

As a student, Camil Petrescu used to tell T. Vianu that he would write a play and a philosophical system. He wrote poetry, several plays and two novels, and in 1940 he wrote the first version of his philosophical system (all confirming that unique personal equation, "reason plus passion", which T. Vianu was the first to detect). This point could be considered the end of a cycle, his subsequent works being part of another. However, I think that the true break in his creation occurred sometime around 1926-1927, when he had been through the failure of his play, *Mioara*, had just finished *Danton* and had wanted to commit suicide. With the writing of *Substantialism* (the first draft of his philosophical system) [3], he seems to have regained his balance, by integrating personal evolution into the cosmic evolution of substance. The forever rebellious writer, the seeker for truth who said that "only revolt is generous", seems to have decided to follow *Danton's* advice and take life as it is, and defeat it with its own weapons.

The writing of the initial version of *The Doctrine of Substance* (which he deposited at Vatican during the war) took several months, but he continually improved and supplemented it until the end of his life. The book, published only in 1988 [31], reproduces the last type-written version of 1954-1955 (which, apparently, is not very different from the initial one), to which the author made a number of additions that the editors put between brackets.

Since he considers that any beginning with pretenses of absolute certainty, similar to the Cartesian one, is arguable, because subjective certainty does not mean truth, Camil Petrescu sets off by making a brief presentation of his system, so that the subsequent presentation of details would make it possible to validate or invalidate it in the reader's mind.

After analyzing the actual experience of knowledge, he rejects both the materialistic and the idealistic solution, as being the result of an unacceptable simplification of the concrete given fact. According to his doctrine, the substance is the structured totality of the world and it is organized bi-dimensionally, around two poles: a material one, of necessity, and a "nousic" one, of free intentional thinking (nous). In contradiction with the romantic and the idealistic tendencies, Camil Petrescu makes the adequacy to this necessity the essential condition of rationality: "necessity asks for reason, it is not reason that asks for necessity", and "the nous can achieve nothing unless it uses necessity against itself".

Contrary to the philosophical tradition, the goal of knowledge must not be the universal categories and the general laws, but the concrete. It "represents a structure with a unique, indefinite complexity, a structure whose equivalent the human mind has not been able to grasp". The concrete is given through the hierarchical totality of essences. Essences have to do with intuition. The understanding of the concrete resides in its adequate reconstruction, achieved by marking the limits of the essential intuitions and integrating them in the substantial intuitions. It has a spatial-temporal existence, like in the theory of relativity, but in the reality of substance, the evolution of history in time merges with the existence in space: all that is valid in this evolution is actual.

Camil Petrescu calls the process through which the substance knows itself through the agency of man transcendental action, and distinguishes it from the idealistic one because it is manifest in history. This self-knowledge is achieved under the sign of "the postulate of the act", which shows the impossibility of knowledge to directly know itself; it can only know itself through a mediation, through its results recorded in substance. This postulate, shows the author, explains the Kantian antinomies, and even places the totality of knowledge under the sign of antinomy.

In the act of knowledge, the author distinguishes a pole of the object and one of the subject, different from the pole of necessity and the nousic one. The object interacts with the

subject and they both change, while the pole of necessity (of the outer world) remains passive and indifferent to the nousic one (he concludes at the end of an analysis of the discovery of America, which he considers exemplary). However, I think the difference in dimensions between man and continent conceals here the existence of interaction (which nevertheless appears on a social level), confirmed in quantum mechanics and obvious in the relations between two persons.

Due to the lack of homogeneity of the concrete and to its becoming, to which it has to constantly adapt, substantialist knowledge cannot have its own method, i.e. "an autonomous fixed rule". Thus, logical necessity and formal logic, which operate with homogenous series of identical terms, are forced into a subordinate position. Logic would, in fact, be "the obligation of consistency in speaking, not in thinking", the fundamental principle of the former being that of identity (adequacy) between intention and expression, while the latter has the duty of following and recording as faithfully as possible the meanings of the concrete. Mathematics itself is a science only when it is applied to the concrete. We shall find with A. Dumitriu a confirmation of the tautological aspect of logical deduction.

Both the nousic pole and the material one have an axis of becoming: "the devolutionary substantial series and, coupled with it, the material-historical, evolutionary one". The former represents "the essential direction of the evolution of the concrete", of the creative spontaneity, while the latter is "the evolutionary itinerary" of the physical-chemical "automatism", and of the psychological and social mechanics (described by dialectical and historical materialism, accepted under this restriction). The former direction of evolution creates, while the latter only preserves, through passiveness, resistance and sometimes excessive specialization ("evolution into subspecies"). The interaction of the two poles represents the essence of historical becoming, which, however, is not denied an immanent finality.

Devolution has three stages: "a material stage, an individuation stage, i.e. a subjectivity stage, and finally a decisive return: to collectivity and objectification", the last giving birth – through transcendental action – to the science of substance. One can notice at this point a surprising and profound similarity with Hegel's philosophy. But, unlike Hegel, Camil Petrescu does not consider his doctrine the ultimate expression of truth; he even leaves room for the doubt that this would ever be possible, just as historical becoming allegedly does not have an end in time, although it has a direction. The objectification of knowledge is achieved through expression, which asks for a minimum of physical support. The goal of expression is a "transfer of structural presence" (essential intuitions) from the author's mind into "the interlocutor's essential intuition".

Camil Petrescu calls the totality of the adequate expression of knowledge "orthology". It implies a double adequacy: "first, the adequacy of thinking to the necessary reality, and then the adequacy of expression to the concrete thinking", therefore "a combined double precision" (which we shall find again in Addenda to the Fake Treatise...). The objectification of expression through signs (possibly words) and the elimination of its ambiguity are achieved by comparison (the measure is one of its particular instances), which effects the contact with the concrete essences and allows for "the reconstruction of the original structural presence".

"Art, science and technology are not opposed forms of knowledge itself, but different orthological modes of the totality of the known concrete". Camil Petrescu starts from the phenomenological outlook on knowledge as intuition and generalizes to the entire field of knowledge B. Croce's definition of art ("expressed intuition"), by going beyond the dichotomies operated by the latter in the sphere of knowledge (between the logical and the artistic one). Another dichotomy that Camil Petrescu transcends as early as The Theatrical Artistic Modality is the reason-passion one. Since any act of knowledge is an act of living, it is accompanied by sentiment as if by a shadow, and the sentiment, in its turn, is enhanced by its becoming an object of consciousness, by lucidity.

Science would then be "the mode of the essential subordination of symbols" (symbolological), art – "the mode that tends towards the corporal, total, concrete objectification" (ana-

logical), and technology – the mode of object making (technological): art and applied science, social organization and political action. All orthological modes are requested (in a positivistic spirit) “to achieve such an objective value, that the facts of knowledge can be reconstructed irrespective of the objective circumstances in which they occurred”, thus allowing the transfers of the instances of the presence of the nous. This condition follows from the concrete-oriented character of knowledge and from the inherently abstract character of any communication.

Orthological modes, together with other fields of human existence, are historically determined too. Thus, they result in the appearance of cultures, so that “in its entirety, each culture is a substantial group that has evolved into a species”, because it is only a store of knowledge, which, however necessary, is not living knowledge. Notwithstanding, culture is, he contends, a multidimensional organism that can be reduced to none of its characteristics or components (religion, art, economy, technology, etc.), and in the Western civilization, “art is still a good part of its substantiality”, despite the deformations it has suffered.

Orthology is supplemented with a theory of values, which includes not only their definition and description, but also a hierarchy based on a substantialistic criterion. Values can be ordered according to the stages of the nousic devolution (historical categories), and arranged hierarchically according to their contribution to the substantial knowledge. The theory of values is thus based on ontology, on the objective structure and evolution of the cosmos, not on the individual's subjective preferences (through which they however manifest themselves).

We thus obtain the substantial hierarchy of values, with the genuine substantial values of objectified knowledge (orthology) at the top, the collective historical values (related to social structures) in the middle, and the subjective biological values at the bottom.

Just as the nous cannot materialize without a material basis, its functions cannot be performed by human collectivities as entities. “History and devolution are dominated by the fact that the last stage in the possibilities of the nousic presence is the man-individual. Substantial creation is individual, and only its storing is a superindividual reality”.

“Sensibility and honesty in knowing, the courage to disregard the <<scientific>> preconceived ideas, heroic work in terms of achievements, and the courage to say what you think are the very conditions and the historical criteria of creation in the case of a genius”, i.e. the one capable of substantial intuitions and of their objectification. Moreover, these characteristic features are not specific to knowledge, but to the entire personality: “there is as much character in the other activities as there is in knowledge”. We are far from the romantic outlook on the subjective genius, but equally so from the classical one, of the creator obeying the artistic “rules”. What distinguishes him from Nietzsche is his concern for the “inferior” values and persons, as well as his view on the genius' obligations to the community to which he belongs.

In a study published in *Arc* magazine no. 1-2/1997, I pointed out the similarities and the dissimilarities between substantialism and the philosophical systems of Th. de Chardin, Sartre and Hegel. Here, we could also add the name of K. Popper and the concept of the third world, but, with Camil Petrescu, substance is an on-going, permanently actual process, while in Popper's world, it is the mere result of this process. Camil Petrescu does not name his forerunners in *The Doctrine of Substance*, but in his *Landmarks*, published in 1942, he expresses his disappointment with Plato's philosophy and his admiration for certain fragments from Aristotle's treatise *On Soul*. There are certain similarities between the latter's ideas and substantialism, while the major difference is the postulate of the act. The same treatise will be a source of truths also for A. Voinescu and A. Dumitriu, and certain statements which may seem paradoxical with Camil Petrescu will be clarified in a way in their works.

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Addenda, the follow-up to the Fake Treatise for the Use of Dramatic Authors of 1926, was published in 1947, at the end of the third volume of plays [15]. It includes, for each of his plays, explanations with regard to the circumstances in which they were written and performed, as well as to the author's intentions. The lengthiest explanation accompanies Mioara, and this is in fact the author's most comprehensive theory on the essence of drama (tragedy, in classical terminology).

This is a capital but difficult text, due to the density of ideas, to his (openly expressed) refusal to provide an explicit theoretical basis for his assertions and negations, as well as due to a significant counterpoint construction dealing with three themes: the "absolute" drama, its protagonist and the corresponding literary creation proper. I will try to decode them in the light of Camil Petrescu's other works, mostly his The Doctrine of Substance.

In The Theatrical Artistic Modality [29], he contended that the dramatic performance materializes as a result of the interpenetration of the performance and the dramatic. What allegedly characterizes a performance of any kind, be it an actual happening, symbolic action or materialized fiction, is the search for the object as mere presence; on the other hand, the dramatic is man's interest in his own destiny, it is the presence of this destiny in one consciousness. The artistic emotion is therefore triggered by the audience's identification of the character's lucidly living, which qualifies it as emotion in the presence of consciousness.

In an attempt to explicate it, it follows that artistic emotion results from revealing the subject's Ego through the agency of Another signified by the aesthetic object, and then, from identifying Another with the Same, with an Alter-Ego of the spectator. While in other art genres this revealing of the destiny of one's own Ego is carried out through a double mediation (one being that of the significant artistic object, the other, the identification with the signified destiny of Another), in the dramatic performance there is a single mediation, because the public has right before its eyes the evolution of a lived human destiny. As it brings one's destiny into one's consciousness, the act of identification with this experience is turned into dramatic experience.

The author polemically specified that "the essence of drama is not the action as movement, but the act as presence", and that "the act resides in the translated consciousness". It must be clear that dramatic evolution is not the characters' exterior movements, what happens to them; it is the evolution of the essential meanings in the public's consciousness, evolution which is determined by the one incorporated in the play.

In Addenda..., Camil Petrescu begins by identifying drama with "the act in the pure consciousness" (in a phenomenological sense, i.e. free from the accidental occurrences of the outer or inner reality, from sensations and emotions). Aphoristically phrased, "as much drama as pure consciousness". And the absolute drama (a new concept) is the one that goes on in the character's inner self, i.e. in his conscience, not in the struggle against exterior data. The intensity of the drama is ever increasing "by successively discovering new horizons in the main characters' conscience". As the dramatic character's conscience expands and deepens knowledge, its representations come in conflict with each other. Consequently, the essential conflict germinates in the very heart of truth and justice, in their antinomical nature, and the confrontation of the characters' interests and passions are the mere occasion for its manifestation.

We have seen in The Doctrine of Substance that the lack of homogeneity and the indefinite complexity of the concrete, as well as the interaction between nous and matter, make the universal categories inappropriate for real evolution (as in the case of Robespierre and Gelu Ruscanu, in Danton and The Fairies' Dance, respectively), and they necessarily lead to logical aporias. We thus see that these exterior contradictions are internalized by the dramatic character's conscience, then externalized through his actions, and their alienated

effect is then again internalized in an inevitable cycle. Consequently, "as much drama, so much lucidity".

We thus come to the second theme of the text, namely the personality of the protagonist of the absolute drama. For him, his actions and passions are determined "by the game of the revelations of his conscience", and by cognitive conflicts. Moreover, "the intensity of passion itself depends on consciousness", or, in other words, "as much consciousness, so much passion, and therefore as much drama". Following the gradation of these precepts, we could decode an evolution from a drama related to self-awareness, to one of lucidly knowing the torment of the objective world, followed by a return to the self, accompanied by the suffering induced by full knowledge. We deal here with a methodical succession of phenomenological "brackets" (*epoché*), i.e. the elimination of the accidental aspects of drama in order to intuit its essential nucleus.

In *The Doctrine of Substance*, man's "destiny" is given by the direction of historical becoming. This implies not only subordinating matter (and, consequently, the passions and sufferings related to natural and social needs), but also transcending subjectivity through the transcendental activity of knowing (oneself and the world), the preliminary subordination to necessity, and the objectified expression of truth.

Therefore, the hero of the drama is simultaneously the promoter and the necessary embodiment of this process, the personality through which the epistemological and the orthological functions are performed. But, in this process, he comes across two major obstacles: his own limitation (due to his finitude and particularity) and the contradictions in the evolution of the concrete world (in which the forces of the nousic pole confront the counter-forces of the material pole), both internalized in their turn. The hero tries to subordinate the sentimental, ethical or social conflicts to the truth resulting from his own process of knowing. He thus follows the commandment of the substantial hierarchy of values, and even if he perishes in his struggle against the internal or the external counter-forces, his objectified (if alienated) deed is preserved in the evolution of substance. Just like the way in which the stages in Camil Petrescu's evolution can be recognized in his characters' dramas.

The third theme identified in *Addenda...* is that of the artistic creation of the dramatic text. Dramatic creation is superior to lyricism because of the objectification in several characters that confront or support each other, just as "the symphony and the musical drama surpass and imply the solo singing however skillful it may be". Its result is a concretely structured totality, in which the essential meanings are incorporated in a concrete framework (consisting of characters and dramatic evolutions defined biologically, socially and historically). This is achieved (intentionally, not accidentally) by "combining two liberties" (which is similar to the "combined double precision" of orthology), that is, by choosing a possibility resulted from the combination of two quasi-infinite series of possibilities. This surprisingly resembles what A. Koestler called *bissociation*, a process common to art and science.

In the light of *The Doctrine of Substance*, it follows that, as substantial art is a way of expressing the intuition of the universal truth, it has to render it in all its complexity, as a concrete and contradictory synthesis of the nous and matter, of the intuited essence and the concrete infrastructure (that is, to achieve, in fact, what Hegel called the concrete concept, the outcome of the efforts made by dialectical reason). This is a synthetic operation of unification, which occurs in the act of genuine creation, not by "imitating" or "reflecting" reality, but through a process Camil Petrescu calls *reconstruction from the interior of reality*, which starts from a substantial intuition.

Using J. Volkelt's terminology in *The Aesthetics of the Tragic*, with which Camil Petrescu's theory has deep similarities, we could say that the absolute drama is achieved within the frame of an organic type of tragic, through the climactic combination of tragic peaks. In other words, through the combination between an antinomical situation and a personality capable of sensing it and of reaching a conscience crisis.

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By putting together the concepts in The Theatrical Artistic Modality and in Addenda, we actually get (at least in nuce) an aesthetics of the dramatic literary work, in all three hypostases of its existence (poetical creation, objective structure, individual and social reception), with an ontological and epistemological basis, but also correlated with a substantial psychology and axiology. If we add to these The Theatrical Artistic Modality and the author's notebooks for the seminar in directing (we have no time to dwell on the latter now), what results is a complete doctrine, that projected "quiddity of the dramatic performance".

His theory of the novel is more difficult to reconstruct, because its fragments are even more scattered. Some of them are real traps in which quite a number of critics got caught. Traps which could, however, have been avoided through a more lucid examination of his works of fiction, with a view to the intrinsic structure of their meanings (as I demonstrated as early as 1980 in an analysis of his short-story Death of a Sea Gull). Other texts, in which the author tried to present his deep and even genuinely revolutionary ideas, mainly about the historical novel, need perhaps a weeding out of the cliches imposed by the dogmatic ideology of socialist realism.

At the end of the pages in Addenda... I have referred to, Camil Petrescu leaves (like Praidă in the end of The Fairies' Dance) the substantiation and understanding of his theories in the hands of a future science, which he himself had intuited and even partly outlined in his unpublished manuscripts and mainly in The Doctrine of Substance.

We can say that the theoretical side of Camil Petrescu's works meets his promises and our expectations, although he did not have the chance to polish it properly. There is still to examine mainly the way it agrees or disagrees with his own literary work. And this because in the case of great artists (and Camil Petrescu is definitely one of them), we cannot confine ourselves to their theoretical writings and, in order to understand their deepest and most profound thinking, we have to explore the entire work. One in which he succeeded to achieve a unique synthesis of Caragiale's dramatic objectivity and Eminescu's tragic lyricism.

(L. B.)

