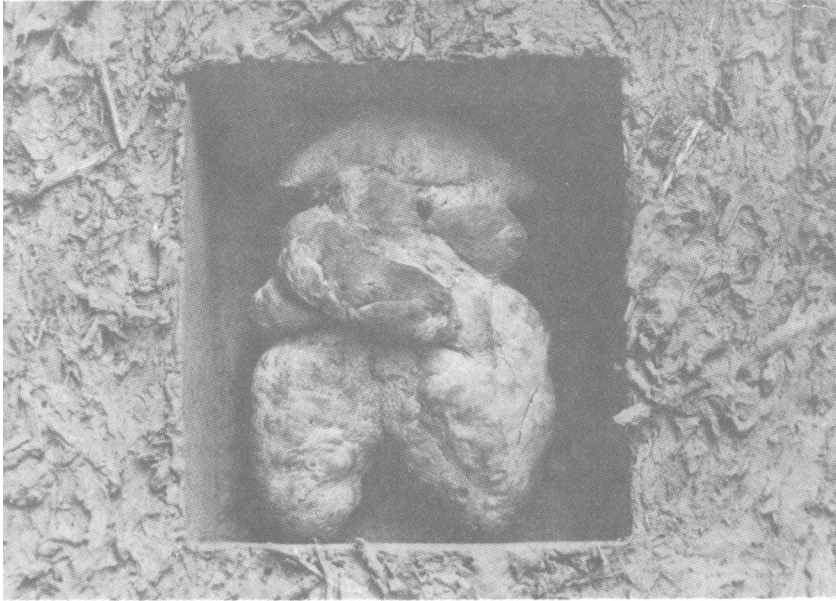


TRICKS AND TRAPS OF THE SEDUCTIVE DISCOURSE

One could easily make quite a thorough selection from Romanian philosophy, so that its samples would qualify as fragments of a seductive discourse. In a didactic framework, the philosophical discourse attempts to inform, i. e. to act as a mediator between knowledge and the thirst for it and, when truly inspired, to in-form, i.e. to participate in the development (Bildung) of a new personality. However, the philosopher often resents being confined to the scholarly environment; he would gladly channel his discourse through the main cultural highways of his time, hoping to reach, beyond the circles of the few devotees, the realm of the mysterious many. To achieve this, he has to avoid boredom for pedantry's sake, to favour clarity at the expense of precision, to sacrifice comprehensiveness to brevity, the soul to the wit. Being the housekeeper of Light, he is not to enlighten, but to delight. He believes, not unreasonably, that literature, the vehicle of all ideas, would best serve his purpose, so that he tries to turn it into an ancilla philosophiae.

Lucian Blaga describes his first contact with the philosophical discourse, namely a paper by Vasile Conta: Following this first somewhat abstract lecture, I also felt enriched because this was my first contact with the philosophical terminology, I started to become familiar with words of Greek or Latin origin, which, among usual ones, preserve their carats like gems among common stones. Exotic terminology is indeed seductive when intelligently employed, that is without excess and *cum grano salis*. Terms like Gabriel Liiceanu's polytropy and peratology look somewhat precious and are prone to facetious wordplay, while Noica's names for the „six maladies of the spirit of our times“ – catholitis, todetitis, and so on – are charmingly humorous. A poetical, metaphoric vocabulary is also attractive at first sight. However, it involves a significant risk: it is vague, hence seductive and, as such, discourages the retort, thus stifling the debate. It is indeed difficult to imagine a panel discussing seriously Blaga's concepts of time-spring, time-river and time-waterfall.

The seductive discourse may also fall into the trap of worldly success. It lures the audience into the illusion of obviousness and, consequently, attracts in its trail too many lay admirers whose brazen enthusiasm may be disreputable. Nothing did more harm to Bergson's heritage than the memory of the ladies-of-fashion that attended his lectures. Seductiveness subverts authority; hence it must be barred from the University. That is why Claude Lévy-Strauss sticks to his dreary prose, while Bernard Henri-Lévy charms the media outside the



Gardens of Akademos. However, American Universities, more permeable to the latest business styles, encourage showy, glitzy titles, concocted according to the marketing rules, which seldom fail to sell. Here are some examples of high-level research in gaudy wrappings: Flesh: Life in the Transhuman Era; Wired Women: Gender and New Realities; TechGnosis. Myth, Magic, Mysticism in the Age of Information.

One must distinguish the seductive discourse from the popularising one. To charm does not necessarily entail to uncover. The aim of the discourse is not to make the issue clear and visible, but to capture the imagination and to mesmerise reason. Moreover, one has to be amusing, and prove that dealing with concepts may be great fun. The latter strategy is less frequent in the case of Romanian philosophers, who are more inclined to wit than to humour. In their case, the prestige of „good“ writing is such that most authors take great pains to provide, at least at the end of each chapter, a memorable, epigrammatic sentence. Who would not dream to be remembered for such captivating lines as: In History, everything occurs twice: first as a tragedy, second as a farce or Philosophers have explained the world. It is time to change it?

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