orizont și stil*, ed. cit., p. 180. Mircea Muthu discută asemănările și deosebirile dintre Spengler și Blaga în capitolul „Prospecțiuni morfologice: L. Blaga și O. Spengler”, din *Lucian Blaga: Dimensiuni răsăritene*, Pitești, Editura Paralela 45, 2000, pp. 57–65, așa cum o face și Viorel Colțescu în „Lucian Blaga și morfologia spengleriană a culturii”, din *Lucian Blaga – cunoaștere și creație*, ed. Dumitru Ghișe, Angela Botez, și Victor Botez, București, Editura Cartea Românească, 1987, pp. 357–379. Deosebirile dintre Spengler și Blaga fac de asemenea obiectul propriului meu articol „Blaga’s Philosophy of Culture: More than a Spenglerian Adaptation”, *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai*, seria *Philosophia*, 48, nr. 1–2, 2003. În „Matricea stilistică și structura semantică”, din *Dimensiunea metafizică a operei lui Lucian Blaga*, ed. cit., pp. 298–302, Aurel Codoban argumentează că filosofia blagiană a culturii este în realitate mai apropiată de structuralismul francez (*à la Lévi-Strauss*) decât de morfologie (*à la Spengler*).

⁶ Vezi Dumitru Micu, „Lucian Blaga: Un sistem filosofic axat pe cultură”, în *Dimensiunea metafizică a operei lui Lucian Blaga*, ed. cit., pp. 231–238. Binecunoscutul Mircea Eliade constată de asemenea originalitatea și caracterul sistematic al filosofiei blagiene a culturii; vezi *Lucian Blaga – cunoaștere și creație*, ed. cit., pp. 482–485.

evaluativă, de-a lungul liniilor trasate de predecesorii săi germani. Această interpretare eronată a provocat o reacție potrivnică din partea unora, îndeosebi atunci când s-a remarcat că Blaga așezase cultura română sub rubrica „culturi minore”.

În fragmentul tradus aici îl vedem pe Blaga răspunzând acestor critici. El exprimă cu claritate ceea ce crede că ar fi trebuit să fie evident pentru cititorul atent de la bun început, și anume că distincția pe care o face între culturile majore și cele minore nu este evaluativă, ci descriptivă. Și unele, și altele au mare valoare, dar din motive diferite. Cultura majoră nu este mai valoroasă decât cultura minoră. Iar cultura română, cultura lui Blaga, are o mare valoare.

Traducere din limba engleză
OVIDIU G. GRAMA

LUCIAN BLAGA ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MINOR AND MAJOR CULTURES

[WITH AN EXCERPT FROM THE THIRD CHAPTER OF *FIINȚA ISTORICĂ*]

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Although interest in culture as a philosophical topic dates back at least as far as the ancient Sophists, the modern interest in philosophy of culture seems to have as its primary source 18th and 19th century Germany and in particular German Romanticism. Romanticism can be seen as a reaction to certain extremes of Enlightenment rationalism. It aimed to carve out an axiological space in an intellectual milieu that had become dominated by logic, math, and science. Part of this movement was a discussion of the place of culture in the human *lebensform*. Here an evaluative distinction was sometimes made between cultures that were considered “high” or “low,” civilized or uncivilized, that interpreted more primitive cultures as being inferior to those that were more developed. Other Romantics took an opposing position, affirming that earlier or less developed cultures are more natural or authentic than more developed cultures, which were sometimes described as too modern or too superficial.

Although a 20th century philosopher, Lucian Blaga was undeniably influenced by German Romanticism. Philosophy of culture occupies a place of great importance in Blaga's thought.⁷ In fact, I believe that a strong argument can be made that culture occupies the central place in his philosophy. Although Blaga considers metaphysics to be the coronation of philosophy, and although he opens his systematic philosophy with a detailed treatment of epistemology, it could be argued that his thinking on philosophy of culture is that aspect of his philosophical system that most influences the rest of the system. The philosophy of culture is interwoven throughout all the areas of his philosophy: not only his metaphysics and epistemology, but also his philosophy of science, philosophy of religion, aesthetics, philosophy of history, and philosophical anthropology.

⁷ In Blaga's philosophy, “culture” refers to the collective product of human creativity actuated through a given “stylistic matrix” and within a particular set of concrete circumstances.

Philosophy of culture is Blaga's true area of specialization. This contention is supported by the fact that a special chair for philosophy of culture was created for Blaga at the Romanian University of Cluj. It is further supported by the fact that the address that he delivered at his induction into the Romanian Academy was on Romanian culture: "Elogiul satului românesc." The abundance of his writing on the subject lends further weight to this position. From his doctoral dissertation (*Culture and Knowledge*) to the penultimate chapter of his final book ("Oswald Spengler and the Philosophy of History," in *Ființa istorică*), Blaga is repeatedly found exploring the issues of philosophy of culture.⁸ Thus it is no surprise that in his philosophical writings more space is devoted to the philosophy of culture than to any other single area of philosophical inquiry.

Blaga sees culture as the single most important factor that distinguishes humanity (and all that humanity creates) from the rest of existence. Culture influences, according to Blaga's, all human activity.⁹ Therefore every aspect of philosophy is also impacted by culture. Because of this, all of Blaga's philosophical works deal to some degree with the philosophy of culture. In a period in which many of the most notable thinkers were inclined toward the attempt at purging the cultural and subjective from philosophy, Blaga spoke out loud and clear in favor of culture as a fundamental and pervasive human enterprise.

Blaga himself indicates that his philosophy of culture is a current in the stream of philosophy of culture initiated by philosophers and thinkers such as Nietzsche, Simmel, Riegl, Worringer, Frobenius, Dvorak, Spengler, Keyserling, and others, many of whom were Romantics.¹⁰ On the one hand, their influence on Blaga in this area is unmistakable and undeniable. But on the other hand, Blaga's philosophy is more than a simple restatement or synthesis of the insights of others.¹¹ Blaga offers new insights of his own

⁸ Lucian Blaga, *Cultură și cunoștință*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Institutul de Arte Grafice „Ardealul” 1922; *Ființa istorică*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1977.

⁹ Blaga, *Ființa istorică*, ed. cit., p. 406.

¹⁰ Lucian Blaga, *Orizont și stil*, București, Fundația pentru Literatură și artă „Regele Carol II”, 1935, p. 75. For a discussion of some of the similarities and differences between Nietzsche, Spengler, and Blaga, see Alexandru Boboc's chapter „Blaga, Nietzsche și Spengler” in *Dimensiunea metafizică a operei lui Lucian Blaga*, ed. Angela Botez și Argentina Firuță, București, Editura Științifică, 1996, pp. 276–280.

¹¹ It is sometimes alleged that Blaga's philosophy of culture is little more than a rehashing of Spengler's philosophy of culture, or an application of Spengler's philosophy to the particularities of Romanian culture. The latter view would be understandable if one were to read only *Spațiul mioritic*, but a full reading of Blaga's works on philosophy of culture does not permit such an interpretation. Blaga himself acknowledges his indebtedness to Spengler, but he also criticizes Spengler on many points. Spengler's exposition of his philosophy of culture is perhaps more detailed than is Blaga's (see Oswald Spengler, *Decline of the West: Form and Actuality*, authorized translation by Charles Francis Atkinson, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, vol. 1, 1926; vol. 2, 1928), but he does not succeed at integrating philosophy of culture into a general systematic philosophy, as does Blaga. There are also several very specific differences between Spengler's and Blaga's philosophy of culture, including what Blaga indicates is an overestimation of the importance of spatial conceptions on the part of Spengler; see *Orizont și stil*, ed. cit., p. 180. Mircea Muthu discusses the similarities and differences between Spengler and Blaga in the chapter „Prospecțiuni morfologice: L. Blaga și O. Spengler”, in *Lucian Blaga: Dimensiuni răsăritene*, Pitești, Editura Paralela 45, 2000, pp. 57–65, as does Viorel Colțescu in „Lucian Blaga și morfologia spengleriană a culturii”, in *Lucian Blaga*, ed. Ghișe, A. Botez and V. Botez, pp. 357–379. The differences between Spengler and Blaga are also the subject of my own article, „Blaga's Philosophy of Culture: More than a Spenglerian Adaptation”, *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, seria Philosophia*, 48, nos. 1–2, 2003. In „Matricea stilistică și structura semantică”, in *Dimensiunea metafizică a operei lui Lucian Blaga*, ed. A. Botez and A. Firuță, pp. 298–302, Aurel Codoban argues that Blaga's philosophy of culture is actually more akin to French structuralism (à la Levi-Strauss) than to morphology (à la Spengler).

and integrates his philosophy of culture into a complete philosophical system.¹² And he succeeds in avoiding some of the pitfalls of his forebears. In particular, I believe that he avoids evaluative judgments that elevate one culture over another based on values and criteria that are themselves inextricably cultural.

When in his *Trilogy of Culture* Blaga introduced a distinction between “major” and “minor” cultures many misinterpreted him to be making just this sort of evaluative distinction, one that follows the lines of those made by his German predecessors. This caused an adverse reaction on the part of some, particularly when it was realized that Blaga had assigned Romanian culture to the category of “minor culture.”

In the excerpt translated here we see Blaga responding to these criticisms. He clearly expresses what he thinks should have been obvious to the attentive reader all along: that his distinction between major and minor cultures is not evaluative but rather descriptive. Both “major” and “minor” cultures have great value, but each for different reasons. The major culture is not more valuable than the minor culture. And Romanian culture, Blaga’s own culture, has great worth.

FROM “THE PERMANENCE OF PREHISTORY”*

by LUCIAN BLAGA

In one of our studies we have spoken at greater length about “minor culture” and “major culture.”¹³ At that time we showed that the two types of culture depend, each in its own way, on specific structures of the person who creates them, and we established these structures in function of the age of childhood and the age of maturity, (370) both understood as “adoptive” ages of the human collectives that create culture. Those who are interested in the problems that we are on a path to approach in this chapter are advised to also consider these issues that we cannot even partially reiterate here. We have repeated that in denominating cultures as “minor” and “major” we are not making a categorical distinction of value, but rather a distinction of structure. Again we were saying that as far as we are concerned, we enthusiastically appreciate minor cultures. Every type of culture has its qualities and deficiencies, advantages and disadvantages. Prior to anything else, their durability differs significantly, and this because of their nature. A minor culture, birthed from ceaseless improvisation and spontaneity as if from a complete lack of will

¹² See Dumitru Micu, „Lucian Blaga: Un sistem filosofic axat pe cultură”, in *Dimensiunea metafizică a operei lui Lucian Blaga*, ed. A. Botez and A. Firuță, pp. 231–238. The well-known Mircea Eliade also acknowledged the originality and systematicity of Blaga’s philosophy of culture; see *Lucian Blaga*, ed. Ghișe, A. Botez, and V. Botez, pp. 482–485.

* Translated from the 1997 version of *Ființa istorică* published by Editura Humanitas in *Trilogia Cosmologică* (page numbers of this edition in parentheses).

¹³ *The Genesis of Metaphor and the Meaning of Culture* (Geneza metaforei și sensul culturii). Bucharest [Romania]: Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă, 1937.

toward permanency, has the chance to endure, in its living stasis, many thousands of years. Meanwhile a major culture birthed, it seems, among others, and from the thirst to exceed an approachable space and a visible time, is, precisely through its dynamic, much more exposed to catastrophes and destruction. It is certain that the simple chance of durability is not in any way indicative of "value." On the other hand it can be affirmed that the risk of tragedy, of the catastrophe that a major culture takes upon itself, has the gift of multiplying its aura.

However, there are also other perspectives from which the comparison between major and minor cultures could be viewed. A minor culture keeps the person much closer to nature, while a major culture sooner distances the person and makes him or her a foreigner to the ways of Nature. It is obvious that, beginning from such philosophical considerations, we will maintain that it is difficult to know if the spiritual advantages of a major culture are not overcome in the end by the cost of the disadvantages that offset them. In any case the problem is very complex, and we do not at all intend to solve it in these pages. It is certain that people who have a major culture look down on minor cultures. But it is equally certain that the people who have a well-established minor culture mount a categorical resistance to replacing it with a major culture that is not in accord with their inner spirit. The repulsion and alienation take place therefore in an atmosphere of perfect reciprocity.

(371) In connection with the issue of minor and major cultures, however, we also meet another problem, one of intense interest. History in general divides, as is known, into two major compartments: prehistory and history proper. The question of the nature of history proper has many aspects in common with the problem to which we were referring earlier, namely the problem of the distinction between major and minor cultures. We are of the opinion that a distinction between prehistory and history proper cannot be made on the basis of some menial dating, such as the appearance of the written document. It is correct that the majority of historians still work with this conventional criterion that long ago lost any meaning. The appearance of writing is susceptible to diverse interpretations, but cannot be raised to the value of a criterion that distinguishes between prehistory and history itself. We will not pause to consider the current well known evolutionary-progressive conception. In the perspective of this conception, so widely received, prehistory is considered merely a *preparatory* phase of history, as a vestibule of history. From the evolutionary-progressive perspective, prehistory appears gravely depreciated, as much as it is deemed a simple phase of spiritual beginnings and of biological-naturalistic constructs.

We must remember, in the face of the current mode of viewing prehistory, that the Romantics understand it completely otherwise. Without ceding the exaggerations of Romanticism, there is cause to specify here that we will view both prehistory and history in the light of their respective structures through that which will open to us a path toward certain results and conclusions that differ fairly significantly from those in circulation. It would be good to see, however, how some older and recent authors *exalt* prehistory, at least to inform to some degree those readers unfamiliar with this issue.

Vico, the Italian philosopher, is the first thinker that turned his attention to the unusually important spiritual events that would have taken place in the dawning phase of humanity. Next, the Romantic Schelling develops Vico's ideas, granting to prehistory greater proportions and an exceptional importance. Schelling distinguishes between "historic" time and "prehistoric" time. The distinction between these times is not only

subjective, conditioned by the grade of knowledge (372) and by the documentation that we have about them.

According to Schelling, there is an essential distinction between these “times” even in their nature. In this way, the prehistoric period is characterized through specific processes, deep and interior, pertaining to the human consciousness. In the prehistoric period occurs a crisis of the human consciousness, a crisis that precipitates various mythologies. The processes are very complex and fall under the domain of a higher necessity than the arbitrary volition of the individual. These processes, which find their expression in the creation of myths, have as their ultimate result the differentiation of humanity into peoples. The *historic* period begins only after the fulfilled fact of the differentiation of humanity into peoples. For history, therefore, mythology appears as a “completely done,” as a “what” appertaining to the past. Mythology fills that dark space, that *chronos à dilos*, as the Greeks say, that precedes the beginning of history. The prehistoric period and the historic period are, according to Schelling, dominated by principles that are qualitatively different. The greatness of the mythological visions and the monumentality of the corresponding art, the ancient Babylonian and Egyptian monuments, cannot be imagined, in Schelling’s opinion, as products of chance.

Schelling also reckons particular ancient cultures of a *monumental* nature, and therefore “major,” as pertaining to “prehistory.” This fact needs explanation, since it is a point of view that cannot be sustained at all today. But we should see what Schelling was desiring to tell us about the constitutive principle of the prehistoric period. If the ancient people found a path towards their art, magnificent in all ways, according to Schelling this fact would constitute a proof that a factor intervened here that was, if not identical, at least similar to that which was later declared in “divine revelation.” In this order of ideas, Schelling will sustain that paganism does not represent a negative or empty moment in comparison to “divine revelation,” but rather a positive moment.

Mythology is an *analogue* of divine revelation. Mythology is due to a process of the consciousness nourished by divine inspiration. Only in this way is it possible to understand the completely exceptional products of that *chronos à dilos* or of the prehistoric period. According to Schelling, mythology is destined to prepare the divine revelation that takes place in the great religions. (373) Thus Schelling understands myth to be a privilege of prehistory, but he combines prehistory and the great ancient cultures (Babylonian, Egyptian, etc.). Myth is considered by Schelling to be a product of an analogue of divine revelation. From this comes Schelling’s conviction that myth is a *primary* fact, while history is *derivative*. It is not the history of a people that determines its mythology, as was sometimes believed, but rather the mythology of a people determines its history. From whence it follows that the history of a people is founded on its prehistory. Mythology becomes the destiny of a people.

Schelling affirms that, through anticipation, all of the history of the Indians and Greeks was given to them simultaneously with the mythology of their gods. A people does not have the liberty to choose to accept or reject the mythological imagination that it likes. Here we see the dominion of a strict necessity that rules the human consciousness. Myth takes possession of the human consciousness, inciting in it processes that lead to ethnic differences and to historical events.

Schelling maintains that the coalescence of a mythology is a sign that certain divine powers have burst into the human consciousness. The conciliation that Schelling makes

between the appearance of mythology and divine revelation is clarified through the fact that, in both, the *initiative* belongs to the divine power.

It will be recognized that no other formula has ever accorded to myth a higher dignity. Myth is not, says the philosopher, only human imagination with reference to gods and divinity; myth is itself the sign of a divine invasion in humanity. Prehistory is, according to Schelling, the locus of a divine invasion in the human consciousness, through which prehistory is raised nearly to the rank of the supreme moments of divine revelation that, according to theological opinion, are occasionally manifest in human history (that is, in the founders of the great religions). In this way the qualitative exaltation of prehistory takes place in a philosophical-theological perspective that we oppose even in its fundamental principle. Schelling's opinions about prehistory (and history) clearly implicate the conception of a supposed "divine revelation" with which we find ourselves in disagreement on a metaphysical basis, as is well known.

In connection with the problem of prehistory, it also will be of interest to consider the position of a contemporary philosopher. Specifically, we refer to the theory of Ludwig Klages. His chief work (374) is titled *The Spirit as the Adversary of the Soul*.¹⁴ It is a title that summarizes all of Klages' philosophical position in a single phrase.

It is well known that Greek antiquity, as well as medieval Christianity and Idealist and Romanticist philosophy at the beginning of the nineteenth century, made a distinction between three substances of which human beings are composed: body, soul, and spirit. For the Greeks, as in the medieval period and in Romanticism, the three substances are understood as if harmoniously superimposed in three levels: the lower – body, the middle – soul, the upper – spirit. In the nineteenth century this trichotomy was more or less forgotten, speaking only about the body on the one hand, the soul on the other, without making a distinction between soul and spirit. Klages revives the old trichotomy: body, soul, spirit; but concerning the relationship between these, he proposes completely new ideas.

According to Klages, the spirit is not harmoniously superimposed, as a third level, over the body and the soul, but rather is something separate: a factor to which are attributed attitudes and tendencies contrary to the body and soul. Likewise the body and soul are not seen as levels, but rather only as two polar aspects of one single unity: "life." Body and soul are corollary terms of the biological cell. Therefore on the one hand we have "life" (the biological cell) with its two corollary moments: body and soul; and "spirit," on the other hand, as "something" separate. The "spirit" penetrates as a wedge into the unity that is "life," having the tendency to separate the body and soul, to render inanimate the body and to dematerialize the soul, in order to destroy, in the end, the life itself. In other words, the spirit is an irreducible adversary of life.

But what is the spirit and what is the soul according to Klages' understanding? The spirit is, in the first place, the intelligence that uses abstract concepts; it is the act of thinking and of the determining of the will, the author of deliberate acts. The soul is the concrete life, the emotional living in the sensible world. Any emotional beginning arising from the domain of the organism pertains to the soul. (375) The spirit judges and decides, while the soul becomes attached, throbbing emotionally at the images that are seen. The spirit, as the agent of the acts of thinking, needs life in order to be supported by it.

¹⁴ In the original, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*, 3 vols., Leipzig, 1932–1939.

Therefore the spirit is a parasitical being, while the soul exists unto itself, not needing the spirit in order to live. The spirit is an intruder.

But why do we explicate this in such detail? Because it is in light of this understanding that Klages maintains several very unusual ideas about “history” and “prehistory.” Klages sees the historical process of humanity as a progressive and triumphant battle of “the spirit” against “life;” a process that will end in final destruction. Antiquity, Christianity, and philosophical Idealism valued the spirit more than anything, as the highest level harmoniously placed on top of the body and soul. Klages, who sees in the spirit a categorical adversary of life, accomplishes a severe reversal of values. This is because he values above everything *life*, with its corollary aspects (body-soul), and repudiates the spirit. Personally, Klages adores the principle of vitality. In this perspective, he affirms that the soul is “*mythical life*,” while the spirit is intellectual cognition through *rational* concepts. The soul lives in visions and living images. Klages, assigning greater value to the soul and repudiating the spirit, will adhere more strongly to myth than to science. In light of this understanding, Klages will eulogize prehistoric man, ruled by the soul, rather than the spirit.

In one of the volumes of his major works, *Das Weltbild des Pelasgertums* (The Vision of the World of Pelasgian Man), Klages develops these ideas about prehistoric humanity that, according to the indications of the Greek legends, he names man of the “*pelasgian*” type. The legends speak about the Pelasgians as about the natives of the Greek lands. From a social point of view, the Pelasgians must have been a matriarchal society, and they seem to have lived in rhythm with the cosmos and bonded to the earth. *History is*, according to Klages, *a process of decadence*, in which the *spirit* that increasingly triumphs will eventually destroy *life*.

Klages theory is certainly disturbing. In our publications, we have subjected various aspects of this theory – and consequently also the theory of pelasgic or prehistoric man – to criticism. (376) Klages moves the axiological accent from history to prehistory. For our part, we do not need this exaltation of prehistory, but neither do we need to depreciate prehistory in the sense of positivist evolution. We will view prehistory in light of its own structures; and likewise for history. And to show the structural differences, it is sufficient to emphasize the distinction that we have previously made between minor cultures and major cultures. In prehistory, people create, are organized, and are technologically manifest in virtue of the structures of their childhood. In prehistory, the “adoptive” age of people, of collectives, is childhood; in history, the adoptive age is maturity. This point of view opens a more just perspective from which to evaluate prehistory, which need be neither exalted nor depreciated.

Years ago, when we were still formulating these ideas about “minor culture,” we had the opportunity to speak at the Romanian Academy about the Romanian village in this light.¹⁵ Someone reproached us later, saying that the way in which we presented the Romanian village within a mythological geography, as a cosmic center with products

¹⁵ *Eulogy to the Romanian Village* (Elogiul satului românesc), a discourse presented on June 5, 1937 in the official meeting on the occasion of the reception into the Romanian Academy, published in the *Official Monitor*, Bucharest, The National Printers, 1937 (cf. also *Discourses of the Reception* [Discursuri de receptie], LXXI, Romanian Academy). This has been translated in French by Georges Piscoci-Danescu and published in the collection *Perennial Philosophy* (Philosophia perennis) of the publisher Librairie du Savoir, Paris, 1989 (n. ed.).

determined by certain childhood structures, would better correspond to the prehistoric Dacian village than to the present Romanian village. Without a doubt this critic was correct, except that we took care to say, even in that very discourse, that we desired to establish a pattern of culture and to delimit the *idea* of “village” as such. In order to avert any misunderstanding, we add that today there are few villages that correspond *exactly* to the definition that we were proposing.

To arrive at the establishment of the pattern of minor culture, we found it necessary to turn and to situate the village far back in prehistory. When we establish “patterns,” the procedure is completely justifiable. If we would take all the existent villages in turn and examined their appearance, we would not be able to arrive at any conclusion at all. Intuition led us to proceed otherwise. (377) Intuition told us that we don’t necessarily need to conduct statistical research, or research of a rural sociology nature, in order to arrive at a definition of the *village idea*. So we chose a route at once both simpler and more fruitful. We tried to transpose ourselves into our childhood memories from the village and to explain what *village* meant for us *then*. We recognize that we thus move away from the prehistoric village, but this was the only route to obtaining the description of a unique kind of culture.

In the meantime, we had the occasion to think more about these things. Nothing could have persuaded us, however, to renounce the two patterns of culture, the pattern of minor culture and that of major culture. We concede that the terms of the distinction oblige us to return definitively to prehistory. We testify, however, that it gives us unusual pleasure to return to prehistory, which we are not disposed to underappreciate.

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