

CONSTANTIN NOICA

THE PHILOSOPHICAL DIARY

I dream of a school where, strictly speaking, nothing is taught. You would live quietly and politely on the outskirts of a city and a few young people of the world would come there to be rid of the tyranny of professors. Because everything and everybody gives them lessons. Everything has to be learnt from outside, by rote, and all they are allowed from time to time is to ask questions. But can't you see that they have something to say as well, something to confess? We are just mediators between them and themselves. (Although they shouldn't be told this either.)

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The disciple comes to request something from you. You have to teach him that he has nothing to receive, that he must grow. The disciple wants to become a clinging plant. You must leave him to be what he should be, even if it is a weed. And your happiest end – fecundity! – is to be overcome by weeds.

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I am obsessed by the thought of the School where nothing would be taught. States of mind: that's what you should give to others. Not content or advice or teachings. That's why you don't need lessons either. Even if someone asks you, you don't have to give him a 'lesson'. A book from the library, a recording of a Bach prelude on a peaceful evening, an example of intellectual composure – all of these are more educational than a lesson.

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If you love music – its fadings, flows and crescendos; if you like geometry and rigour without a hardening of your heart and mind; if you have an

ounce of madness and a mountain of balance – then at some point you will meet philosophy.

Yesterday I looked for a site for the School: a house on the edge of town for myself and a friend, just two of us. At a kiosk by the railway crossing I ask for the road out towards the Ștefănești Wood. ‘Who are you looking for?’, the man asks, eager for a chat.

I start for a moment. In fact, I am looking for myself. I was going there to meet this strange apparition which is yourself projected into the future. However, I don’t have the courage to talk philosophy with the tobacconist. I just tell him about a kind of professor without any students who lives over there in a school where nothing, strictly speaking, is taught. ‘You haven’t heard of him?’ I ask. ‘Yes, I think I have. The one who...’

The man knew. I didn’t know yet but he knew – everything there was for others to know.

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Abel is a shepherd and Cain a ploughman. Abel wanders as the Son and Cain works the land as the Brother. But Cain kills Abel. It’s always Cain who kills Abel.

I reflect, for example, on the two spirits of Romania: pastoral and agrarian. According to some, everything to do with nostalgia, freedom, a feeling for art and the thirst for new horizons comes, in our case, from the pastoral spirit. But the sedentary spirit of the ploughman passed over it and laid it waste – and will continue to lay it waste.

We are the land of Cain, in which Abel has never completely died. But God’s punishment – the car – will come and sweep them both away so the people can multiply, biblically, beyond their frontiers.

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What a curious role the ‘wave’ has in Romanian history: Trajan’s wave, other waves. Essentially, the wave is a symbol of movement. With us, however, it has become static, a defensive wall. The beginnings of Romania consist in the freezing of the waves.

Russo comes to mind: ‘The melancholy of the Bible hangs over the people’s heads. The country is torn between the plaintive pages of the chroniclers and the sad songs of the people.’

He wanted a ‘loud shout’. But he never heard it.

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I took a friend to the outskirts of Bucharest to show him the site of the School. Everything revolted him: the city fringe, the shacks, the mud. ‘Don’t

you see how ugly it is?', he said to me. No, I hadn't seen. He liked the house itself more. 'But the landscape is flat and monotonous.'

Oh, these people who only see the aesthetic side of things. But the landscape can be transfigured. A man who *lives* an experience makes his own space, his own landscape. 'It's not flat,' I say, 'there are hills – if you look gently.' 'Naturally,' comes his pitiless reply, 'for Don Quixote Dulcinea is a beautiful woman, while the windmills...'

These common places again! But he's right: the experience of Don Quixote is valid, perfectly valid. That's how it should be lived: with *your* world. It's just that I prefer to think – and why not? Isn't there room for a different comparison? – of another Spaniard, El Greco, who was found by a friend in broad daylight with the curtains drawn and explained, 'I want to see *my* colours better.'

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Look at reason in the time of the French Revolution and reason today. Or freedom in German romanticism and freedom today. There is no contradiction in terms, but in spirit? If there was a belief in reason both then and now, today reason is simple reason, i.e. good behaviour; but then, it was madness (reason with a capital R). Today, it is conservative; then, there were revolutions in its name. The apologists of reason just take the dictionary of revolution without the content it had then. It's true it would be hard for them to praise the madness which laid so much to waste. But *that* madness made reason a force that made history. So why not just leave the French Revolution in peace?

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It's curious how under free regimes people fall under a new tyranny: that of the commonplace. I wonder if it isn't sadder than any other.

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What is absurd about people who demand simple freedom for the proper development of man is how they imagine that they know what man is, when in fact mankind is constantly (re)defining itself. I'm on the side of those who *don't* know. They're more likely to get somewhere.

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A young man will come to the School complaining that he doesn't know enough. But doesn't he feel the joy of not having read Goethe yet? Ignorance, how much life you have!

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That mix of the known and the unknown which makes literature (the recurring incident, the character you meet again, novelty in the familiar), which makes music, the landscape and knowledge. The magical sense of novelty, as someone said. No, the mystical sense: unity and otherness at the same time.

(That is why I look forward to the 'first day', the meeting with the new man who comes to the School, with the man who is *classifiably* new: the known and the unknown are in balance.)

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I can't think about philosophy without feeling that I'm falling, almost like with religion. Somewhere the sin happened. There's a lost paradise of knowledge *too*. Maybe it's the same myth in both cases, proving the solidarity of the spirit with itself. Because look, one of the main certainties of philosophy arises precisely from the fact that man is a fallen and limited being. God – a limitless being – exists, says Descartes, because I – as a limited being – have the idea of Him. Otherwise how could I have this idea? From my limitations?

However, philosophers usually discuss the value of this argument when they should be looking at the sense of its *perspective*.

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Maybe all myths come from myth of the fall. Man would have no need of myths if there wasn't a fallen being.

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A school in which the teacher doesn't learn as well is an absurdity. I think I have found a motto for my School. It is Léon Bloy's extraordinary phrase, 'You never know who is giving and who is receiving.'

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People who want the truth from philosophy are odd. Truths yes, but the truth? The truth is the result of logical thinking in the same way that a good deed is the result of moral living. But just as you don't put the accent on the good deed or prefer the deed to the act, so you don't prefer truth to the life of the spirit. All heretics do more deeds than Orthodox people but they're still heretics. All bigots have more truths than philosophers but they don't have philosophy, because they don't have life.

Where does the idea that philosophy teaches you the truth come from? It teaches you to think – but doesn't teach you the truth. It gives you the

direction of the truth. As Kant said, to know the truth about something you must be in harmony with it. Thus, any truth is about something; it is material. What could such the truth mean, formally? There are realities, not reality. There are truths, not the truth.

Besides, the definition of truth – *adaequatio rei et intellectus* – comes from a certain Isaac in the Middle Ages from whom it was borrowed and established by Thomas Aquinas. In Antiquity, they didn't lose sleep over truth. The ideal then was contemplation, wisdom or else the rediscovery of being (Aristotle). With the Scholastics the ideal was the rediscovery by other means of a truth was already given. But the unknown truth with a capital T is a modern creation.

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Only women know how to love. Héloïse and Abélard had been separated for many years. Each became the head of a monastery and, for everyone else, they live a righteous life. But when Abélard writes to Héloïse that for some time he has only loved her through Christ, she replies: 'Dieu le sait... que c'est à vous, bien plus qu'à Lui que je désire plaire.' And she went on: 'Je pleure non pas les fautes que j'ai commises, mais celles que je ne commets plus.' What can one say?

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The most beautiful role you can play in the lives of some people is to undo another who has played a role. Naturally, you don't exist; you are forgotten. But you drag another down with you.

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The book you are waiting to write. To be dominated by a single thing, a single sense. To make all the other gestures of life and for these not to be anything else... That's how it should be when you are in love.

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How many valid lives are not sustained by minor qualities or even shortcomings: stubbornness, ambition, pride? Everything is good, even what is guilty, on condition you don't happen on it too late. Everything is bad, even what is healthy, if you don't happen on it in time. The key is to be carried further on, to be in the flow. Everything is bad if it takes you out of it.

'Learning is good,' said Nae Ionescu, 'on condition that you don't take it seriously.' You must turn your back on things and say adieu; leave your girlfriends one by one lest they destroy your happiness. The Romans, said Montesquieu, were more afraid of leisure than of the enemy.

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I have heard Heidegger speaking for about one hour every two years. He said the same thing, or things which he must have said already in his first lecture. I asked people who had been listening for a long time, but no, they said, he hadn't repeated himself.

I don't know how, but he thought in a descending spiral. Valid thought doesn't have to be linear and progressive. Maybe it's never linear but in a spiral – like a drill. You know something from the start and you say it over again and in different ways until it says itself.

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Philosophy as Don Juanism. Specialists, in comparison, have simple, bourgeois marriages.

The key is to win over. Not to accept. Not to know.

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The bad man does much more good than the good man. Because the bad man needs deeds. The good man *is* good and, expecting to act naturally, forgets about them. A deed often hides something but he has nothing to hide.

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The ability you have to act when you have failed to do evil. You see, you say to your darkened conscience, 'I am condemned to be good'. But you're not good – and that's why you act.

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My friend gets angry that I don't argue – what he calls 'logic'. However, I don't argue to prove anything but, with a bit of luck, to discover something. Once again, these people want reason exactly where it has no role. They live life accidentally; they are slaves to passing friendships, professions dictated by others and to changing times and circumstances. As Socrates said: 'They know how many sheep they have but not who their real friends are.' In their being, life has no rational development or fulfilment. But when they go on a trip or play roulette, how everything is analysed! In every little adventure of life, they ruin the miracle and surprise by calculation. How beautiful it is to argue if you are alive, if you take a risk – if you let yourself be taken by the moment and don't just repeat what you thought out at home. But when they argue, they are 'logical'.

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I have found yet another person I can leave. Because a person who is full, rich and worthy is one to whom you can say a huge amount in few words. You shake hands, look each other in the eye and something has happened. You have a pact: 'we can leave each other now'. Because from now on, whatever keeps you apart, you are two people *who have met*.

This is the crux: to meet the other. The end – which should always mean a summary of all the foundations – is then possible. These people beside whom you spend hours on end and who spend hours on end beside you, neither gaining anything, are so dull you can't even leave them.

I count my luck by my number of possible separations.

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Besides, it is also the loveliest declaration of love: 'I feel I can leave you. I love you so much that something has happened inside me – and now I can leave you.'

It is pointless to turn around. You might see disappointment. When you leave, it is better to think that you have closed a chapter.

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Occasionally in my life I have experienced a miraculous celebration: that of celebrating the smallest thing. You celebrate first getting back to work, then a break, then opening the newspaper and seeing that nothing awful has happened. You go for a walk and everything is celebration. When you come back for a meal you are not sure exactly whether the celebration is the meal or the anticipation – so subtly described in Thomas Mann's *Zauberberg (The Magic Mountain)* – of having a smoke afterwards. Because other celebrations pile up on you, calling for your attention, arguing over you and your time. In the end, dizzy with so much happiness, you invoke the humdrum celebration – unavailable to those already in heaven – of having nothing to celebrate at all.

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I remember a day when I was twelve years old and a group of us had gathered around an older cousin who claimed to have begun to know life (what an absurd expression!). Later on I never again met such a thirsty lust for knowledge. Our hearts stopped – 'what's it like?' – as we waited for this vital truth to come out of his mouth.

What I say now may be trivial and in bad taste. But it's pointless to be philistine or moralist. It's a fact that no teacher has ever aroused in me such an intense thirst for knowledge – and *this is* what should be awoken in a dis-

ciple. You have to involve his being so deeply that he feels with bated breath that there's an absolute knowledge.

And you have lived in vain if you haven't had such a deeply human experience that the other asks you, trembling, 'What's it like?'

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What Romanian common sense knows and pedagogues don't: 'Don't give advice to anyone who doesn't ask for it, because they won't listen.'

Make them thirsty first. Put them in the position of asking you for it. And then tell them – if you have something to say.

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It is absurd to say that there are disinterested concerns. I don't know anything more passionate, and sometimes more petty, than so-called disinterested concerns. Everything, at the beginning, is 'interested' on some level. Purity only comes later, if at all.

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Innocence is a question of vocabulary. You should avoid naming what is bad. The good man doesn't see evil because he refuses to learn its name, to separate it, to know it. Evil exists in him as well; but somehow it is part of another composition.

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Romanian purity:

When a man dies, as the popular legend goes, 'If his body is without sin, his spirit will kiss him from head to toe and say: body, flowers! how well you treated me and took care of me!'

A Freudian today would analyse the remark about kissing from head to toe. But better to leave something alone in its purity just for once. It's only a legend, and a beautiful one.

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What the moral man does not understand is that his morality is a path. If he has begun to be good then he must get *better*. And Christianity ends up being a persecution precisely of the best.

(We, here in Romania, make a vocation of this. As Pârvan recounts, every four years our ancestors, the Thracians, used to throw their best men onto spears, for the gods.)

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Someone tells me off for wasting so much time on the School. But our whole effort is to enable the frame of a life to 'hold' as many things as possible: family life and solitude, those close to you and strangers, common sense and madness. He who integrates more, who achieves a more unexpected balance – wins. (Maybe no more than in a game of cards, but he wins.)

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Non-being is more rational than being. It is homogeneous, reversible and indifferent. Exactly as reason would like it.

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Sometimes it seems we have the Slav soul without the dimension of infinity, i.e. without its essence. For example, we make confessions without anybody asking us. You suddenly find yourself admitting things that are so crude that the other person starts making gestures, nodding in approval, anything to make you stop: but you go on, relentless. You want to say *everything*. Just like in one of Dostoyevski's great scenes.

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Everyone teaches you, especially when you are young, how to succeed. But a far greater virtue and, in any case, a far more useful technique for success is knowing what to do with your failures. It's not just that it's hard to succeed all the time, it's also sterile. You become a 'prizewinner'. And, God forbid, the prodigal son's brother won quite a few.

Since we are also handed out defeats, there exists (without especially looking for them, naturally) a certain lust for setbacks which should be encouraged with young people. The prodigal son had this too. But, of course, he was prodigal with this as well.

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The whole problem of Romania is not just being and being for eternity, but also becoming. But how can you transform being into becoming? Starting from when?

And I think of a Romania which could tolerate a Nietzsche telling it 'Romanians are nothing; they are becoming something.'

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I attend a seminar of Heidegger's. It's curious: he's not free of teachers' tics either. He wants correct answers: for students not to think for themselves

and have a guess but to *know*. The essence of professors is to encourage thinking that is exact and stop it being a search.

Is there really no other way?

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The young man comes to the School and says, 'I can't read the *Critique of Pure Reason* through to the end. I've begun it many times, with commentaries, interpretations and exegeses, but I can't read it.'

Why should he? He should just throw Kant away. What should he read then? Something he likes.

Don't read what you don't enjoy. Philosophy is free of obligations. Its beauty is that you can start anywhere. It's not a science and it doesn't even have a definition. Do you enjoy Descartes? Then start with Descartes. Are you fascinated by the problem of becoming? Then start with that. But you should know how to *begin*. You will learn along the way what philosophy is. Because now you are setting out for a world you can find wherever you start from. There is no royal road for mathematics, says Euclid to a king. But, on the contrary, one *does* exist for both mathematics and science: the road of reason and logic. There's only one way to learn mathematics and that's down the royal road. But philosophy doesn't have any such road. It can be learnt from anywhere, since instead of the royal road of reason it has the unknown ways of the heart.

So don't come here without love. Books are not a *pensum*; and nobody makes culture, or in any case philosophy, without love. Naturally, there are lots of worthy, learned people, brothers of the prodigal son, who make culture without love. But they peddle notions rather than making culture.

That's why you shouldn't read Kant. I know that later on, nevertheless, you should – and not just once but several times. But don't read him today. Do what you enjoy. And if you enjoy philosophy, then at some point you'll find Kant. And if you don't find him? Then you didn't like philosophy.

Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas. It is simple: don't read Kant, but love philosophy. And if you love philosophy you'll read Kant.

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I've never been able to read *The Divine Comedy* from cover to cover. There's such a monstrous order in it.

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We flatter ourselves that we take care of our bodies with medicine, sport and hygiene but we lose so many meanings through this cult of the body. For example, we have lost that immense *physical* pleasure of the traveller: the

washing of the feet. You have to read the Bible or certain pages of Claudel, in our own time, to feel what the washing of the feet used to mean.

We have discovered the bath – if one can say this, since the ancients also knew a thing or two in this regard. We have discovered the joy of the whole body. But what if the body, in itself, isn't really a whole? What if the repose of the biblical wanderer's feet meant more than that of the rest of the body? Because the whole body's fatigue is drained out through the feet and nothing can replace the gesture of that girl (in Claudel?) who washes her father's feet.

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If there is something I want to show through the School it is first of all that culture encapsulates everything. That it is not anaemic or devitalizing. In the name of culture I will never forgive those who send young men 'back to their books' in the conviction that they will lose their instincts. Personally, I would prefer it if a large number of young people were to stick to sport and other such secondary activities. Because if culture attracts people who are too healthy, too direct and lacking that subtle something called 'quality' which no pedagogue has ever been able to define, then anything is possible in culture.

Like any valid world, culture is self-enclosed. In it you find happiness, sadness, fullness and rest. You also find hunger and food. It's just that you find them, although don't ask me how, for a second time. I prefer to leave the taste for the immediate to things in the immediate world.

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I wait for the timid youngster at the School. There is something invaluable in timidity: it preserves. Timidity is a peerless educational factor, especially in peoples which mature easily like our own – Latin, if you will. The key is to prolong youth, by any means and so even by timidity. Because all 'superior animals' have an extended youth. (This I know for sure from biology.)

Hence the struggle between a real teacher and parents. Normal teachers conspire with parents to make a young man grow up: to give him the necessary knowledge, say the teachers – to prepare him for life, say the parents. That's when the real teacher intervenes. The young man doesn't know how to defend himself, what is best in himself: his own youth. Because even within himself there are urges and temptations – instincts, in a word – which push him towards maturity. Yet a nostalgia of quality persists in his heart and he searches for an apprenticeship, for a teacher.

Oh, what beautiful things happen at this age between 20 and 25! His parents nudge him along, his professors give him diplomas. The outside world opens its doors and his instincts of affirmation goad him along. And what about him? He still hesitates. But it's obvious, they tell him. Look, here's a job, here's a mate, over there might be a career. What are you waiting for?

Instead he waits. Something inside him waits. Something delays.
Happy are they who meet a great delayer at that crux!

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The prodigal son wouldn't have left home if he had met the teacher.

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The brother of the prodigal son would have left home if he had met a teacher.

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I am convinced I will find someone at the School reading through a course; he has come there because it's quiet and he can read undisturbed. I will ask him gently to come back later.

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It is interesting to follow degraded forms of certain states or processes that were initially valid. This unfriendly man – who talks 'to hear the sound of his own voice' and who doesn't want to listen because he's the one who has something to say – is just such a form. In the beginning his tendency was legitimate since any man learns not so much from what he is told as from what he is made to say himself. Any act of learning is one of thought making itself explicit. (Schoolteachers know this too, by making children repeat after them. It's just they stop, directly or indirectly, at repetition – i.e. the most trivial form of learning.)

That's why I've always felt that stupid people are much more interesting than the majority of bright people. They don't catch what they are saying but they do catch the way they are saying it. They catch the freedom with which they say it. The intelligence of bright people comes from a primitive fear: they are satisfied if they can just avoid saying something stupid. It's so little, so lamentable little.

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What is interesting when you indulge in philosophy is that at a certain moment everything gets interesting and informative: theology and mathematics, the natural sciences and the theory of music. Could it be the end? Or just the beginning?

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Science is knowledge. But reflection about knowledge – that is, becoming self-aware and integrating the act of knowledge into the life of the

spirit – produces something else: philosophy. Knowledge can be merely rational (although scientists themselves are now beginning to talk about the irrational), while awareness that knowledge is rational is not a rational exercise at all.

I can't understand how some people want two things to be one and the same (philosophy to be scientific, even to be science) when these things state at the beginning that they don't want to be the same.

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'What's missing in your School,' a friend told me, 'is the critical spirit. Without that...'

I know, without a critical spirit you can't do anything because everything good is done with a critical spirit etc., etc. So? Is that what it's about? The absurdity of the critical spirit is that it wants to precede and be independent of everything else. Who disputed that you need a critical spirit? But it's everything else that is interesting, not this. Like inventing brakes before the car.

Besides, if your critical spirit is not innate (alongside and underpinning your creative faculties), work and your material will awaken it. Whatever you do – build a house, write a poem, engage in politics – the *material* will provide you with a measure; it will show what's possible and what isn't. In principle, it's possible to live and create without a critical spirit, although it's preferable to have it. But with critical spirit alone, even fish in water can't survive.

That there are people who nevertheless believe only in critical spirit, claiming that the key is to choose? Of course there are; there are some even in Romania. They say that what is essential is not to find your own way of living but to have enough critical spirit to choose what is best from other places.

But they don't live in Romania. They live in a colony that just happens to be called Romania.

The sense of measure... What a screen for lack of feeling, often! I see them pretending not to understand how you can believe in anything beyond your present-day nothingness. You must have a sense of measure, they say...

But do they have it for themselves? They have a sense of measure for their people, for others, for everything which is foreign to them, but not for themselves. Each of us – and you all admit it – believes in the back of our minds that we could have become almost anything: prime minister, head of an army. It so happens that, for one reason or another, we didn't. But, in principle, we could have.

Any life lived in the first person at least has a freedom, something irrational.

Now I understand those who preach measure: they don't live in the first person. They are 'objective', because there is no subject in play. They

are in the nation but they are not the nation. It's normal that it should be precisely them who condemn you in the name of common sense. That's all the feeling they have left: common sense.

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I make a clear difference between two types of people: on the one hand, those who praise friendship (Cicero!), harmony, enrichment through identity, relaxation and peaceful exchange; on the other, those who believe they learn infinitely more from their enemies, in states of tension. Like in a war in which a new weapon or tactic at first surprises one of the adversaries until he learns and the two adversaries become balanced.

Who knows if the troubling 'love your enemy' of Christianity doesn't also have an epistemological undercurrent.

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Freedom and reason, say democratic spirits. So far, all well and good. But their mistake is to believe that freedom is reason when they should believe – like Schelling, Hegel and German romanticism – that reason is freedom.

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Freedom. Both the ancients and the moderns wrote good tragedies when they had constraints of time, place and action. Today, when they have all the freedom they want, they've stopped writing them. Because today you can write just about anything, whenever and wherever you like. You have complete 'liberty'. And who uses it? Theatrical revue writers.

I am afraid it might be like that everywhere... How cheaply people sell freedom, the single, great freedom, for a few liberties.

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Romanians don't have the Western category of personality. Everything is possible here, inside their own being; as Ivan Karamazov said, everything is permitted.

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I don't like at all the autochthonous example of the Dacian on Trajan's column who looks exactly like the peasants of today. This unshaken Romanian 'eternity' is just too much.

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I have seen something surprising – a compassionate man thanking a beggar for receiving his gift. In fact, he was quite right to do so. A benefactor exists because of he who receives. How grateful a doctor should be to the sick man he has cured!

You don't know is giving and who is receiving.

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I find this curious observation in Professor Sextil Pușcariu's *The Romanian Language*. 'Rece' (cold) comes from *recens*, 'fresh', as in *acqua recens*. However, with a different association, for example *panis recens*, cold would have meant hot.

What do we look for in science? The elevation of things to the point of indifference where a thing could be its opposite. The elevation to life and choice. Because life is not science, as is usually said, but indifference. Life is freedom of choice, indifference of choice and the possibility of opting. Every science tries to elevate itself to the point where things could be otherwise. As they stand today, things are frozen in a single, accepted sense. To elevate yourself to life means to seek the freedom beyond paralysis.

And I would *like* to elevate myself to the point where Romanian thought is no longer resignation and wisdom. To before the point where it is frozen in eternity.

I know, this is Romanian: cold in the sense of cold and not hot. But I don't want to believe that's all it is.

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It seems that something historic may be happening these days in Romania. For the first time there are people who believe in the Romanian people but who declare their dissatisfaction with Romanians. With faith in the Romanian people. Because otherwise, there have been plenty occidentalist hail-fellows in the 20th century.

Until now all of them, even hail-fellows from the 19th century (with the exception of their great predecessor, Cantemir), have been convinced that all we need is to be given certain conditions – independence, liberty – to show what we are capable of. But that is not enough. Too many years of anonymity have passed for us to recognize the paths of achievement and personal identity.

But this is Romanian, my friend V. tells me. What do you expect? Aren't you fed up with the absurd phrase, 'cut yourself another cloth'?

We'll see; we'll see if it's another cloth. It might be the same one, but another side. The bright side.

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There is no greater loneliness than that of peoples. It is close to fear and biblical darkness.

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Every time I see an adolescent I think what an unjust fate awaits them today. It was different with the Greeks. I know, wicked historical tongues have accustomed us to a different idea. But beyond the gossip and scandals, there is a *problem* here. We should be aware of this.

Faced with a girl of 18, any wise man on earth is a touch more attentive and kind. She exists, for them. Academicians and other bald-headed folk crowd around her with a johnny-come-lately grace and offers of help. (How the Greeks would laugh at *us!*) But meanwhile, what is the moral status of a young person of 18? 'Let's have a chat later on,' they tell her.

It's true a girl of 18 is completely formed. She knows and understands everything. Her struggle from now on will be not to lose things. She will clasp onto her youth and strive through culture, experience and memory to know as much as she knew, *suddenly*, then. I admit that in a sense this is more interesting, but only in a sense. Because she doesn't have a future, and if you love the future the young person is more interesting.

Should you wait for them to approach you or should you approach them yourself? Take their soul in your hands and gently move it around like a handful of wheat. Is it heavy? Will it make good seed? If you can, don't be the type looking for something new to pluck but be like the rain, the autumn rain that knows nothing of harvesting...

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The School. This School. I don't know if I will ever do it. But at the end of my life I'd like to be able to say that I never did anything else.

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18

I reread this whole journal. What, in fact, does it contain? Just two things, two myths of its own: That of the School and that of the Brother. And maybe they're not even two but just one. Because I myself am the brother looking for peace with the world through the School – with the sons who come and the sons who go out into the world...

English version by Robin HARDIE

Thirty years after this Journal was written, Noica went to live in a small room in a hostel in the Carpathians where he often received younger philosophers until his death twelve years later. Several have become major public figures in post-Ceaușescu Romania.

CONSTANTIN NOICA (1909-1987) studied Philosophy and Letters in Bucharest (1928-1931). After further studies in France, he took his doctorate in Philosophy in Bucharest, with a thesis entitled *Draft of the History of How Something New Is Possible*, that was published in 1940. Noica worked as a philosophy referent with the Romanian-German Institute in Berlin (1941-1944). He was at the same time one of the editors of the yearbook *Sources of Philosophy* (1942-1943). After World War II, he was under house arrest in Campulung-Muscel (1949-1958), and between 1958-1964 a political prisoner in various Romanian prisons. Afterwards he worked as a researcher at the Institute of Logic of the Romanian Academy (1965-1975). For the last twelve years of his life Noica lived in self-imposed seclusion in Păltiniș (a mountain resort in Transylvania). His many published books and essays in Romania include his debut *Mathesis or the Simple Joys* (1934), *De Caelo. An Essay on Knowledge and the Individual* (1937), *The Philosophical Diary* (1944), *Twenty-seven Steps of the Real* (1969), *The Romanian Philosophical Expression* (1970), *The Separation from Goethe* (1976), *The Romanian Feeling of the Being* (1978), *Stories about Man* (after Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, 1980), *The Becoming into Being* (volume one: *An Essay on Classical Philosophy*; volume two: *The Treaty of Ontology*, 1981), *Letters on the Logic of Hermes* (1986), *De Dignitate Europae* (1988, in German).

The Philosophical Diary is rather an essay, concluding the early period of his thinking, focused mainly on the matter of the individual facing history (that is, like in the cases of Cioran and partly Ionesco, mainly the history of Culture with a capital C). It contains also the opening to his further philosophical works, consistently dealing with the reflective features of the Romanian language, and the particularities of the national psyche.