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Review of the Volume „Ipostaze ale simbolului în lumea tradițională" [Instances of the Symbol in the Traditional World], Author: Daniel Cojanu, Lumen Publishing

Constantin-Andrei PĂTRĂUCEAN[1]

[1] PhD Student, Stefan cel mare University of Suceava, Romania, andreiconstantin150@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper is a book review of the volume ‚Ipostaze ale simbolului în lumea tradițională" [Instances of the Symbol in the Traditional World], authored by Daniel Cojanu, and published by Lumen Publishing House from Iasi, Romania, in 2019.

Keywords: *symbol; traditional society; Daniel Cojanu.*

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Daniel Cojanu is a specialist in cultural anthropology, political philosophy and the history of ideas, carrying out numerous studies regarding the analysis of mentalities, religious symbolism or the collective imaginary. The study entitled „Instances of the Symbol in the Traditional World", in its second edition, is published by Lumen Publishing House from Iaşi, in 2019 (267 pages), and it is structured in two large chapters, with related subchapters.

The author's motivation is based on the philosophy that, in the modern world, the symbol does not represent a complex and transcendental reality anymore, as it existed in traditional societies, but in today's context, the symbol exists in other forms: slogans, advertisements, election campaigns, traffic signs and so on

The author notes that all modern critical schools, starting with psychoanalysis, structuralism, formalism, semiotics, sociocriticism etc., in the attempt to define the symbol, fall into the cliché of the so-called methodological narcissism, eventually managing to interpret the symbol from the point of view of some theories of reductionism. Accusing modern theories of the analysis of an anthropology in which the symbol becomes strongly rationalized, the author believes that the understanding and interpretation of the symbol is done correctly from a simplistic and transcendental perspective, just as it existed in the archaic world, and not in an experimental manner, through the excessive rationalization specific to modern society. Thus, Daniel Cojanu (2019) delimits three functions of the symbol: cognitive, expressive and operative, observing how, in symbolic thinking, it is not a "prologue" to conceptual thinking, but a different way of viewing reality, on an ontological level.

Starting from the etymological meaning of the symbol (Gr. symbolon), the author insists on its inhomogeneity, supporting the existence of the fragmentary side of the symbol, which he also considers a way to a further complementarity, that can prove the utility and functionality of the symbol. It thus becomes inexhaustible in terms of interpretations, which gives it a mysterious projection or sometimes even an esoteric aura.

Through the symbol, symbolic knowledge can thus be developed, as a variant of a metaphysical knowledge, in which the interpreter has the obligation to get involved not only cognitively, but also affectively, through sensitivity. A plausible example that Daniel Cojanu (2019) offers is related to the symbol of the cross, as an element of a sacred link with a supernatural entity, and not just as a technical reality, related to the shape or the material from which it is made. In this way, reality can be delimited dichotomously into sacred and profane existences. Also, the author insists on the difference

between allegory and symbol, emphasizing the didactic side of allegory and the metaphysical functions of the symbol.

Analyzing the philosophy of Kant (19977) and Cassirer (1994), Daniel Cojanu (2019) arrives at the so-called concept of natural symbolism, as a natural manifestation of human consciousness, at the center of which there is the symbol. In Jung's (1994) interpretation, the symbol cannot be understood apart from the notion of archetype, as an innate psychic manifestation, through which symbolic images are generated, also demonstrating relationships at a transcendental level, hereditary transmitted to generations based on a collective unconscious. Freud (1993), on the other hand, observes that the symbol contains in itself a secret, perhaps even a concealment in front of certain contents, which consciousness, in the first instance, does not accept. Daniel Cojanu (2019) concludes the experts' opinions, arguing that the definition that Freud (1993) offers is actually, according to Jung (1994), an explanation of the sign and not of the symbol, although the difference between them is almost imperceptible.

For homo religiosus, as it follows from the author's opinions, the symbol represents part of a traditional culture, in which the being lived a spiritual, almost magical reality, without particularly focusing on excessive rationality, as it happens in modern culture, through rejection of dogmas, beliefs, rituals etc.

Cojanu (2019), like Eliade (1994), when he theorizes the symbol, necessarily refers to spiritual manifestations, delimiting the modern man, as the "enemy" of archaic mythologies, from the traditional man, who is not a consumer of myths and degraded symbols. It is easy to understand this, as long as through the symbol, the individual who lives within traditional societies can detach himself from subjectivism and enter a space of real collective experiences, which thus become objectified. This reality can thus be synonymous with spirituality, or, in Eliade's terms (1994), with hierophany, since the only type of culture known to traditional society was religious culture, and modern man, moving away from the religious factor, lost his ability of this symbolic interpretation.

Thus, the author claims that the thinking of the archaic man, authentic in its form, is based on a common group symbolism, since for the traditional man communication or relationship with his fellow men was not a problem, as it is, unfortunately, for the modern man, whose relationship is deficient despite the many communication channels that exist today. Through the knowledge of otherness, man thus reaches a better knowledge of himself.

In the first part of the study, the author rightly asks why it is possible to think symbolically only within a premodern culture, while in the modern world there are deficiencies in this regard, offering at the same time a pertinent answer: "The main assumption that the mentality of premodern man is supported by the fact that he admits a hierarchical relationship of ontological, epistemological and axiological subordination of the world, of entering in a relation with the world of being" (Cojanu, 2019, p. 67). Practically, this is also the thesis from which the author's work starts: the traditional world it is a place conducive to the realization of symbolic knowledge. As far as the hermeneutic of symbols is concerned, a certain logic is necessary, even if it is a logic of a metaphysical order, through which the dynamic transition between two types of interpretation is achieved.

Symbolic perception represents, in the traditional world, according to the author, not only an avoidance of the reduction of the absolute rule of sensations, but an overcoming of them, even if the passage is achieved through an objective opacity. At the same time, the knowledge of symbols demonstrates an awareness of the being in the universe, and even if the archaic world did not know a philosophical way of expressing this awareness, the being was externalized through rituals, myths or different beliefs that placed it in the sphere of the sacred.

In the following sub-chapters, the author also emphasizes the existence of myth, as a reality that expresses an absolute truth through symbolic images, demonstrating exemplary facts, models that also refer to so-called noetic representations, which man later tries to decode. Sacred time thus has the ability to renew itself and to give a good start to the identity of the being, opposing the specific linearity of profane time; this is also the purpose of religious holidays: the actualization of primordial time, when creation was perfect.

Imaginatio vera thus becomes a concept on which Daniel Cojanu (2019) finally insists and which he places in connection with symbolic images, where analogical representations lead to psychic functions with unconscious impulses and to a noetic imagination in which archetypes have the role of projecting the world, starting even from its reducible nature.

The symbol and archetypes that develop in the modern or traditional world are the basis of the formation of reality, be it subjective or a group expression, thus developing holistic images in which man is tempted to relive the events that happened in an ancestral time, in order to find himself in a society which finds itself in an eternal quest.

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