

# PSEUDO-PROTREPTIKOS

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**Abstract:** *This text is nothing more than a attempt to prove, by reductio ad absurdum, the truth of that Cioran's sentence that states that the thought of those who expressed themselves in fragments and aphorisms cannot to be (fully) systematized, nor has to be systematized. It is also intended to be a playful, so cioranian, exercise of breaking this taboo. For the same reasons, to remain faithful to the commented author, nor the questions raised here will get a definitive answer, but will be kept in their proper uncertainty and somehow deliberate vagueness.*

**Keywords:** *Cioran, philosopher, philosophy, propaedeutic, system, meta-philosophy.*

**Motto:** *„The doctrines have no strength, teachings are stupid, beliefs are ridiculous and theoretical flourishes stupid. From all that we are, is not living than in the soul.”*

*Passionate Directory, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1991, p. 23.*

**Introduction. Is Emil Cioran a philosopher?** A text that covers the way in which Emil Cioran has put himself in relation with philosophy could have very well titles like *Arguing with philosophy* or *Separation from philosophy*, especially because our thinker has been in a continuous „quarrel” with philosophy, and the „separation” he has claimed it repeatedly; of course, a parting accompanied by a permanent stay together. It is easy to see why these two titles are no longer possible. After a while I stood in the watershed for the title *To what good philosophy?*, who sends to another cioranian *topos*, I decided that the above one is the appropriate, as long as he allows a convenient ranking of Cioran's „decrees” about philosophy.

Among his published books there is not even one that has missed the reference to philosophy. And thought, it is put, not once, the question: was Emil Cioran a philosopher? This is not an easy question to answer, Cioran taking careful precautions to not be easily caught.<sup>1</sup> By the way, with a monstrous lucidity,

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<sup>1</sup> Very well defines him Nicolae Turcan, *Cioran sau excesul ca filosofie*, Cluj, Limes, 2008, p. 14, when he compare Cioran – in one of the most successful analysis of his thought – by platonic sophist, who "is escaping to you just when you were the illusion that it was left trapped.". Cf. Dan Oltean, *Mistica metafizică la Cioran*, Timisoara, Helicon, 1996, p. 5: Cioran "try with any manner to be more incomprehensible as he can". Pietro Citati expresses too Cioran's ambivalence, *apud* Fernando Savater, *Eseu despre Cioran*, trad. by Sorin Mărculescu, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1998, p. 163: candid and diabolical, mystical and sceptic, mundane and ascetic, caustic and polite, calm and

he's constantly conscious of its contradictions, even looking for them. Cioran was not considering himself a philosopher, but even an enemy of philosophy. If we must listen to him in this regard, he will declare, by an expression by which Kierkegaard it has defined Job: „I am not a philosopher [...]. I am nothing but a *Privat Denker*.”<sup>2</sup> Despite such statements, he's not a non-philosopher, but an anti-philosopher. He is even philosopher, in spite of himself,<sup>3</sup> his revolt against the philosophy being a philosophical one. Lucian Blaga says in a row that Cioran's attitude towards philosophy is a lyricism against philosophy, but a lyricism with certain philosophical elements. We could specify even the type of philosopher which Cioran represented: he was a philosopher with a Socratic function, one which is destined making us dizzy with his „sophisms” and „contradictions”, which must to awake us from the drunkenness of approximate knowledge. „We know that we know nothing” sure about what philosophy is, which is its object, which is its utility etc., so, the research must always be renewed on the basis of superior exigencies. Even if he's not a philosopher *stricto sensu*, Cioran is a philosopher, while his aphoristic and essayistic work is built around some topics generally considered as philosophical: life, death, freedom, existence, God, time, history etc. He stated once to Fernando Savater that the notion of the *philosopher* should be „amplified” by including anyone who „comes to be *jaded* by essential interrogations and satisfied to be tortured by a so notable disorder” and admits that he would be too „a bit, to the extent that, thanks to my defects, I have always strived to advance to a higher stage of uncertainty.”<sup>4</sup>

The discovery of philosophy since adolescence has a *coup de foudre* effect upon him, and leads him to study it at the Bucharest University, where he will

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choleric etc. This is something natural to a "bogomil of the 20th century". In *Exerciții de admirație*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1997, p. 9, Cioran appreciates that the "unlucky to be understood" is "the worst of each may vary over an author". Precisely why, in *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1995, p. 188, he formulates a "golden rule: to put down an incomplete picture of yourself..."

<sup>2</sup> In *Scrisori către Wolfgang Kraus. 1971-1993*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2009, p. 33, he defines himself as "a private thinker" in order to decouple from school philosophers, from systems designers, against whom he always vituperates.

<sup>3</sup> In *12 scrisori de pe culmile disperării...*, cited texts by Ion Vartic, Apostrof, Cluj-Napoca, 1995, p. 39, he declares: "I don't do philosophy, but rather seek to clarify on some matters, that are *not only of philosophy*." (my underlining, I.P.) The temptation to recall here, as some spicy, an appreciation to his address in a document of the Securitate, *apud* Stelian Tănase, *Cioran și Securitatea*, Iași, Polirom, 2010, p. 32, it's hard to repress: "It is apart from any question that Emil Cioran has the spiritual conformation of a philosopher. Think always in problems, dissects all things, has a very sharp critic spirit and an as developed speculative spirit, has passion of the ideas, but – and this *but* is fatal to him – is a lyrical spirit by definition, which cannot be objective and does not want to be. Sharp mind and endowed with the gift to withhold read things extremely easy, Emil Cioran is a great specialist of the history of philosophy, a complex and difficult study". Another document, the 27 Dec. 1954 one, depicts him, *Ibidem*, p. 31 sq., as "an exceptionally gifted talent, particularly intelligent, a stirred soul, gnawed by issues, a temperament altogether strange and whimsical." Almost it covers you envy on this "securist" with penetrating spirit. We can imagine Cioran's laughter, if he had found out! Sure, other "workers" of this institution disappoint us too, showing themselves as... uninformed when they declare, *ibidem*, p. 57, 78 and 83, that Cioran is "member commander of the Legion", or he was "Professor at Brașov and Cluj-Napoca". Homer does off too!

<sup>4</sup> Fernando Savater, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

know the Professor Nae Ionescu and his grand friends: Noica, Eliade, Ionesco and Vulcănescu. Degree in 1932, he departs with a scholarship in Munich, and then at a PhD in psychology in Paris, without truly intending to sustain it, such single confesses. Started at the age 17, when nothing – poetry, action, love, death, suffering – does not appear to him that rises to the height of the abstraction that offer philosophy, his passion for philosophy ends as flashing as it started, with the experience of insomnia. The separation occurred because „no idea cannot console in the dark, no system resists to the wakefulness. Analyses of sleeplessness shatter uncertainties.”<sup>5</sup> Renouncing since the time of Bucharest studies to his confidence in philosophy, he never renounce to the philosophical readings, which will accompany him throughout his entire life. „Jumped out of his childhood into philosophy”, he will always be a „traveller and straying philosopher”, a „philosopher of the street”, one that could never fix in a doctrine.<sup>6</sup> This is precisely why his thinking is so hard to systemize.<sup>7</sup> It can be systematized only by inventing a „scenario”, an „intrigue”. At such a canvas, with which we can order the „shivers” of his thoughts about philosophy seated through all his books, we must appeal too for the theme here. Otherwise, we have to use a simple agglomeration of quotations, trap which is not easily to be avoided. Read from this point of view, his work gives us, for our theme, a *sui generis* philosophical propaedeutics, and a particular *ars philosophica*. And, indeed, we learn here about the subject and issues of philosophy, about the types of it, about its fields, about its history, about its relationships with other forms of culture, about its method etc.

**Definition and object of philosophy.** In a meta-philosophical approach *a rebours*, the definition of philosophy can only be one appropriate. So, what is philosophy to Cioran? For a man hopelessly disappointed by it, philosophy can only be a system of questions and dead ends, „the highest expression of powerlessness”, a „prestigious falsification”, an “anonymous cry”. Philosophy is nothing else then „the deficiency of creative instinct in the profit of reflection.” „There is only a single definition of philosophy: restlessness of impersonal people.”<sup>8</sup> Which dealing, which is its subject? Its subject is not essences, but the

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<sup>5</sup> In *Tratat de descompunere*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1992, p. 250. *Ibid*, p. 76, we learn that another factor of the separation of philosophy has been the observation that the philosophers did not weakness or sorrows, but merely a "suspect depth which it does not seduce than the timid and tepid people", those who "flee the corrupting abundance of life". "Nearly all philosophers have ended *well*: here's the supreme argument against the philosophy". Even a Socrates or a Nietzsche ended without tragic, first as educator and the second as a poet. In *Silogisme amărăciunii*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1992, p. 32, appreciate that the age at which you set about philosophy is youth or even adolescence – "philosophical orgy stage" – when you are fascinated by the "clown-side" of the philosophers like Nietzsche.

<sup>6</sup> See G. Balan, *În dialog cu Emil Cioran*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1996, p. 25 and 60, in a letter to the author, he was said that: "all my life has been a frenetic search matched by *the fear to find*" and define himself as "the one to whom has been distributed the mission do not find".

<sup>7</sup> On this complained already his first exegete, F. Savater, *op. cit.*, p. 22, which states that Cioran's thinking is not systematizable. Incidentally, *Ispita de a exista*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1992, p. 129, Cioran himself throws anathema on those who show the bad habit to systematize the thinking of who deliberately submitted a "in shivers". He said somewhere that is a true sacrilege to systematize what a thinker did not want to since they delivered their thoughts in a fragmentary form. However, the taboo's violation is a cioranian attitude.

<sup>8</sup> See *Cartea amăgirilor*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1991, p. 163. Cf. *Singurătațe și destin*,

“supreme appearances”, „what never was and never will be”. To Cioran, traditional problems of philosophy (being, space, time etc.) are just false problems, are problems deprived of any verbal or rational rigor, simple language’s abuses, the elements of a detestable „jargon”. After him, a problem is completely compromised as soon as the philosophers have given attention to it. They undermine even the thought itself. Therefore, he proposes a veritable „reform” of the philosophy’s object. Thus, its true objects are: disease, death, boredom, solitude, melancholy, insomnia, suicide etc., issues in which Cioran declares being fully competent, even *expertus* in some of them.<sup>9</sup>

For example, diseases, he said, have a „philosophical” mission, they remarking to human metaphysical realities normally imperceptible. Specifically, they are meant to highlight the illusion of definitive and eternity that life could give to us; or the illusion of its accomplishment. Disease „dooms us to the depth”, it is the best path to the own self, making of any invalid an „unwittingly metaphysician”. The only valid commitment of man is only toward his own interiority, to himself. The commitment for any other theme is a dangerous decentres a waste of time and a self spending.<sup>10</sup>

But the „official” philosophy can be disapproved most because it does not have an organ for „the beauties of death”, this „sublime out of reach”. It is not able to provide a comfort for the great disease which is death. In fact, is unable to surprise the essence of life, nor that of death. Even Epicurus – philosopher which otherwise enjoys great appreciation from Cioran–, disappoint him when he wants to chase behind the fear of death by the statement that as long as there is an I, death doesn’t exists, and when the man dies, ceases to exist the I to feel it. Epicurus forgets that death doesn’t come suddenly, but is a result of a gradual agony. The death problem is fundamental to the man, it overwhelming and substituting all others problems. But it is also harmful to philosophy. Cioran thinks that philosophers cannot confess their fear towards the death because of too much pride, miming a false spiritual serenity. In fact, usual philosophy it’s nothing else than an „art” which teaches you how to hide your feelings in general and especially fear of death, the true engine of philosophical activity. Or, „the only valid attitude would be an absolute silence or a disappointed roar.”<sup>11</sup> According to Cioran, there is no other „serious” theme except the theme of death. At least he only in relation to this „absolute” *a rebours* is able to exercise his full fanaticism and delusion, the only possible ingredients that can ensure the „depth”. He

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Bucharest, Humanitas, 1992, p. 332 and *Sfârtecare*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1995, p. 151, 160.

<sup>9</sup> Suggests too that "clinic card" of the disease in general, whom we find in *Amurgul gândurilor*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1994, p. 116: "excess of consciousness; paroxysm of individuation; organic transparency; cruel lucidity, energy proportional to the 'loss'; respiration in paradox; vegetative, reflex religiosity; visceral pride; flesh wounded vanity; intolerance; angel's delicacy; executioner's bestiality."

<sup>10</sup> See *Silogismele amărăciunii*, ed. cit., p. 170. Cf. *Tratat de descompunere*, ed.cit., p. 148: "As an anti-philosopher, I hate any *indifferent* idea: I am not always sad, so I don't always think. When I see the ideas, they seem to my more pointless than even things; this is why I never have liked than sick men's elucubrations, tiredness of the insomnia, incurable fear's illuminations and doubts pierced by sighs."

<sup>11</sup> *Pe culmile disperării*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1990, p. 38 and 43.

confesses to Gabriel Liiceanu that in the 15 volumes of his own, he wrote „always the same book, on the same obsessions” – the theme of needlessness, the theme of death.<sup>12</sup> Somewhat like to Plato, for him the true philosophy is a continuous „preparation for death”, an „art of dying”. This does not mean, however, that Cioran has not meditated on the related theme of the suicide, which appeared to him as one of the most important themes of a lyrical philosophy, and of writing with cathartic intentions. „Living, day by day, in the companionship of suicide, would be for me unfairly and unpleasing to denigrate it. What could be healthier, more natural than it? Morbid and against nature is lust for being, passion, my passion.”<sup>13</sup>

To end the string of those examples detached from the philosophical problems in cioranian vision, another major theme is the anguish, which, though falsely claimed by traditional philosophers, he considers to be actually the invention of cavern man. The type of anguish to which Cioran accords most attention is the boredom, this „cyclone *au relanti*”. Boredom is a form of anguish „from which fear has been eliminated.” „Affective Eleatism” and „positivistic reverie” alike, boredom was the burden of all his life: „To live with the dread of boring anywhere, even in God ... I think the obsession of this boredom is the supreme reason of my spiritual accomplishment.”<sup>14</sup>

Regarding the fields of philosophy, the only one who could be saved as a result of the roller of cioranian „Reformation” is the ethics. But this too, unless it falls within the specific disease of common philosophy – excessive formalizing of reality, which is always more complex than the forms in which philosophy tries to catch it. While ordinary ethics does nothing else but transform our life in a „sum of lost opportunities,” a moral acceptable to Cioran is just one that refuses forms, principles, criteria, rules and, in particular, the concepts of *good* and *evil*, which are actually empty of any real content. This would be an epicurean ethics with ecclesiastic accents, expressed in urging: „suffer, drink, sip all the cup of pleasure, laugh or cry, weep of despair or of joy, sing of love and death, because nothing should be selected for all!”<sup>15</sup>

**Two kinds of philosophy: objective philosophy and subjective philosophy.** We see, thus, from the above that the anti-philosopher Cioran does not reject altogether the philosophy. What he refuses is only the official and traditional version of philosophy – the *objective* philosophy, “teachers philosophy”, the dogmatic and flat philosophy, that which “kills life”, stifling it with „categories gag”. Not philosophy itself displeases him, but purely formal

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<sup>12</sup> Gabriel Liiceanu, *Itinerariile unei vieți: E. M. Cioran. Apocalipsa după Cioran: trei zile de convorbiri – 1990*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1995, p. 68. Cf. *Silogismele amărăciunii*, ed. cit., p. 63sq., where confesses that the discovery of death is the fact that had “shaken his modesty”, stumbling him from the diligence of “serious studies” and becoming the “teaching” which preaches in all his writings. To feel the *essence* of the death is the supreme metaphysical experience of man, an experience that “an old illiterate woman’s interjections” it expresses better than the “philosopher jargon”.

<sup>13</sup> *Mărturisiri și anateme*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1994, p. 60.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 173. Cf. *Silogismele amărăciunii*, ed. cit., p. 24 and *Tratat de descompunere*, ed. cit., p. 82.

<sup>15</sup> *Pe culmile disperării*, ed. cit., p. 96 and 99.

thinking, the “concepts mud”, the devitalised and devitalising conceptualism, free of and unnecessary speculation. On the contrary, *subjective* philosophy, the true “metaphysics” is accepted. This is an “organic and existential” philosophy, a living philosophy – with living truths, created from an inner torment – a „wisdom”, or that what Nae Ionescu, his mentor from the Bucharest period, was naming *philosophizing* or *experiencing*.<sup>16</sup> Otherwise, from this one he retrieves too the distinction between *philosopher* and *thinker* or *wise*, the distinction which, in turn, he will be on loan from Schopenhauer.

Cioran put the two types of philosophy in correspondence with two human types and two kinds of thinkers: the abstract human, according to the Professor-philosopher and the organic human, corresponding to the thinker, or to the wise.<sup>17</sup> The first ones reflect only on questions, while the last ones take as objects of their meditation the reality itself. To the „abstract human”, who thinks only by the pleasure of thinking, is opposed the „organic human”, who thinks propelled by a vital imbalance, by a depression, and his thoughts have „an aroma of blood and flesh”. The last one take as object of his meditation the problem of suffering, an issue more important, more present and more vital than the syllogism problem or the truth one.<sup>18</sup> Because the truth is nothing else then a hollow word, a superstition and a nonsense, and to seek that means to be poor in spirit. As a thinker, is even disqualifying to believe that truth can be found, and the recourse to syllogism, to reasoning is the „sign of a weak vitality and of a degradation of affectivity.”<sup>19</sup> While objective philosophers begin from an external experience and reflects on the ideas, failing in syllogism, the subjective ones departs from its own experience and meditate poetically on them, on unhappiness. On the contrary, the objective philosophers talk about pain without

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<sup>16</sup> Its superiority comes from the fact that it valorises more the sensitivity, the emotion, constitutes the principles of reasoning. So he could be able to say, in *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1993, p. 168, that ordinary people can sometimes be longer profound than philosophers, in that they can have a deeper sense of life. For, "The starting point is the living, and not the theory." He himself is not seeking a philosophy of essences knowledge, but one of the significantly detail.

<sup>17</sup> The distinction is more often repeated and nuanced. See, for example, *Tratat de descompunere*, ed.cit., p. 148 sq.: one who "thinks *when he wants*", but that doesn't tell us anything, being located *next* to thinking and being non responsible for his statements, and another who "thinks when it wants the chance", but he finds himself and, therefore, he thinks live. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 258 sqq.: some who are deprived of any pathos and intensity, the men of their time, addicted to the era in which they live, and others temperamental, which you can imagine them at any time, that transcend time by "the specific eternity of their defects". These are the confessors of the "truths of temperament", as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, which is above their experiences and wanderings for they worth more than what is "going on" to they.

<sup>18</sup> *Vezi Pe culmile disperării*, ed. cit., p. 32.

<sup>19</sup> *Ispita de a exista*, ed. cit., p. 43. Cf. *Tratat de descompunere*, ed.cit., p. 246. In *Caiete*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1999, vol. I, p. 34, expresses squarely belonging to this category of philosophers by stating that he did not propose truths "but half convictions, heresies without consequences, which did anyone any harm and no good." Anyway, one thing that always remains valid in a philosopher is his temperament, that thing that makes him "to forget himself", to be alive and to pursue his own self, that it supply him whit contradictions and whims, making him to think sincere. A thinker is interesting only if there is a divorce between himself and his opinions, so it happens to Marcus Aurelius, the warrior emperor that meditates on the problem of death and not to the Empire, or to Nietzsche, the forces adulator, who lead a sick's monotonous life.

lyricism, which is „a paradox of existence”. They „try to teach us the indifference, a state that even they fail to arrive. No one can boast that he had ever met a single perfect wise, while we meet all the time all kinds of people that represent extremes both in good and bad: enthusiasts tormented up to torture, prophets, Saints sometimes...”<sup>20</sup> „Restful, coward and reserved”, objective philosophers have not the citizenship in Cioran’s world, they must banish or isolate „into a left castle, do not trouble anyone”.<sup>21</sup>

The main defect of objective philosophy is that abstract problems that and it consider not fully engage the background of human subjectivity, does not imply any risk, madness, or passion. Or, in view of the individual, the philosophy has to be a private act, to be „philosophy of unique moments.” „Thinking which not express the fight of an existence is pure theory. To think without destiny, here's the destiny of theoretic man. Theory make all those who do not want to change them and to change this world, which does not restore anything that was done, and feel not all that will be. Voids are thoughts which do not grow on a soul and a body, voids are pure ideas, useless all for free knowledge. Let emerge steams from thoughts; sparks from ideas; flames from the knowledge.”<sup>22</sup> Precisely why Cioran preferred „lyric philosophy”, a thinking bordering on poetry, a living thinking, inundated with lyricism, a thinking what plunge in the our inner hell.<sup>23</sup> His preference for this kind of philosophy is motivated including by the pragmatic of creation, because, „when you repudiate lyricism, is a discomfort to blacken a page: to what good writing that did *exactly* what you mean to say?”<sup>24</sup> With his temperament of „prodigal son”, it was natural that Cioran choose the destiny of the „subjective philosopher” and not that of the “objective” brother, to be a Goldmund who prefer to know the world traversing it – even a on a bicycle! – and not a Narcissus, who knows the world „from the books”.

But, beyond the objective-subjective opposition, ultimately, Cioran is not retained nor to reject the entire philosophy/thought. And that, because „a stone, a flower and a worm is more than the entire human thinking. The ideas were not born and will not bring forth even an atom. Thinking has brought nothing new on the world than itself; that is another world. [...] And in truth, the final objection

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<sup>20</sup> *Căderea în timp*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1994, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> *Vezi Pe culmile disperării*, ed. cit., p. 136, where he add: "Should be declared void all dry people's truths, thinking without sperm to the brain, without anguish and despair. I appreciate only vital, organic and spermatric truths, because I know that there is no *truth*, but only living truths, fruit of our anxiety." The only way to save for the objective philosopher, it is shown in *Amurgul gândurilor*, ed. cit., p. 110, it would be to become a "lawyer of the heart", to drown his thoughts in the blood.

<sup>22</sup> *Cartea amăgirilor*, ed. cit., p. 130. In *Pe culmile disperării*, ed. cit., p. 176, he declares: "I do not have ideas, but obsessions. Ideas can have anyone. No one failed because of ideas." Or, we learn in *Amurgul gândurilor*, ed. cit., p. 192, "the thinker's reason is to invent poetic ideas, to compensate the world through absolute images, running away from the general and breaking the laws. [...] The thinking is germinating on the ruin of reason."

<sup>23</sup> *Pe culmile disperării*, ed. cit., p.61. Cf. *Caiete*, ed. cit., vol. I, p. 75: "I am unable to write but only under the passion's empire." p. 199: "to think is to exaggerate." p. 3: "My <manner>: obsessive thinking – acrobatic style." However, while states that practice a sense, impressionist philosophy, Cioran is situated between lyricism and lucidity.

<sup>24</sup> *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*, ed. cit., p. 16.

against the ideas is that they are not ours. There are not unique ideas; none have borrowed our face. [...] the ideas do not lead to anything and so they do not round up effectively world in which we are. Why to think about the world if thinking not becomes destiny for the world? No law of nature has changed because of thinking and no idea has imposed a new law to the nature. Ideas are neither cosmic nor demiurgic and thus were born convicted.”<sup>25</sup>

**History of philosophy. Cioran's „sources”.** Our philosopher does not operate with a proper history of philosophy. In any case, not with a Hegelian type one, as a becoming increasing over time. After him, in the history of philosophy there is no progress; consciousness is not progressing at all over time; just its forms change, without targeting any illusory perfection. On the contrary, the becoming of philosophy he seems to be just a becoming into becoming, such his grand friend Noica says, that he has never „forgiven” because it had the naivety to have wished to become a philosopher.

Vicious reader of philosophy, however, Cioran was not interested in „professional” historic-philosophical reading, but appreciates that we should philosophize as if we were the first philosophers, as if there would not be a history of philosophy.<sup>26</sup> However, from his work we can detach a personal vision on the history of philosophy, one that operates with a fairly simple division between *ancients* (implicit, medieval) and *moderns* (including contemporaries). Thus, he considers that the modern philosophy it is not with anything superior to the Chinese, Indian or Greek from antiquity, but, at most, equalise it in some instances. After him, modernity is saved only through music, by Monteverdi, Bach or Mozart, because philosophically the meditations of a Buddha, Lao Zi, Śankara or Plato surpass it successfully. In any case, moderns do not add anything new to what the ancients said. A Greek or Chinese sophist appear superior to Hegel, the supreme modern responsible for the modern false optimism through his theory about progress of consciousness.

Indian thought and Daoism – sophisticated wisdom net superior to European philosophy in regards to the art of the indifference – seem to be the most profound, because they do not constitute a mere intellectual exercise, but are training for the performance of the thinking, their aim being to obtain the liberation. Furthermore, the wisdom of China and India are the only ones who can cure the European culture – a culture of the „tired intellectual” – by its defects. Of Indian philosophies, felt the Vedanta is the most metaphysical, because it said that God made the world only in the plays. Greek philosophy comes in value just following the two Oriental philosophies, because, while in the Orient have sought deliverance, in Greece, with the exception of Epicurus, Pyrrhon, and a „few

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<sup>25</sup> *Cartea amăgirilor*, ed. cit., p. 158 sq.

<sup>26</sup> *Caiete*, ed. cit., vol. II, p. 308. Cf. *Demiurgul cel rău*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1995, p. 173: "We should philosophize as 'philosophy' there was not, as it would do a Troglodyte fascinated or terrified of plagues that took place under his eyes." In an anti-Hegel passage from *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*, ed. cit., p. 162, states that "History of philosophy is denial of philosophy." An idea has to be lived and confronted in battle with it, not conceptually disjointed or describing its historical stages. About professional readings in the history of philosophy, in *Amurgul gândurilor*, ed. cit., p. 159, expresses so his contempt: "They say: so and so know Spinoza, Kant etc... I've never heard but telling you about anybody: *that one* knows God. And just so it would only be interested."



others”, was sought “only” the truth or to achieve wisdom. Worse, the German and European thinking do not propose than the development of systems which „have no relation with life”.<sup>27</sup>

What commonly distinguishes the ancient philosophers of the modern is not simply the difference of perspective in which they are placed, how downright a difference of *position* that generates itself that difference of perspective. Thus, while the ancients philosophize stretched, waiting thoughts, inspiration, the moderns, seated at desk, assails them and causes them, raping them by reading. Precisely for this reason, modern thinkers fail to be than some „stooping engineers” in the vicinity of God.<sup>28</sup>

But which are the favourite philosophers, which are Cioran's „sources” and masters? We can observe from the beginning is the fact that he had weakness especially for thinkers and currents of one particular marginality: Indian and Chinese thinking, *Zen* practice, cynics, stoics, epicureans, sceptics, Gnostics, Christian mysticism, French moralists (especially Montaigne), occasionalists, Pascal, German philosophy of life (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Simmel, Spengler, Klages), spiritualism (Shestov, called somewhere „my philosopher”), Kierkegaard, Weininger, Nae Ionescu, E. Lovinescu and even Heidegger, in his kierkegaardian side.<sup>29</sup> We can add to them Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, Job and Ecclesiast. Of all „influences” enumerated here the most had talked about the Nietzsche’s „influences” on Cioran. To be sure, however, his closeness of Nietzsche is easy and unfair, as Cioran is not a simple epigone of German philosopher. Therefore, it would be exaggerated to talk about an influence of it on him, being rather an affinity. Just as it was and as regards all the other „sources” above enumerated. It would be more accurate to talk about the fact that Cioran overtakes from them themes and attitudes to process them in a personal way. Furthermore, he has always denied his approach by Nietzsche, pointing out that he was for him only an idol of youth, later seeming to him „too naive” and a „false iconoclast”, since he just replaces some idols with others.<sup>30</sup> Cioran does not accept

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<sup>27</sup> *Tratat de descompunere*, ed. cit., p. 217. Cf. *Ispita de a exista*, ed. cit., p. 8, 37; and *Caiete*, ed. cit., vol. II, p. 246.

<sup>28</sup> *Amurgul gândurilor*, ed. cit., p. 36. In *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*, ed. cit., p. 197, we learn that "natural place" of philosophy is the *agora*, most garden or a house, while the "chair is the philosopher's tomb, the death of any live thought, the chair is spirit in mourning".

<sup>29</sup> Comprehensive lists for this purpose offers to us Fernando Savater, *op.cit.*, p. 130; Ioan Costea, *Sfârșitul istoriei după Cioran*, Bucharest, EuroPress, 2009, p. 61; and R. Reschika, *Introducere în opera lui Emil Cioran*, trad. by Viorica Nișcov, Bucharest, Saeculum, 1998, p. 10. But numerous passages are in our thinker's books in which he gives us such lists with "idols". It's true, highly fluctuating from one book to another, from one stage of life to another. As an example, see: *Scrisori către cei de-acasă*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1995, p. 243 and \*\*\*, *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, ed. cit., p. 20 etc.

<sup>30</sup> See Gabriel Liiceanu, *op. cit.*, ed. cit., p. 24. Separation from this "idol of youth" begins right from the writings of Youth, and relation whit him remains fluctuant. Here are, random, a few places. If in *Cartea amăgirilor*, ed. cit., p. 160, Cioran declares that only the philosophers he may take are those "that you can't read aloud", those whose truths "should be whispered", as Pascal, for example, that "holy *without temperament*" (or, Nietzsche "must called out" as "any drummer of the delusions should be called out."); in *Lacrimi și sfinți*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1991, p. 45, says that "the great merit of Nietzsche is that he knew in time to defend himself for holiness" (otherwise, it would have become "a Pascal with all saints madness's moreover"); and in *Silogismele amărăciunii*, ed. cit.,

to be explained by his lectures, considering that they have not influenced him. Disabilities would be those that made him to be and write as it is and how he wrote, and not lectures. His vision about things – said it several times – is prior to his intellectual formation.<sup>31</sup>

Interesting philosophers for Cioran are those who, by exhausting thinking, they started looking for happiness. They are the ones who have brought „philosophies of dusk, more consoling than religions, because removes us under any control”, philosophies that whisper to us: „*everything is permitted*”. This kind of philosophers are, for example, Epicurus and stoics from the twilight of Antiquity, who threw a thick shadow of doubt over everything thought a Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato or Aristotle, who, in their philosophical creation, were simple slaves of their *genius, daemon* or encyclopaedism. Epicurus is the wise that Cioran declare that has the most need, considering that he is preferable by Diogenes by his misanthropy, and by Socrates, that fails to be a „deliverer”. Epicurus was disappointed him only when stated that Teognis from Megara was wrong asserting that's preferable not to be born, and since you were born to die soon.<sup>32</sup> Along with Epicureanism, stoicism is also tempting, being also a palliation, by which the Greeks sought to heal of that „*mal de siecle*” which is specific to all the „historical sunsets”. As a follower of stoicism – the roman one, in particular – Cioran appreciates that we must consider us as some *kosmopolitai*, as human wisdom itself is cosmopolitan. Epicureans and stoics – whom he attends alternately, being faithful to them at the same time! – are „experts in wisdom, nobles charlatans appeared on the suburbs of philosophy”, which provide recipes for happiness.<sup>33</sup> Among the Stoics, Marcus Aurelius is the most appreciated and repeatedly recommended as „best consolation” and „the only philosopher which can be read at times of great crisis.”<sup>34</sup>

Other preferred philosophers are cynics, true „masters in irresolvable”, who „*knew everything* and that have pulled all the consequences of this supreme indiscretion.” Among the cynics, the philosopher who enjoys the highest tolls in the eyes of Cioran is Diogenes the „Heavenly dog”, „crazy Socrates”, that „Buddha sorry player” which „posing in the show”. His appreciation is roused that he was he who had the strength to face all the conventions, permitting to himself to pass in the act any of „the most intimate thoughts with a supernatural insolence, like a God of knowledge, lewd and pure”. Lucid and honest to the extreme, „only Diogenes does not propose anything; the background of his attitude – and of

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p. 12, considers that by Nietzsche physiology has entered in philosophy, he transforming organic disorders into concept and ennobling the diseases destiny; and, in *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*, ed.cit., p. 94, declare that it was separated from Nietzsche because this is a simple "teenager iconoclast". Now he feels closest to Marcus Aurelius, which gives "more comfort and even more hope" than that "scintillating prophet" who was the German philosopher. Finally, in *Caiete*, ed. cit., vol. II, p. 8, 14, Nietzsche becomes a simple "thinker for teenagers". For anyone who has sought *ataraxia* all his life, not troubled minds as Nietzsche, but those seated, as Marcus Aurelius, is available to attend. Separation from Nietzsche will be produced by the maturation of "scepticism".

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, *Caiete*, ed. cit., vol. I, p. 35.

<sup>32</sup> *Mărturisiri și anateme*, ed. cit., p. 37.

<sup>33</sup> *Tratat de descompunere*, ed. cit., p. 57, 72. Cf. *Lacrimi și sfinți*, ed. cit., p. 121.

<sup>34</sup> *Scrisori către cei de-acasă*, ed. cit., p. 320.

cynicism, essentially – is determined by a testicular abhor before the ridiculous to be human.”<sup>35</sup> By assigning often the cynics and sceptics, exponents of a veritable „school of discretion”, he states: „The last sceptic and the last cynic at the end of this world (i.e. Greco-Roman world - my note, I. P.) *knew* more than a great philosopher of the modernity’s aurora.”<sup>36</sup> Cynics are real *post*-human – not *supra* –, because they chased out of them the humanity; they were people and now they are not anymore.<sup>37</sup> The flip side, „scepticism is the surprise of geniality in front of the vacuum and, of course, of reality too. Only the ancients knew to be sceptical. And among them only those of Alexandrine cross-road. „<sup>38</sup> One of Cioran's constants model was Pyrrhon the sceptic, whose strength of indifference was making him envious, to whose „discipline of the scorn” covets „with the feverishness of a potty”.

Especially in the second half of his life, Indian thinking becomes Cioran's great weakness. Having yearly „crises of indianity”, he appreciates that his own philosophical position lies somewhere between Buddhism and Vedanta. <sup>39</sup> Recognizes, however, that his affinity with the Indian thinking is not total, as long as it seeks nothingness of the “I” and he himself can’t focus only on him and his sufferings. Of all Indian thought systems, Buddhism – “which teaches you how to become detached” – it seems to him the most true and most deeply thought system, the only one that really attracts him. Without however being Buddhist, because, living from contradictions, he is unable to join in completely at any doctrine. Superiority of Buddhism – and of Daoism, by the way – is generated according to Cioran that Buddha and Lao Zi are not interested by an identifiable Being, but of something without precise outline, neighbour with nothingness – Dao or Nirvana – and offer to us the meditation not prayer or thinking.<sup>40</sup>

As for Christianity, declares that it has not helped him like Buddhism, Daoism and Marcus Aurelius. In his letters to Arșavir Aterian, Cioran claims that the resumption of his perpetual attacks on Christianity has their concern in his desire to take revenge on Christianity because it did never offer to him support or consolation in his difficult moments, as they did Daoism and Buddhism. On the contrary, the incessant return to reading Christian mystics itself throws him each time in the arms of scepticism, which constitutes the „background of his nature”.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Tratat de descompunere*, ed. cit., p. 101 sqq. Cioran has admiration for those who practice the cynicism not only in words, but they translated and indeed, as Talleyrand, for example.

<sup>36</sup> *Lacrimi și sfinți*, ed. cit., p. 80 sq.

<sup>37</sup> *Amurgul gândurilor*, ed. cit., p. 126.

<sup>38</sup> *Lacrimi și sfinți*, ed. cit., p. 54.

<sup>39</sup> *Caiete*, ed. cit., vol. I, p. 98. In one of his letters to Arșavir Aterian – see \*\*\* , *Întâlniri cu Cioran*, Fundația națională pentru știință și artă, Bucharest, 2011, vol. II, collection of Marin Diaconu and Mihaela Gentiana Stănișor, p. 108 –, Cioran asserts that, if it were to resume his life would grab to study Eastern philosophy, especially on the Indian.

<sup>40</sup> *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*, ed. cit., p. 14. Cf. *Scrisori către cei de-acasă*, ed. cit., p. 56; and \*\*\* , *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, ed. cit., p. 11: Buddha "outdid all the wise men" because "he understood best the problem" of life and death.

<sup>41</sup> \*\*\* , *Întâlniri cu Cioran*, ed. cit., vol. II, p. 136 and 129. Cf. *Mărturisiri și anateme*, ed.cit., p. 74 and *Exerciții de admirație*, ed.cit., p. 133, where adds that the only Christian Mystic you can read is Meister Eckhart, because only he knew to accompany his depth with an inexpressible charm and help us "to break our temporal chains".

On the other hand, however, in view of his structural „Manichaeism”, as well his mystical temperament would never be excluded that, through his anti-Christianism, to be unconsciously wanted to have against Christianity the same function which attributes to mystics themselves: a half-heresy with a reviving effect for the faith.

Therefore, can we decide which Cioran’s „masters” were truly? Had he really masters? This is not easy to say. For the claiming of his „apprenticeship” near to one or other of those remembered is accompanied – sometimes on the same page, in the same sentence – even with the retract, sometimes vehemently by them. Inconsequent and exalted, Cioran change opinions repeatedly, giving them each time the appearance of absolute beliefs. They even were absolute, but only on time! But let him to confess even him about the question before: „I was companion with Athens sceptics, with the reckless of Rome, with the saints of Spain, with the North’s thinkers and with hoar frost of live embers of British poets – disappointed of unnecessary passions, vicious and left devoted the of all inspirations. [...] And, at the end, I met again with me.”<sup>42</sup>

**Hierarchy of culture forms.** The hierarchy of culture forms that we could distinguish in Cioran’s work is not similar to those that philosophers use to make. It is not one to put philosophy at the head of list. On the contrary, the cioranian hierarchy of the culture forms „exiles” philosophy one queue. He reveals the philosophy on the list of valid paths by absolute. Thus, making a synthesis of the places where Cioran analyse this question, on a first-place would come the *art*, with music and poetry, but also – if is allowed – erotica, an art too; the following places *religion*, with Mystique, the Prophets institution and that of the Holy; only at third place coming *philosophy*, where to the philosopher itself is preferable the wise man, an unusual mixture of religious and philosophical. In addition, the science and scientist have the right to the city no more than in the immigrant condition. Science seems to Cioran as an inutile concern because the world „does not *deserve* to be known”. In any case, not in the manner in which understands science to do so. Because it searches for the truth, and truth is „boring”.

The music is clearly superior to philosophy and religion, because while the last ones search in the vain to find a valid argument for the existence of God, the former did so the best by Bach. „If does not exist the imperialism of the concept, the music would be kept rather than philosophy; it would have been the paradise of ineffable evidences, an epidemic of ecstasies. [...] What good to attend Plato, when a saxophone can make us just as well to loom another world?”<sup>43</sup> Then, the philosophy is inferior to poetry because it forgets heart, being „devoid of passion, love, alcohol”. Anyone can learn more from poets than philosophers because the last of poets knows more than the greatest philosopher, knows that ideas, especially if you live for them, are foreign to life. The poetry surpass philosophy by its “surplus” of intensity, suffering and solitude, the philosopher saving himself in front of the poet only on a single „point of prestige”, „when he feels alone with *all knowledge*”. „What an artist? A man who knows everything – without realizing. A

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<sup>42</sup> *Îndreptar pătimăș*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1991, p. 43.

<sup>43</sup> *Silogisme amărăciunii*, ed.cit., p. 94 sq. Cf. *Lacrimi și sfinți*, ed.cit., p. 79.

philosopher? A man who realizes but knows nothing.”<sup>44</sup> Another reason of superiority of poetry to philosophy is that only poetry takes courage of „I”, while philosophy stay in the impersonal „it” or, at most, risk a „we”. „There’s not more rigor in philosophy than in poetry, and neither in intelligence more than in the heart.”<sup>45</sup> Then, the mystics and saints are preferable to philosophers through that suspension of intellectual activity and by the conceptual indistinction to which they arrive by practicing ecstasy, while philosophers don't know than to make distinctions.<sup>46</sup>

The great flaw of the philosophy is that it's „too *supportable*”. As a simple „kind of fall”, Cioran believes that philosophy has always enjoyed an undeserved „religious reverence” and a „consideration full of fear”. Its legitimacy must however categorically be questioned, because it is sterile field, and truths that it value are useless, and is even very possible to not have any truth. Philosophy boils down to the ordinary law of causality, which puts it in a condition of marginal in culture, of mediocrity, a neighbour sad of science, which can always be vastly exceeded by music, poetry or mystical. Therefore, he says that whoever does not defeat the philosophy is a defeated himself. Alike a modern and strange Calicles, Cioran declare that „Studying philosophers, in order to remain in their company whole life, is a compromise in front of everybody that they understand that philosophy can only be a chapter of their biography, and dying philosopher is a shame that death cannot delete it.” Their doctrine does not deserve to be accepted, because it cannot even take the function of consolation, as long as it claims to offer knowledge. Or, „to know and to be consoled do not meet never.” And, then, remains a sad truth: „any philosophy is a cheated waiting”. „Philosophers began to be indifferent to me in the moment when I realized that it cannot do philosophy than in a psychic indifference, i.e. in an inadmissible independence against any state of mind. The neutrality of the psychic is the essential character of the philosopher. Kant was never sad. [...] As ideas, philosophers have no destiny.” To be philosopher is „comfortable”, whereas philosophers are neutral towards „all that is and what is not.” They don't actually know anything. „A poet of great vision (Baudelaire, Rilke, e.g.) says in two verses more than a philosopher throughout his all work. Philosophical probity is pure shyness. Trying to show what it can't be demonstrated, to prove things heterogeneous reasoning, and make valid the irreducible or the absurd, philosophy satisfies a mediocre taste of the absolute.”<sup>47</sup>

**The method of philosophy. Doubt and scepticism.** Cioran affirm that there is no philosopher “more honest” than the sceptic. Or, just honesty in thought is what he wants the most to do. Therefore, another better method than the uncertainty could not find it. Because he, like sceptics, “not spare anything”, all it seems

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<sup>44</sup> *Amurgul gândurilor*, ed. cit., p. 103, 126 and 135.

<sup>45</sup> *Tratat de descompunere*, ed. cit., p. 219. Cf. *ibidem*, p. 30. See and *Silogismele amărăciunii*, ed. cit., p. 114: "The Truth? In Shakespeare; a philosopher would not be able to acquire it without having to fly into smithereens, with his system too."

<sup>46</sup> *Lacrimi și sfinți*, ed. cit., p. 66. Cioran not refutes totally the religion, but only the theology and the Church. It accepts a God, but one between philosophy and religion, a – no matter how oxymoronic would call this expression – "personal infinite". Not just personally like the God of the Bible, and not just infinite "as the God of the philosophers".

<sup>47</sup> *Cartea amăgirilor*, ed. cit., p. 161 sqq. Cf. *Amurgul gândurilor*, ed. cit., p. 114.

“approximation and appearance, both theorems as and cries.” Just that he does not want to be a “rigorous” and „orthodox” sceptic, but a „heretic” one, who alternate his „crisis” of doubt with excitement ones, with a „hauntingly enthusiasm that would endow whit feeling even minerals.” Heretic sceptic, believe he, it is higher than the „orthodox” one in that he *defeats* from time to time the doubt, while the first is *defeated* for good by it. Attending for long the doubt, Cioran assumes a special form of vanity: believing to be given more than others not in intelligence, but in lucidity, in lack of simplicity, hubris of knowing how is staying the things *in fact*. He is „the most lucid of mortals”.<sup>48</sup> Cioran resonate with the doubts of a Pascal or Shestov, which are more than „vulgar, ordinary scepticism and peripheral”. On the contrary, considering that the scepticism is the „last courage” of philosophy, he says that modern scepticism, with his, „scientific” relativism compromise in fact true scepticism. Science is nothing else then „a sum of vulgar doubts for a cultivated folly”. „There is no science than to the antipode of the spirit. [...] A philosopher is saved from mediocrity only by scepticism or mystique, these two forms of despair in the front of *knowledge*. Mystique is an escape from knowledge, and scepticism is knowledge without hope. In both kinds *world* is not a *solution*.”<sup>49</sup>

The scepticism professed by Cioran is no different only by vulgar and modern/scientific scepticism, but also of the antique. While the latter seek equality mood, cioranian scepticism is a „lyrical” scepticism, a scepticism “combined with tragic and demonism and heroism”, that leads to a „transfiguration, an internal combustion which is extremely fertile for the individual”.<sup>50</sup> The places where Cioran describes the form of scepticism adopted by him or the kind of sceptic that he embodies abound in his books. Making reference to such places would be an otiose approach. That is why I think it is sufficient to list the most common formulas: “sceptical unleashed”, “violent scepticism”, “sceptic fake”, “obsessed with no belief”, “visceral scepticism”, “scepticism of de-fascination”, “panting, frenetic scepticism, combination of fervour and reasoning, with the predominance of the former”, „sceptic incomplete”, „sceptical of a world that goes down”, etc. etc.<sup>51</sup>

But beyond all these formulas, designed to carry more than to define, it must be said that Cioran's scepticism is not one of absolute structure, is not a negation for the sake of negation, but is a moderate scepticism, lucid doubt expressed about the values that man always generally cherished: life, civilization, religion.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Căderea în timp*, ed. cit., p. 63 sqq., and p. 82.

<sup>49</sup> *Lacrimi și sfinți*, ed. cit., p. 51.

<sup>50</sup> *Singurătate și destin*, ed. cit., p. 174 sq.

<sup>51</sup> Here, however, two places where we find a larger "agglomeration" of such formulas: *Caiete*, ed. cit., vol. III, p. 157, 226, 260; and *Mărturisiri și anateme*, ed. cit., p. 26. We note for all of them the appeal to oxymoron, a peculiarity of cioranian style. Their use makes sense not only from stylistic grounds (to produce an aesthetic short circuit), but too because it reflects his internal "contradictions".

<sup>52</sup> The passionate cioranian Marius Dobre says so, in *Certitudinile unui sceptic – Emil Cioran*, Ed. Trei, Bucharest, 2008, p. 11. Moreover, by the end of his life, Cioran recognizes opened, in the talk with Ann Van Sevenant, apud *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, ed. cit., p. 270: "Whole my life I was in conflict with myself. For a long time I thought that I am a huge sceptic. Any word. It was a pure ambition. I had easily and simply a choppy character."

Cioran's spiritual predominance is scepticism. But there is not a bearish, inane, exhausting scepticism, but a "well tempered" one with cynicism, humour and histrionics. His writing itself is an *exercise*, a sceptical type „play”: he contradicts certain sentences counted generally as true to demonstrate that and their contradictories are rational acceptable. Being not as sceptical as he sometimes claim to be, he recognize him as a „fake sceptic”, precisely because, due to his temperament, cannot be a true sceptic. Scepticism was for him more than anything, something therapeutic a “sedative” against his temperament, fears and moods. Doubting with “delight”, it makes the sceptical whenever he can't find enough grounds for a certainty that it desires desperately. He is a sceptic by a measureless desire of certainty. In its absence, he believe only in ... doubt, becoming a „professional of scepticism”, even one which dress a “sceptic's robe”! “My scepticism, he says, is inseparable from delirium, and I never understood how someone can doubt *with method*.” In short, Cioran don't agree more the scepticism itself as a “philosophical doctrine” or as a simple “conventional concern”, but the scepticism as attitude, as a permanent state of mind, one which involves the self-doubt itself, the “theoretical transcription of its neurasthenia”.<sup>53</sup>

In view of the crowd „labels” that have been attached to him from claiming his scepticism, often apparently devastating, so you can ask the question: was Cioran a nihilist? As was falsely stated that it would be „influenced” by Nietzsche, about him were claimed as false and it would be a nihilistic thinker. However, Cioran is not nihilistic – he says it so many times – but a negationist; is tempted by negation, has contradiction „in the blood”. Ultimately, he does not say that nothing has value, but, through an exercise *neti neti* type, finds cracks in everything man gifted with value, but always nourishes the secret hope to ever find something to get rid of under the razor of his critics, to find something to resist the whole in the face of this criticism.<sup>54</sup> Incidentally, is not pure negationist neither, as is neither pure sceptic, but both in a sort of synthesis.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps precisely why we attract so much Buddhism, which, by Nagarjuna, exceeds nihilism.

**System or fragment? A „thinking in shreds”.** „I have the fragment in the blood”, says Emil Cioran somewhere. And it was receipted, rightly, as a thinker in love with the fragment and aphorism, as one who vituperated against the system. Have been altogether? It's true, almost his entire work sits on the mark of the fragmentary. He believed that after Nietzsche, who dynamited the old way of doing philosophy, it is no longer possible as a system, but only as a fragment, as „explosion”. The option for the aphorism and fragment he explains by the fact that in this „triumph of a disintegrated *I*” he feels fully free. No matter how deceiver, the fragment seems to be the only „kind” really honest, only compatible with its humours, his aphorisms being like „small pills” that produce himself and that „makes their effect”. Cioran declares that he has accepted the

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<sup>53</sup> *Silogisme amărăciunii*, ed. cit., p. 6. Cf. *Caiete*, ed. cit., vol. I, p. 9 and 99.

<sup>54</sup> *Sfârtecăre*, ed. cit., p. 128. Cf. *Caiete*, ed. cit., vol. I, p. 71 and \*\*\*, *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, ed. cit., p. 37, 176 and 216, where states that it is not nihilistic, but has only obsession of nothingness; that since youth has experienced his "the delight of *no*"; and that to him "refusal was always stronger than enthusiasm".

<sup>55</sup> As it says with sharpness Dan Oltean, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

fragment just because only this allows contradictions and, hence, the truth, while the system push towards a false honesty, therefore rejecting self-contradiction. In a fragment you can say something now, and over one time, to another fragment, something else, because the fragment is the expression of a momentary experience. And the momentary experiences are the only true. In the system, on the contrary, speaks only the reason, only a part of the whole which is the man. That is, only „head” talks, *hegemonikon*.<sup>56</sup> We see how Cioran manages a surprising upset of the current mode of thinking the report fragment-system: after him, the system is a part of man, so it is ... fragmentary, while the fragment, expressing the whole of man, is ... the whole. And whereas the fragment reveals to us the truth, so *the truth is the whole*, our whispers with a tricky smile this upset *alte Mann*.

The system is “the most pernicious form of despotism”, and Aristotle, Hegel and Thomas are some “enslavers of the spirit”. According to Cioran, thinking that debate on to the system and conceptual unity contradict life, or, in any case, betrays a poor, schematic, personal life, deficient in volutes of the internal contradictions, of reach the limit. Those who follow this thinking cannot achieve performance to write under the inspiration, according to the fluctuations of the emotional or organic dispositions, when thought is alive, gaining an organic and personal expression. „Everything that is, form, system, category, frame, plan or scheme considered as issues and trends of absolutization result from a less of contents and productivity, from a deficiency of inward energy, from a sterility of the spiritual life. [...] Does not exist a fruitful spiritual life that knows no chaotic states and effervesce by paroxysm of maladaptive states, when inspiration appears as an essential condition of the creation, and contradictions as manifestations of the inner temperature. [...] Only what rises in inspiration is value, what stems from irrational fund of our being, from our intimate and central subjectivity. On the contrary, “everything's exclusive product of labour, assiduity and the effort has no value, and the intelligence's exclusive products are sterile and uninteresting.”<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, however, Cioran manifest and disbelief in fragment, because at other time the aphorism is no longer seen only as a “fire without flame”, to which “no one wants to heat up.” So, if you were to ask the question: „Why fragments?”, Cioran might let us answer: „Because of laziness, of frivolity, of loathing, but also for other reasons...”<sup>58</sup> „Clanged to wreckage of ideas and simulacra of dreams, arrived to the meditation by chance or by hysteria and not of caring for rigor, I myself appear to me as an intruder amongst civilized people, a Troglodyte passionate by caducity, immersed in subversive prayers, absorbed by a fear born not from a vision of the world, but from the cramps of the flesh of and from the obscurity of blood.”<sup>59</sup> A prove that Cioran has no repudiated totally systematic philosophy, the philosophy of Idea, he provide to us when he says: „I would like to make the Idea a bedding, to plunge into it, in to an abstract strait to stop the mumbles of my heart. [...] Let no hint of emotion no longer trouble the

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<sup>56</sup> \*\*\* , *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, ed.cit., p. 222, 170 and 148 sq. Cf. *Sfârtecare*, ed.cit., p. 163.

<sup>57</sup> *Pe culmile disperării*, ed. cit., p. 62 sqq. Cf. *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*, ed. cit., p. 126.

<sup>58</sup> *Mărturisiri and anateme*, ed. cit., p. 186. Cf. *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*, ed. cit., p. 163.

<sup>59</sup> *Istorie și utopie*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1992, p. 26.



glance of judgment. You were quite a tenor of appearances. Search now in you – without melodies – separation harshness, like a hedgehog of the spirit.”<sup>60</sup> Cioran's aversion to system may have „historical” causes, as may have and in his spiritual structure, in his powerlessness to adequate to the system. You can find arguments for both. In his youth newspaper articles and in the *Transfiguration...* we see his temptation to systematic, and the nostalgia of the system is still present in *Note Books*. Thus, the either 21 years, in an essay published in the “Fire Flower”, titled *Life and System*, he observed that those who still believe in the ability of the system to capture and exhaust the whole complexity of the real are seen as „anachronistic”. Contemporary thinking, he believed then, is predominating by *life*. It is possible that his perennial philosophical attitude to be determined precisely this tendency to respect „times command”. We could therefore say that he does not resort to aphorism and fragment from the inadequacy to the system, but because it expresses him plenary.<sup>61</sup> Also, we cannot fail to note that his aversion to the philosophers and philosophy is not so honest as vehemently is expressed. He attended philosophy and philosophers, criticized and disapproved the system and the accuracy of thinking with an assiduity and a consequence that betrays admiration for them and a rage to powerlessness to achieve on his own. Not the philosophers he hates, but his own helplessness to be like. This can be the motive for that, hiding his regret and weakness – we see so many times confessed indirectly –, he ceaseless attacks, reliving their defects, their weaknesses, their inevitable “emptiness” that sits in each of the people. In philosophers, Cioran it hates the systematic philosopher he cannot be. The refusal of the systematic philosophy is only the reflex of the awareness of the spiritual structure differences between him and the makers of philosophical outlooks and systems.<sup>62</sup>

What prevented him from spilling the fragment, what kept him from exercise systematically? A disarming lucidity, a paralyzing sense of ridiculousness, a weedy desire to achieve the absolute on his own, in thought and in everything he did. He preferred the “outrunning of philosophy”, considering that the *living* of the absolute – either through its repressing – it means more than just express it in a systematic way, transpose it into not useful schemes. He practiced the essay and the fragment because it lacked the *patience* and no *capacity* for synthesis and extensive construction. Recourse to the fragmentary manner of expression of

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<sup>60</sup> *Îndreptar pătimăș*, ed. cit., p. 116.

<sup>61</sup> See *Revelațiile durerii. Eseuri*, taken care of edition by Mariana Vartic and Aurel Sasu, Foreword by Dan C. Mihăilescu, Ed, Echinox, Cluj, 1990, p. 43. The idea occurs in other texts in this volume, as for example on p. 116, where, in a review in Iosif Brucăr's *Filosofie și sistem*, Cioran says: "I cherish infinitely more a philosophical fragment with a personal attitude or an essay than a scholarly book, as I cherish all that much lyrical philosophy to an objective or constructive philosophy." Cf. *Caiete*, ed. cit., vol. I, p. 216, where he says that his spirit is "built" for the fragment, that cannot overcome the "croquis".

<sup>62</sup> See Ilie Dumitrașcu, *Emil Cioran, coerența unui antisistem*, Brașov, Ed. Lux Libris, 2008, p. 89. Another argument for that, although the lyric/sentimental philosophy keeps by his structure, Cioran would have liked to work systematically we find in a letter to his good friend Bucur Țincu, apud *12 scrisori de pe culmile disperării...*, ed.cit., p. 24, to which says – on 19 years! – that he renounced to "any sentimental philosophy" and that he concern whit pleasure to "problems of pure philosophy: space, time, causality etc."

one's own ideas does not exclude the fact that he may have had a *Weltanschauung*, even if no systematic one.<sup>63</sup>

**Language of philosophy.** The option for a “lyrical” discourse makes Cioran to appreciate that the conceptual language of philosophy is too poor to express fully the human inside of lyricism. Therefore, he says, when you love, more proper is the poetry. For lyricism transcend “forms and systems”, which are completely foreign to the inward life; lyricism, with its „blood, sincerity and flames” is effective by its „Barbary”. After him, at first, philosophy was into a no differentiated unit with poetry. With time, however, it became an „activity itself”, and the originality of philosophers has declined at the stage of mere creation of terms. Language of philosophy is now just a “hodgepodge of concepts” that not talks about the reality as it is a meditation around the words, around technical terms.

If it would be devoid of “unintelligible jargon”, philosophy then would collapse. Its language is just a „drug” that gives only “the illusion of depth”. Translating a philosophical text in the language of daily life, says Cioran, you can find that it doesn't actually say anything. Especially Heidegger it seems to be as a real standard for that. But, anyway, generally “philosophical jargon” is not just a “pseudo-language, which attempting to express ideas, achieve only to obtain relief on their own account, to alter and darken them.”<sup>64</sup> This “jargon” show its inconsistency in that it is to become old-fashioned as fast as the argot, because both are the prey of two equally destructive excesses: one commit the excess of being artificial, and the other that of vitality. There are philosophical fashions, as there are food fashions. Today's fashionable *being* and *nothingness*, yesterday it was *matter*, *evolution*, *intuition*, tomorrow will be *energy*, *spirit* etc. “The history of ideas is nothing else then a coming by turns of words were converted into absolutes”.<sup>65</sup>

Philosophy might save of her languages abstraction and could become lyrical with a condition only: if it leaves prey to the “absolute confusion”, if it forgot to make distinctions, to try clearing up things and framing them in explanatory schemes. To get rid of the abstraction of stupid way to do philosophy and to philosophize poetically, you need to allow the inner drama which triggers only

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<sup>63</sup> In the *Letter-Preface to op. cit.*, p. 14, Cioran says to F. Savater that he could put the subtitle of his book: *About Anti-system*. Perhaps, as says Patrice Bollon too, in *Cioran l'hérétique*, ed. cit., p. 253, the “heretic” has even managed to become a creator of an anti-system. A confirmation offers to us Valentin Protopopescu, in *Cioran în oglindă: încercare de psihanaliză*, Bucharest, Editura Trei, 2003, p. 159: „Sceptical, nihilistic and devastating, Cioran has practiced not a philosophy, but a *sapience* literary stylized.”

<sup>64</sup> See \*\*\*, *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, ed. cit., p. 210. With a jealousy more or less disguised, Cioran never hide the fact that he not appreciate at all Heidegger – reproaching him a too large appetency for the linguistic invention, for a true “lez-langage” – and believe that translated into a daily language, Heidegger did not actually say anything, that is a simple conjurer. However, we must admit that the translation of any philosopher into a daily language can't be done but only betraying his thinking, decreasing it. You cannot appropriate express a conception than using its specific terminology. Cf. *Pe culmile disperării*, ed. cit., p. 8 sqq., and *Despre neajunsul de a te fi născut*, ed.cit., p. 53.

<sup>65</sup> *Spita de a exista*, ed. cit., p. 143. Cf. *Mărturisiri și anateme*, ed. cit., p. 51.

presence of erotic presentiment, metaphysical restlessness, fear of death, forgoing any heroism and hugging the sense of nothing.<sup>66</sup>

**The efficiency and the utility of philosophy.** The philosophy “does not create anything.” This is an expression with a principle value by which we can express succinctly the Cioran’s outlook about the efficiency or usefulness of philosophy in the cultures plan and for humans in general. After him, the universe does not to be *discussing*, but *expressed*, and philosophy fails to make it truly. On the contrary, it perverted the idea of efficiency of philosophize. The modern cult of efficiency makes that the philosophers who do not write, even if thinking, to not be appreciated as in old times. „Wise men” of yesterday are „human failure” today. Now, only „writing the work” is a measure of the value of a thinker. Cioran consider philosophy as unnecessary from a double reason: because she cannot figure out the inexplicable of the world, but also because it sees with unjustified cold, disdain and superiority some limit states as the sadness, boredom, unhappiness, and despair. Here his partial “separation” of philosophy, that seems not to move forward “human insecurities.” Cioran's relation with philosophy stays upon the mark of the same contradiction which configures – and with which he „undermine” voluntarily – all his thinking. On the one hand, hi is blaming it, and on the other cannot opt out of it. On the one hand, he complains about the „feeling of complete useless of culture and especially of the school philosophy, crammed with abstract and avid formula”, and on the other hand, he finds that there are too philosophers who “saved the honour of philosophy”, such as Plato and Nietzsche, which were *always* embarrassed not just episodic that they are people, trying to “us out of the world”, the first, or to “draw us out of ourselves”, the second. Thus, they are the only ones that “even the Saints would have something to learn.”<sup>67</sup>

Philosophy in general disappoints him because it is not seeking “than” the truth. The only philosophy that it pleases is the one with search issue, i.e. the Indian one and Pyrrhon’s or Epicurus. The first cause of mediocrity of philosophy is the “low temperature” at which it produces its meditation. To it, Cioran prefers the “gaze to yourself,” to the thoughts what are “tormented columns by the epilepsy of inside fire”. Traditional philosophy is only meditation on the *meditation* which is the suffering itself. „All of philosophy is of second, third rank... Nothing *direct*. A system it is build by derivations, himself being the derivative by excellence. And the philosopher does not more than just an indirect genius.”<sup>68</sup> From this philosophy, believes he, has learned very little, for Descartes, Kant and Aristotle „have not thought but only for our lonely hours, for our allowed doubts.” „It would embarrass to be called the disciple of Schopenhauer or Nietzsche”, he says, because „if philosophers think of another world, they are still *unable* to it.”<sup>69</sup> Job is much more profitable and therefore, he is approaching to him “with a great-grandson piety”. About last evidences philosophers have failed

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<sup>66</sup> *Pe culmile disperării*, ed. cit., p. 90 sq.

<sup>67</sup> *Singurătate și destin*, ed. cit., p. 108. Cf. *Lacrimi și sfinți*, ed. cit., p. 55.

<sup>68</sup> *Amurgul gândurilor*, ed. cit., p. 18 sqq. *Ibidem*, p. 27: "Philosophers are pours agents of the Absolute, paid from our sorrows contributions. By the taking the world *seriously* they have made a profession."

<sup>69</sup> *Cartea amăgirilor*, ed. cit., p. 212, 222.

to articulate even as expresses a harmony of Schubert's unfinished symphony. Essences with which they operate are "a philosophical spirit's superstition". You cannot miss them, but at the same time, no one knows what the essential is. However, essences do not anything but only to go us away from life. Only deceptions truly bring us near the plenitude of life, whereas "after everything else, everything is empty". Essences are just some reflections, some derivatives of deceptions. Cioran believes he learned from the Saints – both about "the heavenly, but especially about the earthly" – more than from philosophers, even if the first ones, compared to the latter are some „illiterate". Just their "anti-philosophical attitude" is what attracts him to them. But even the last Egyptian slave "was closer to eternity than any philosopher of the West."<sup>70</sup> „The whole philosophy is *unanswered*. Face it, holiness is an *exact science*. That gives us the precise and positive responses to the questions on which philosophy did not have the courage to stand up. [...] Everything goes in philosophy is reduced to a loan from religion and from mystical calls. By itself it does not prove anything, as the whole culture."<sup>71</sup>

After Cioran, most philosophers suffer from "deficiency of judgment", from "inaptitude to accuracy", or "abstraction's vice".<sup>72</sup> „Philosophical exercise is not fertile; it is only honourable. You don't risk anything as a philosopher: it is a profession without destiny, which fills with bulky thoughts refractory hours both to the Old Testament, and to Bach or Shakespeare."<sup>73</sup> „The shortage of philosophy's being too *easily to endure*." To be a philosopher means to have "brazenness to try to unravel problems that time, beauty or God". And even to try to do it by maintaining your "cold blood". The ultimate uselessness of philosophy is evident especially when, trying to clear its high concept which belongs by excellence to it, misses this: "I never managed to find out what *being* it means – just when and where, in eminently un-philosophical moments."<sup>74</sup>

**Conclusion.** „To think against you" and express yourself as such, here's one of the possible mottos of a man which not only admitted the contradiction, but sought it on purpose. Cioran was a man of all contradictions. Is not he who knew to stay alive, always being defeated by the fear of death, by the Great Nothing? Is not he an atheist in ceaseless search of God, a sinner with nostalgia of holiness? Was not he a religious spirit without religion or, conversely, an unfaithful with a desire – un-confessed by excess of pride – to believe? Is not he a genuine mystic, but at the same time a missed one, because he has always an unfulfilled ecstasy's nostalgia? In compensation, he has refugee in small simulacra of aesthetic ecstasy: music, painting, poetry etc. Cioran is a mystic who refused his fulfilment as a mystic by the fear of not being disappointed even by the absolute. In the version that the absolute can be reached, the more that you enjoy that did not find enough for that, because, so, we would be deprived of his talent and he would no

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<sup>70</sup> *Lacrimi și sfinți*, ed. cit., p. 23 and 50.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, ed. cit., p. 51.

<sup>72</sup> *Sfârtecăre*, ed. cit., p. 98.

<sup>73</sup> *Tratat de descompunere*, ed. cit., p. 77.

<sup>74</sup> *Sfârtecăre*, ed. cit., p. 167.

longer be short-circuited our minds with his lack of weight, with his *recherché* and well tempered madness. Only then would be missed. Perhaps that he will be bypassed any form of liberation or enlightenment. Prescriptions of serenity not tempted him. Only just precariousness, groping, do not „proposing” anything, they did appear to him as deserving things to do, things altogether honourable for an errant with an assumed destiny.

Cioran always simultaneously sees the face and reverse of the medal. That is why he cannot fix ever in a single opinion about something specific. His thoughts succeed each other in cadence affirmation-negation. This „roaring-philosopher”, whose truths do not explain but “exploding”, sought out the philosophy as a peaceful harbour, but not founding his Ithaca, he yelled that Ithaca truly does not exist, that there is only “concepts mud” and “systems grin”, while “unrepeatable moments philosophy – unique philosophy” is something to look yet, a desirable. His disappointment of philosophy is produced even that he followed it with the hope that it is a *medicina animi*, which offer solutions to his questions. But so has resulted of the 15 volumes – of which most anti-philosophical are those from Romanian period, especially *Delusions book* and *Tears and saints* – of diatribe against philosophy.

But it will have been Cioran so disappointed with philosophy on how declared? Let do not believe him by his word! Or, at least not fully. In Cioran is much pose, surfeit and histrionics. Gating him altogether seriously means missing him. Cioran is a superior charlatan, who exercise free of charge his charlatanry, or, simply to amuse, to amuse *himself*, *pour epater les bourgeois*. Cioran is a sophist and a rhetorician, an artist of the word fascinated by his own art to determine beliefs through a superior manipulation of the word. Recipe which he exercises is – reduced to its scheme – a very simple one: the overthrow, say the opposite to all public truths of philosophy and thinking in general. His conclusions are misleading; they get only a provisional role, not a definitive one, as any conclusion. To believe him when he draw conclusion on his own life – “After all, I never lost time, I teemed too, like anyone, in this aberrant universe.”<sup>75</sup> – or consider that he is bluffing once again?

But at the question whether Cioran was or not a philosopher, how will we respond?

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<sup>75</sup> *Mărturisiri și anateme*, ed. cit., p. 188.