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THE ILLUSION OF EUROPEAN EMANCIPATION
AND/OR A STUDY ON THE SPIRITUAL “AMBIVALENCE”
OF THE ROMANIAN DIASPORA

Abstract: One of the most significant problems faced by Romania is the alienation of its diaspora citizens from their language, faith, culture and popular traditions. In the first part of this short essay, I will discuss the servile attitude adopted by many Romanians in the West to be accepted more easily into a different society organized according to other principles, risking the loss of their identity. I will also make a few remarks about the danger of ideological imports. In the second part, I will refer to the bizarre situation in which educated young people, under the influence of progressive anti-Christian ideologies, convinced of opportunism, strangely confuse Christian principles and communist doctrine.

Keywords: identity; ideology; Christianism; communism; ambivalence; church; society.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary world runs its existence in a hellish cadence, at a dizzying speed that promotes agitation and dissipates identities, preventing man from finding himself in it. Human life is undergoing major changes, with society experiencing a continuous modernization process that has been identified with the progress of science, technology and economy. Morality and faith decrease in favor of the consumer civilization. A human being no longer takes seriously his

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goal in life, which is to fight spiritually to acquire eternal happiness. People are no longer counted as persons, but we are trivial items of decor in an indifferent and cold world. Identity is replaced by quantity, personality by subordination, and initiative by unconditional obedience. Consumerism changes the natural relationship between nature and humanity. Human beings are turning from happy subjects into “joyful” objects.

All this is part of the contemporary picture of the civilized world, one which, despite the appearances of material and spiritual prosperity, proclaims the autonomy of man and the world before God. Certainly, even Romanians from the West cannot ignore the reality of this materialistic and mechanistic world, and noticing the performance of the capitalist economy, they also enjoy all its advantages; yet, we must be cautious and not irretrievably fall into the trap of addiction.

In other words, Romanians should be careful of the illusions of this society, where relationships between people are based more on material successes than on spiritual ties, so as not to pervert their souls or nullify their aspirations, distancing them from their identity values.

THE DANGER OF AMBIVALENT THINKING

Many Romanians have left the West for a better life. Some went to study at various universities, and others have found better-paid jobs than in their home country, even if most employment is below their qualifications or dignity, something that should be considered and appreciated.

Migration is an extremely complex phenomenon because it involves a series of fundamental changes in the life of a human being. It also involves a long adaptation process, especially if it is about entering a society that operates according to other rules than those that the person in question knows. The desire to be accepted into a generally hostile world comes with several compromises, and unfortunately also a series of ideological imports extremely harmful to the health and social stability of the country of origin. This can be seen very clearly

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when immigrants begin to experience civic, moral or religious differences, affecting the lives and conscience of their people, without caring about the real feelings of those who remained in the country they left, because are transformed from image vectors into docile tools of identity self-destruction.

This aesthetic exercise of consciousness is the result of a long process of self-reinvention according to the requirements of a society that does not resort to Christian morality, but rather to questionable ethical substitutes.

Their dependence on employers and blind fidelity to the community they belong to, the desire to be accepted by the new society and the fear of failure (in all its forms), and the instinct for conservation and survival cause them to live in a double reality, one apparent, rather aesthetic, which they propose to the community they are now part of, and a deep, moral one, determined by their ethnic and national gene.2

The most eloquent example of the ambivalent thinking in which the Romanian “foreigners” have set their sights is that in the last thirty years, although they want to be represented by a political force and president who offer them social protection similar to other European citizens, helping them preserve their cultural identity and support their hope of returning home, they vote and unconditionally support presidents and people who promote their self-interests and those of international companies and corporations rather than the people’s interests.3 These people have depreciated and discredited precisely the fundamental values that define them: the homeland, nation, family and religion.4

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4 Claudiu Târziu, Rostul Generației Noastre [The Purpose of our Generation] (Bucharest: Rost Press, 2017), 58, 193, 209-218; The concepts of nation/nationalism or homeland/patriotism, as well as the involvement of religion in elections, and the religious education in public schools, are discussed in a biased manner by Romanian intellectuals in the diaspora, see Lavinia Stan & Lucian Turcescu, Religie și Politică în România Postcomunistă [Religion and Politics in the Postcomunist Romania] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche Press, 2010), 93-135, 235-327.
This so-called “duplicity” of the Romanians from the diaspora, raised to the rank of a life principle, comes from the great effort with which they overcome their emotional barrier and versatile genetic behavior.\(^5\)

The desire for integration with Western society is so great that they end up living a real drama because, while they fit into the social rhythm of the adopted country, they become estranged from their own country,\(^6\) a process that brings with it chronic emotional ambivalence.\(^7\)

For example, they become extremely tolerant of any abuse from the society in which they have integrated, but extremely demanding towards the social, political or economic realities at home. They acquire habits that they would have naturally rejected in the past. They appreciate almost everything they observe in the new society, including the negative aspects for which they find ridiculous excuses, but once they return home (even if only for holidays) they criticize the smallest deviations from compliance with the laws and the behavioral slippage.

The same facts are received differently depending on where they occurred. What is *not allowed* in the country of origin is *allowed* without the slightest opposition in the country of adoption. In the first, *any suspicion becomes a crime*; in the second, *any crime is just a suspicion*. In the country of adoption, they accept almost any job, and respect any decision even if it is hostile to them; yet, at home, they become pretentious and accuse the state institutions of their failures. Abroad, they do not dare to criticize anyone, but in their home country, they criticize everyone. Abroad, they do not even think about any privileges and even praise the administrative inflexibility; at home, they want a preferential regime and also disapprove of good measures, just because it is easier to criticize than to build something.

They are not generally affected by any political or administrative measures taken by the Romanian authorities, but they challenge them all without really

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\(^7\) Migration changes the mindsets and habits of the human being. Those who live in the diaspora have a different vision regarding the degree of tolerance towards society, work, identity, justice or traditional values. Dumitru Sandu, *Lumile sociale ale migraţiei românești în străinătate* [Social worlds of Romanian migration abroad] (Iaşi: Polirom, 2010), 180-187.
knowing them. They say they love their homeland and respect their nation, but they do nothing for one or the other. In general, Romanians in the diaspora consider themselves better, fairer and more efficient than the Romanians who have stayed at home, whom they consider uninformed, dependent on old mentalities and unable to progress quickly and adapt to the new political, economic or social realities.

They actually confuse freedom of expression with the liberalism and dogmatization of freedom that rather leads to its restriction. The freedom to express one’s opinion is a good thing, but the freedom to offend or deprive the other of the right to say what one thinks and support whoever one wants comes in direct collision with freedom itself.8

I think that those who today declare their love for the values of the Western world should seriously take the lesson of a famous Romanian who lived almost his entire life in exile. It is about Mister Ioan Rațiu, one of the candidates for the presidency of Romania after the Revolution of December 1989, a genuine liberal, who in a television show, talking about the essence of democracy and freedom of expression, said: “I will fight to my last drop of blood so that you have the right to disagree with me.”9 It was the expression of a diplomatic culture practiced in the great European chancelleries, but also a sign of the nobility of the Romanian people, of a political elegance, of rational dialogue and aristocratic behavior that we no longer find today in those who call themselves vectors of social justice and Western democracy.

Although they live in the West, as Mr. Rațiu did, some of the Romanian immigrants, because of their ignorance of history, social and professional arrogance and lack of national feeling, replaced the power of arguments and the elegance of dialogue with a superficial discourse, devoid of substance, often violent and even unlettered. Unfortunately, when intolerance becomes patriotism or a form of patriotism, then any trace of democracy disappears.

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8 For the limits of freedom, and libertinism, see Constantin Coman, “Limitele libertății sau dreptul de a batjocori pe celălalt [Limits of freedom or ‘the right’ to offend the other],” Vestitorul Ortodoxiei 387(2006): 1, 3.
Moreover, there is another part of the community of Romanian immigrants from the West who, once they collided with the generally hostile Western world, after a time of accommodation, began to think much more about the country they came from, the traditions and customs in which they grew up and the only place where they find all of them - the Church. Even if in their home country, they had not put great value on observing traditions or customs, considering them obsolete and useless, yet abroad they discover that these are the only things that remind them who they are.10

However, even in the spiritual realm, Romanians display a “duplicitous behavior,” which we can easily call pseudo-spiritual bigotry, because, although they proudly declare their Christian identity, only 10% of the vast mass of Orthodox Romanians abroad attend Church services. This situation is indeed quite similar to that in the home country.

Thus, whether they go to Church or do not observe Sundays, the major holidays, fasts, or canons as they should, they continue to baptize their children giving them names like those of the saints, get a sacramental marriage, or bury their parents almost without exception. Moreover, many make the sign of worship when they are in front of a Church, they go inside and light a candle and say a prayer, respect and honor the dead, organize memorial services for their deceased, and even bless their homes and cars; they hug each other perhaps more often than other Christian peoples and wish them a “happy birthday” or celebrate their patron saint’s day, greet each other with “Christ is risen!” and answer “He is truly risen” at Easter, or invoke the Lord’s name, for example, “God help!” – and those who come from more religious parts of the country say “praise Jesus” instead of “hello,” and the response is “forever amen!”11

Of course, one might say that none of this is related to Christian dogma or doctrine, but rather to form, because they lack substance or experience, and they serve as a kind of memento mori to all who realize how short life is. This may

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10 Actually, the diapora should be seen as “a continuation of the life of the homeland”; Metallinos, Parish. Christ in our midst, 136.

be true, but it is equally true that they have entered the subconscious of Romanians.

*Therefore, it seems surprising that their civic and political attitude does not fit at all with their way of being*

Eager to show that they fit perfectly into the Western rhythm of life, Romanian immigrants support all kinds of European policies that are in total contradiction with their mostly Orthodox faith. Either out of ignorance or out of Western fear, often manipulated in the background by individuals whose interests are unknown, they talk about ideologies they do not understand, support causes that are foreign to them and are in solidarity with social movements that have no connection with them.¹² They go to Church on Sundays, sometimes driving many kilometers, confess their faith in the Gospel of Christ, and cry because they miss the family they left behind in their home country. Yet, they support persons or political parties that openly oppose the institution of the traditional family, disregard Christian holidays that they respected with sanctity, mock Christian symbols and militate for the complete secularization of Romanian society, mystifying its history and undermining the true Romanian culture, knowingly distorting the traditions and customs that are part of their national heritage.¹³

In other words, although they consider themselves good Christians, Romanians in the diaspora publicly show their support for all those who want to destroy what they love the most. It is more than a “duplicity” assumed consciously or unconsciously. It is a self-flagellation that is slowly turning into a Christian spiritual and moral pathology with the effect of national self-destruction, especially if we take into account that, despite different political opinions or professional training, churches play an important role in the process of integrating Romanians in the countries of adoption.¹⁴

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¹³ Popescu, “Who did the Romanians from Diaspora and the country vote with in the last thirty years,” see note 3 above.

Yet, where does this culture of the chameleon versatility of the Romanian Orthodox immigrants come from?

Some believe that it is rooted in their nature and that wherever Romanians live they will have the same attitude characterized by inventiveness, sensitivity and the ability to learn very quickly, but they are also characterized by inconsistency, neglect, lack of solidarity and continuity. In a word, they display a changing attitude due to their contemplative and undetermined spirit, although it cannot be overlooked that they know how to take full advantage of the political, economic and social opportunities offered to them in modern Western society.

Others believe that their versatility may rather be the result of a process of ideologizing the deep religious sentiment that marked the existence and perpetuation of the Romanian people in history. This atypical construct comes from a less common approach to how a kind of “Byzantine symphony” between communist ideology and Christian social doctrine (in which the most important word was *survival*) would have occurred at some point.\(^{15}\) Of course, this union could give rise to much controversy, but I believe that the history of a people should be understood in all its aspects, both positive and negative.\(^{16}\)

However, the evidence of this double measure that my compatriots in the West have become accustomed to living with makes me think that somewhere in their subconscious there is a certain collision between their natural cultural identity and the one that each of them voluntarily assumes in the country where they decided to emigrate to, but these overlap only marginally.

\(^{15}\) About a theological vision regarding the survival of Romansians during the communist regime, see Ion Bria, *Orthodoxia în Europa* [Orthodoxy in Europe] (Iași: Mitropolia Moldovei și Bucovinei Press, 1995), 55-82.

\(^{16}\) I think we should not forget that Romanian immigrants are part of the former communist bloc, where the duplicity of people had become a way of life. It is said that they adapt very easily to anything, Lucian Boia, *Românii și Europa. O istorie surprinzătoare* [Romanians and Europe. A surprising history] (Bucharest: Humanitas Press, 2020), 20, 34-35, 74.
AN ODD PARALLELISM BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND COMMUNISM

History shows us that the ideologies associated with a certain form of political government are “built” on a philosophical and/or religious system that also generates the basic elements of social and economic life. Once they enter into popular mentality, they also largely determine the structure of interpersonal relationships based on common, individual and public interests.

When political and social earthquakes occur at the regional or continental level, not only is the system of government reset, but also the hierarchy of priorities, which often only seem to coincide with the aspirations of the vast majority of the people. In this context, it appeals to the emotional resources that include, especially among the populations of Eastern Europe, a religious (Christian) component in order to somewhat legitimize the actual change meant to bring both material and spiritual prosperity.

The same thing happened in 1989 after the fall of the “Iron Curtain” in Europe. Societies that emerged from communist dictatorship rediscovered their Christian roots, but also their fragility in confrontation with other ideological trends, this time mostly of an economic and social nature. Romanians have also enthusiastically joined a program of “westernization” that looks more like a “trapeze exercise” without providing a safety net, by virtue of the usual versatility unmasked and hypertrophied by the representatives of the new progressive ideology.

In short, the political dictatorship (which some have known directly) is replaced by an economic one, the illusion of the West questioning both the solidarity people were accustomed to and the moral values they believed in. Ideological confusion becomes the auspicious basis on which the great contests for the survival of the national, cultural and religious identity are played.

The explanation for this desire for adaptability (with all the risks assumed or not) seems to come from where no one seems to expect, namely from a forced comparison of communist ideology with the Christian social doctrine. Those who engage in such a demonstration start from the idea that both early Christianity and communism have an almost identical message, namely the acquisition of equality and social justice by freeing man from the enslaving power of wealth. Even if there are fundamental differences between the two, there is an area of marginal overlap that may be the secret of this behavioral duplicity.
Those who propose such an experiment start from the idea that both Christianity and communism militate for the same values, but with different instruments. More specifically, they both fight for equality, solidarity and freedom for all, although in reality they cultivate the regime of discrimination through class and caste privileges.

A COMPLICATED IDEOLOGICAL EXERCISE

The idea is neither new nor original, because it belongs par excellence to the founding fathers of scientific socialism, Karl Marx and Friederich Engels.

In fact, the organization that Marx attended in his youth, the League of the Righteous, understood communism as a modern version of early Christianity, defining its doctrine as “a theological and political theory according to the teaching of Jesus Christ.” Ideal communism would find its origins in the forms of social organization adopted by the first Christians who encouraged their followers to give up their personal wealth or goods and make them available to the community.17

Those who seek to demonstrate this fact start from the idea that both early Christianity and later communism would have an almost identical message, namely, the equality of the people by freeing humanity from the enslaving power of wealth. Marx’s vision of liberating and egalitarian communism is synthesized in the famous verdict "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs"18 and seems to be inspired by numerous biblical exhortations (Acts 2:44-45; Matthew 6:19-20; Matthew 19:16-21; Luke 18:22-24; Luke 19:10).19


However, what those who associate communist ideology with Christian doctrine completely forget is that no matter how many similarities can be identified, the differences are much greater.

Communism really changed the meaning of Marx’s words: “from each according to his ability” became “from everyone is taken everything they own, obligatorily,” and “to each according to his needs” became “every person who holds an important position in a communist society takes everything they want.” Therefore, the principle of human equality is replaced by a dictatorship of privileges. Moreover, under communism, people were promised an earthly paradise, an ideal society in which everyone would have everything they needed to live a happy, carefree life. The promises of the communists proved to be nothing but slogans, meant to put people's senses to sleep and gradually turn them into simple tools of propaganda, lies and manipulation. Fear, insecurity and distrust led to the deterioration of personal relationships and turned society into a tragic spectacle in which the desire for survival perverted any form of morality and destroyed any trace of humanity.

Christianity, on the other hand, at least in its pastoral or missionary aspects, has not (and does not) support the obligation to give up one’s earthly goods, because it is not against wealth itself. As we have already mentioned, wealth can be used only for the benefit of a privileged group, while most people live in poverty and deprivation. Also, Christianity does not impose itself by force, but by conviction, and does not promise an earthly paradise, but a heavenly one. Christianity does not identify with communism, which imposes pseudo-equality through force and terror, but with communitarianism in the sense of sharing all the same spiritual and material values voluntarily, according to everyone’s conscience.

Unfortunately, the illusion of a unique experiment makes people accept the paradox as a natural form of survival. The pursuit of sensationalism makes well-

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20 It is true that even within the Orthodox Church (in relationships between clergy) there is a kind of so-called “pseudo-spiritual dictatorship” disguised in an elegant way in the rule of listening (voluntarily) and in that of „blessing,” a hidden form of depersonalization and humiliation; Radu Preda, “Inteligenta slujirii [The Intelligence of Ministry]” in Preotul Ortodox in veacul al XXI, ed. by Marius Vasilceanu (Bucharest: Lumina Credinței Press, 2019), 132-133.

21 Nicolai Berdlaev, Originile și sensul comunismului rus, transl. into Romanian by Ioan Mușlea (Cluj–Napoca: Dacia Press, 1999), 168-180.
intentioned people support, in conditions of existential crisis and a lack of perspective and hope, ideas that they disapprove of in general.

In other words, to prove their desire for European emancipation, in which they are recognized as equal partners with people in the West, some Romanians might identify Christianity – which they consider retrograde, outdated and useless in a super-technical and super-technological modern world – with communism. They consider that the principles of both doctrinal philosophies are similar in many respects, as both have as their primary goal achieving an egalitarian society. What is much more surprising and at the same time intriguing is that those who today declare themselves free thinkers, progressives and neoreformers, and vehemently condemn both communism as well as Christianity support a neo-Marxist ideology, because they are not willing to accept and tolerate others who do not agree with them. I think that this approach in itself is proof of their inability to understand history in its eternal symbolism, because intolerance, in any form of expression, is unacceptable, especially when it is justified precisely by ideals that by themselves deny such a strategic method.

THE CHURCH’S POSSIBLE BRIEF ANSWER

As is known from both recent and past history, the Orthodox Church has rejected all the totalitarian or atheistic ideologies with which communism or socialism have been and are associated because, beyond restricting freedom (in all its forms), it regulates the economy through centralized planning that, in the end, leads to the perversion of relationships between human beings and the disintegration of social solidarity. At the same time, however, the Church has also rejected the capitalist ideology that promotes the absolute primacy of the market over human activities that does not bring about the social justice it claims. Social justice is achieved only through balanced measures that should lead to the regulation of the labor market respecting a clear hierarchy of values for the common good of all.22

Furthermore, the Orthodox Church has always proposed to humanity a communal model of life inspired by the interpersonal relationships of the Holy Trinity, meaning the person-communion relationship. Based on this, a viable economic system could be developed that aims to promote the private (personal) initiative to obtain an honest material profit, but also a spiritual profit that gives a person dignity and makes them sensitive to the needs and sufferings of fellow human beings. The duty of modern society, whether Western or Eastern, which is now facing serious secularization, is not to copy a model of church life based on biblical prescriptions, but to be inspired by the elaboration of its social model based on all human values, offering an emotional balance in order to be able to survive in the external and internal conditions that it has made contrary to itself.

CONCLUSIONS

European emancipation is a goal for most Romanians, especially for those in the diaspora. Unfortunately, it comes with a conscious or unconscious perversion of the values that define their identity and puts them in borderline situations, where fair judgment is called into question, such as an odd resemblance between Christianity and communism. Some support to a certain extent a rapprochement between the two ideological systems, and others consider that such an approach is the result of chance. In my opinion, all of them are located in a kind of implied “duplicity.”

The first group have a crooked logic because, although they condemn the two ideologies as synonymous, they militate for the same goals, namely equality between people, regardless of country of origin, culture, language, color or gender. Moreover, on their way to acquiring the new “European” identity, they begin to lose touch with part of the history of their people and culture, coming to live between two worlds that either sometimes intertwine or sometimes completely exclude each other.

The latter group has a fractured logic because, although they understand the profound differences between communist ideology and Christian social doctrine, they make great efforts (with immense sacrifices) to integrate into a deeply secularized society, operating according to other economic and social rules that are
in total contradiction with the Christian values they grew up in and that, as we will see, represent fundamental moral landmarks for their lives.

Both of them are living in an existential drama because doubling their personality affects them emotionally in the long run, and the soul’s balance is disrupted when anxiety, uncertainty, longing and nostalgia are established.

The only remedy is faith, because their conservation instinct remains alive, and their capacity for self-protection is reactivated by appealing to the Christian moral resources that have not perished through the exercise of social aesthetics that they perform daily. On the contrary, these have become stronger, able to support and strengthen them in the morass of inequities that are present in the host society. In other words, in the West, their only direct connection with Romania and everything that means “home” to them is the Church.23 There they can speak and pray in their native language, there they find for a moment peace of mind. It is the place where competition disappears, individualistic liberalism turns into communitarianism, and communication takes the place of solitude and loneliness; here they have the feeling of solidarity and full communion.

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23 For preservation of cultural identity in the media of Romanian immigrants, see Adrian Otovescu, “Trăsături identitare ale imigranților români din Italia [Identity features of Romanian immigrants in Italy],” Revista Română de Sociologie 5-6(2012): 455-460.


ZŁUDZENIE EMANCYPACJI EUROPEJSKIEJ I ALBO BADANIE DUCHOWEJ „AMBIWALENCJI” DIASPORY RUMUŃSKIEJ

Abstrakt

Jednym z najważniejszych problemów stojących przed Rumunią jest alienacja jej obywateli żyjących w diasporze z języka, wiary, kultury i tradycji ludowej. W pierwszej części tego krótkiego eseju omówię służącą postawę przyjmowaną przez wielu Rumunów żyjących na Zachodzie, by zostać łatwiej zaakceptowanym w społeczeństwie zorganizowanym wokół odmiennych zasad, ryzykując w ten sposób utratę własnej tożsamości. Odniosę się również w kilku uwagach do niebezpieczeństw importu ideologicznego. W drugiej części nawiązę również do zdumiewającej sytuacji, w której wykształceni młodzi ludzie, pod wpływem progresywnej ideologii antychrześcijańskiej, działając z przekonania albo oportunizmu mieszają zasady chrześcijańskie z doktryną komunistyczną.

Słowa kluczowe: tożsamość; ideologia; chrystianizm; komunizm; dwuznaczność; Kościół; społeczeństwo.