

CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE WRITINGS OF ZOE DUMITRESCU-BUŞULENGA AND DUMITRU STĂNILOAE

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Abstract: *Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga and Priest Dumitru Stăniloae were representative personalities of the most difficult period of the modern Romania (the communism) - conditioning the cultural and especially the spiritual development of our country, imposing coercive methods, well-known for their cruelty. They managed to sustain, to confess the values of the Orthodoxy, the cultural and artistic values of Romania, being great professors of the Bucharest University, forming specialists and also special spiritual personalities.*

Key words: *faith, culture, confession, value, eternity.*

1. Introduction

Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga was one of the representative personalities of the most difficult period of the modern Romania (the communism), which conditioned the cultural and especially spiritual development of our country, imposing coercive methods well-known for their cruelty.

Lady Buşulenga managed to sustain, to confess the values of the Orthodoxy, the cultural and artistic values of the Romania, being a great professor of the Bucharest University, forming literature specialists and also special human personalities.

Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga finalized her life by becoming a monk before 2006, having the opportunity to thank God – through her own life and faith – for this accomplishment of her cultural and

spiritual mission, finally dedicating her life to the so much beloved Orthodoxy.

Her last words (interviews, writings, confessions) were organized in an iconic volume, at the Nicodim Caligrafal Publishing House (at the Holy Putna Monastery) in 2013, under a generous title: *Do not lose the vertical dimension of the life.*

The vertical dimension of the life is the most important in the symbol of the Holy Cross (the dimension which sustains the power to confess the faith, the privilege to communicate with God, being complementary to the horizontal dimension (which consolidates the profound, loving relationship for all humans).

Lady Buşulenga “lived her life in the atmosphere of the Romanian soul“ – said Bartolomeu Anania [2], “with a special

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delicacy and force, showing a great spiritual and cultural personality, capable of sustaining essential forces of the heart, in the most difficult moments of our modern history.

2. Problem Formulation

I made a thematically synthesis of her ideas, analyzing her thoughts about the future generation, about the big responsibility for the next centuries: THE CULTURE OF THE SPIRITUALITY - the point of maximum interest in her writings.

1. The idea of the vertical dimension of life, the spiritual one is a principal element in her thoughts: she always respected God's words, living a spiritual life through these values assumed in all her existence, in spite all consequences: "those who fixed the life on these spiritual directions (not material ones), the situation is different, the physic sufferings are almost lost" [2].

"The human destinies are free: in the last years I understood that I was guided by God with His delicate hand, I am not sorry for that, because I tried to make His will, to make my whole duty. What could say someone more about his own life?" [2, p. 61]



Fig. 1. *Benedicta*
(*Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga*)

"We have lost the vertical dimension of our lives, the contemporary humanity lost this one, that is why the humanity is finished in the spiritual filed – the condition for being physically finished, one day... We are lost in the passion of money, of the material things; the cultural personalities must face a materialist society: we must say these truths, we cannot continue that way! You are not devastated about this situation? In this decadent society, where we can discover anymore our Romanian spirituality?" [2, p. 50-51]

"In my early years of life I had the chance of faith, I studied the religious poetry of the Old Testament, that I introduced the Holy Bible in student's bibliography. A faithful person can bring hope into a dark place. I understood the culture in a spiritual perspective. I love God, I always pray, I try to make my heart clear for my God" [2, p. 45-46].

2. The relationship between art and spirituality, between faith and culture, between pray and pedagogy: "the constant spiritual elements of my life were the field of the intellect and the spirit, the interest for culture and for the great horizon of the faith. I had all these benefits because of my quality of Gutenberg galaxy's citizen: the books were the most important element in my cultural existence" [2, p. 68-69]. The civilization of books was the fundament of personal improvement in all fields: "let's rejuvenate the beauty of our language, the beauty of our poetry, music and visual arts: all these values live in the sky of our Orthodoxy – the way to the eternity (according to Priest Rafail Noica)" [2, p. 71].

After 1972-1974, the ideological oppression made the life very difficult: "only God helped me through this period, I don't know how I succeed. In all my writings I have started with o communist motto, then being free to write my own

ideas. I have been accused of ambiguity, but that time needed this ambiguity in order to communicate cultural truths, fundamental personalities and texts“ [2, p. 58-59].

3. The idea of spiritual and cultural community of Romanian personalities, based on superior values: “at Văratec Monastery we had beautiful cultural meetings in the evening, we were listening to beautiful music...” [2, p. 64-65].



Fig. 2. *Văratec Monastery (Neamț)*

Lady Bușulenga considered Văratec Monastery as a SACRED TOPOS (a holy place): “first time I came to Văratec Monastery I lived a special moment, I had a sort of metaphysical state of mind. I think about this place and I instantly have access to spiritual equilibrium. I feel the forces of the place, very important for the Romanian spirituality“ [2, p. 65-66].

4. The idea of tradition: “I have confidence in our traditions, in the continuity of our creativity, I hope we can return to our national values“ [2, p. 68, 70]. “In difficult times, I have tried to save the Romanian culture’s values“ [2, p. 57].

5. The idea of pedagogical responsibility for the future of her students: “I considered myself unhappy when my destiny lost the musical dimension, but now I thank God for the chance to put young souls in Orthodoxy’s horizon – for me, a gift: the culture and the faith are very important for

everyone, especially for young people“ [2, p. 69].

3. Problem Solution

The sincerity, the competence characterized the Lady Bușulenga’s life: “I have never lied in my professional career“ [2, p. 52]. “Our students needed the presences of our great values (Eliade, for example) – so important in world’s spirituality. The young people need models. My students were my children, they are still very closed to me because I never lied, because I teach them all I knew – maybe more.: the essence of the Romanian Ortodoxy“ [2, p. 59-60].



Fig. 3. *Lady Bușulenga (as a teacher)*

The head of Putna Monastery described Lady Bușulenga in iconic words: “she lived for God, giving a state of peace. She was a spiritualized woman, as a result of a spiritualized life, lived for God. The spiritual personality was the fundament of her cultural personality. She confessed her faith in difficult times, she cultivated her cultural divine gifts, she wrote about God because God lived in her heart. She lived a special life, in the horizon of spiritual

beauty, being a model for the young generation“ [2]. Lady Buşulenga had the Christ’s model, “healing young souls with her humility, love and words“ – said D. Haulica [2].

4. Conclusion

Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae made a beautiful link between culture and spirituality: “any form of culture must reach the spiritual values of the Saint Liturgy. The cultural function is linked with the spiritual one: the faith is a power for the human soul only because this power is part of the Christian truth.

Maybe the profane culture and the Christian culture seem very different, but the Saint Fathers of the Orthodox Church said that the strongest scientifically power was the same thing with the soul’s humility and purity“ [4]. In conclusion, the internal power of the great culture comes from the spirituality, that invests the profound culture and art with unsuspected strengths.



Fig. 4. *Priest Dumitru Stăniloae*

In the spiritual cultural personality, the pride cannot endanger the values of a special gifted life: “the true culture is possible only when the humility is more powerful than the pride – that dissolves everything“ [4, p. 62]. Humility is the power that brings out the qualities of a

genuine personality, the only force that is able to amplify the reverberations of all his actions.

In the absence of culture, the foundation of an authentic personality disappears. Spirituality and culture are the two cornerstones of any man. The role of culture is very important in the process of constructing the human personality: “the lack of culture brings less spiritual life“ [4, p. 63].

Constantin Noica wrote about four motivations for culture as a supreme value: the culture is “the only certain source of a permanent joy, the real form of spiritual maturity, the only place of genuine liberty, the discipline of culture is also a very efficient form of spiritual hygiene“ [4, p. 95].



Fig. 5. *Constantin Noica*

The culture must be permanently viewed in connection with the fundamental truths of faith. Every religion influenced the profane culture, but “the Christianity (the relation between Gog and the human person – as an assumed and fulfilled way

of living) had become the authentic founder of culture“ [4, p. 62-64].



Fig. 6. *Priest Dumitru Stăniloae*

Interference between faith and culture takes place not only in the aspirations and religious ideas, but to the level of all coordinates of the human being. Faith is not reserved only for Sundays or certain hours inside the life of man, being the foundation of his entire life.

The Christianity is the most important “cultural factor; all knowledge – if it does not reach a Christian conception about life and art – is only fragmentary knowledge.

The culture of the soul is made only by a Christian conception about life. “All other knowledge can create maybe some technique for using the material, but the soul remains empty, swing and unable of force in the most difficult moments“ [4, p. 65].

In the absence of the spiritual element that supports the work of the entire human personality, we see only the closed horizon which, in other circumstances, would lead to the largest values of the world, of art and culture. Only such an open spiritual

horizon makes you see the true dimensions of the phenomena under consideration.

The culture is not the supreme form of life and spiritual personality, because “the culture must not be overstated, it must not become supreme purpose: it becomes error which isolates from God. The artistic fact must be a form of pray“ [1].

Psalm 126 from the Old Testament highlights the relation between faith and reality: If God does not build the house; in vain anyone else would try to build it.

All dimensions of human personality must become exquisite, in full collaboration.

God says that Scripture appointed for every nation a messenger, a guardian, a kind of governor of the kingdom, located in the cities of residence on earth. It seems that we have the same situation for every age, most often for every people.

For our age, at least in this country, “was appointed Father Dumitru Stăniloae, as the most suitable spiritual personality for this job. With its imposing cultural and spiritual stature, with an inexhaustible labor power, very tenacious, consistent to sacrifice, he bore on his shoulders (like Atlas) this time real of our contemporary world.



Fig. 6. *Priest Dumitru Stăniloae, old age*

Without being sad, little surprised him laughing; he was very proud of being Transylvanian and he has converted this interior power into a work of huge

proportions, full of gentleness, wisdom, balance, depth, vastness, density and many other wonderful qualities.

Father Dumitru Stăniloae was the great gift for the Romanian Orthodoxy in this terrible century of sacrifice and fight, the symbol of the absolute theological discourse of our times“ [5].

“The cultural role of Christianity is founded on the principle of Christianity is moral. This principle characterizes the true culture. An immoral culture is nonsense. Culture aimed education of the soul, it lives in the human soul – that cannot ignore its spiritual and moral requirements“ [3].

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