

## CIORAN AND NIETZSCHE'S PHILOSOPHY

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### A. Nietzsche's Portrait

For young Cioran, Nietzsche is the exemplary philosopher exactly because he is actually an anti-philosopher, because he refuses the dogmatic enclosure inside the borders of a system and he fully assumes the perils of facing a reflection upon the existential abyss, and upon its exalting tragicalness. His vivid, versatile, confessional, paradoxical, and contradictory thinking seems to be the only one suited for a generation that suffers different influences of his work, filtered by vitalism, which is the doctrine that dominates the European culture's landscape.

Even before reading Nietzsche, many of that epoch's young intellectuals discovered themselves trapped in a Nietzschean spiritual climate, because all the themes that obsess them, all the ideas in the name of which they got to fight for, with the enthusiasm specific for their age, are often just some more or less fortunate modifications of themes which are present in the German writer's works. Nietzsche's philosophy captivates not only because it answers perfectly well to challenges that are mainly derived from itself, to problems that the very same philosophy has invented, but first of all because it is sustained by Nietzsche's myth, the myth of the person who does not hesitate to sacrifice himself in the name of his exigency of analyzing until the end the ins and outs of the becoming. Nietzsche's figure, the way it has passed in the consciousness of the posterity is very well described by an observation on modern authors, made by Susan Sontag, that they try to accentuate their marginal condition in order to legitimate this way their vision's freshness and power: "One may tell a modern writer from his efforts to keep himself away from the society, to be morally useless to the community, from his tendency to present himself not as a critic of

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the society, but as a magus, a spiritual adventurer and a pariah<sup>1</sup>.

And it was exactly this type of spirits, this type of models that the angry youths from Cioran's generation needed, youths who were alienated rapidly by the way of thinking and the pretentious jargon used by the academic philosopher. They required to be shown that there is a complete agreement between the life and the works of an author, between the feeling and its expression, and, at least in that context, Nietzsche seemed to fit perfectly those exigencies that were pretending to be absolutes.

Cioran was fascinated by Nietzsche's life, by the intensity of his feelings, by his specific way of making philosophy, adding him to the category of characters he admires, placing him between mystics and saints. This preoccupation for the tiniest details of a life that he considered remarkable is a tendency that will always prevail in Cioran's work, and that will be most obvious in his interest for the 18<sup>th</sup> century memoirs, or for the biography of some of the characters that fascinated him his entire life, like Lucile de Chateaubriand, Caroline von Günderode, Kleist, Napoleon, or Talleyrand.

As a proof of the existence of this tendency, we have a series of texts with accents that are almost hagiographic. Nietzsche is seen as the only philosopher who provokes a change into the being of the reader of his works, is seen as gifted with the attributes of a saint, attributes against which he knew how fight in order to keep the strength of his vision, always ashamed of his fatal affiliation to the human race, gifted with a sharp psychological sense that allows him to understand the difficulty of being and the precariousness of human structure and he is seen as the owner of a strange abyssal religiosity, the paradoxical belief of a anti-Christian Christian. This fascination can be best noticed in a fragment in which Cioran no longer suppresses the temptation of letting his lyrical tendency free: „Each time one reads the life of the martyrs, of saints, of Nietzsche or Dostoevsky you feel the need to hang your flesh on the stars, to step under the nights and to break your members onto a dream of darkness. A tremor of joy embraces you and then, into a twilight-like ecstasy you dress up the stars with a halo of weeps”<sup>2</sup>

1 Susan Sontag, *À la rencontre d'Artaud*, Paris, Christian Bourgois, 1976, p. 11.

2 Cioran, *Lacrimi și sfinți/Tears and Saints*, p. 73.

As he confessed in a fragment of *All Gall Is Divided*, in which he tries to explain the reason for his early admiration for Nietzsche; Cioran, and his entire generation, were fascinated by the potential of disequilibrium, by the destructive force that was emitted by Nietzsche's texts. The youths of that period were less interested in searching the complexity of a vision of the world, and the subtlety of gnoseology and ontology, and were more interested in finding a prophet, a spirit inside which to be able to find themselves, with all of their age's tensions and exaltation, a spirit whose destiny to appear to them as being tragic and exemplary. Since they all loved to show off and act out, they needed a really great histrionic, able to always change the perspectives and attitudes, always able to bedazzle them by sudden metamorphosis of his ideas, which were perceived as obvious signs of his profundity and authenticity. Nietzsche had become their hero exactly because he seemed to be a real human, in flesh and blood, a living being, with all the weaknesses and sufferings of that status, and because he was fulfilling their need to finally meet a character able to eliminate the puppets that crowded the history of philosophy, those poor beings turned into appendices to their pretentious and scholarly theories, unable to live for real, whose mock symbol had become Kant. Nietzsche appeared to be the opposite of the teacher (distant and always imperturbable, cold and able to find abstract answers to any question) because he was not ashamed to propose the image of his own caprices, he was not wary of the idea of making the whole humanity spectators to the show of his migraines, or to his sudden bursts of anger. Moreover he was the voice behind Zarathustra, and it was exactly Zarathustra who was the most exciting figure for the youths of Cioran's age: „During the youth you start to learn philosophy, not in order to find in it a vision but in search of excitement: you get to fight with the ideas you search to relive, by exaggerating the frenzy that created them. Teenage is complacent to play with the attitudes, and what it likes the most about philosopher is their rope walking side: at Nietzsche we liked Zarathustra, his picture, his antics of mystical buffoon, a real fair of the peaks....”<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Cioran, *Syllogismes de l'amertume* in *Oeuvres*, p. 760-761.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7  
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Looking back at that period, Cioran says that the phase of the religion of vitality, of the true philosophical orgy of feeling and intensity, was a necessary step toward his intellectual completion, because it allowed him to notice all the exaggerations and the perils implied by such an attitude, contributing this way to his maturation at a superior level, to getting to a point of implacable lucidity nurtured exactly by the disappointments of his youth. Accepting this conclusion represents the moment of overcoming Nietzsche's worship, and especially the denial of the idea of the overman, an idea that was once accepted as an irrefutable fact, idea that the grown-up Cioran considers an aberration. For him, Nietzsche, the hero of his youth, survived only as „decay expert, the psychologist, an aggressive psychologist who does not remain just an observer, like the moralists. He scans aggressively and he makes enemies. Enemies invoked in his own spirit, just like the vices that he sears. When he fights against the weak, he is proceeding to introspection, and when he is attacking the decline he is actually describing his own state.”<sup>4</sup>

This text from the *All Gall Is Divided* is extremely important because it marks the distance that Cioran takes from Nietzsche, or at least from that image of Nietzsche that used to dominate his youth. The Nietzsche of vitality, of heroic effort, of greatness and the supremacy of force, the often burlesque Nietzsche that the European nationalists invoked, that Nietzsche of the overman is a thinker that Cioran does not feel close to. Here a change in his intellectual preferences is also detected, because, as he confesses in his *Notebooks*: „As I grow older I place myself at the opposite of Nietzsche's ideas, under all their aspects. I like the frenetic thinkers less and less. I prefer the wise and skeptical ones -«the uninspired» by excellence, the ones that no pain can excite or bother. I like the thinkers that remind us of dormant volcanoes.”<sup>5</sup> Moreover, there is also a strategy of keeping a distance from a thinker whom he is often compared to and in whose vicinity he wants to present his own differences and specificity. In a conversation with Jean-François Duval he pretends that, although he read Nietzsche when he was young, he does not really know him, because he never reread those texts, and an author really

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4 *Ibidem*, p. 761.

5 Cioran, *Cahiers*, p. 107.

exists for him only if he rereads his work, as he did with Dostoevsky and Shakespeare<sup>6</sup>. Asked about the similarities between Nietzsche and himself in terms of historical vision, he denies any possible relationship, saying that between him and the German philosopher there is only a temperamental similitude<sup>7</sup>. In a dialogue with Benjamin Ivry, he implies that Nietzsche only used the aphorism when he started to become crazy, only when he felt he was about to lose his equilibrium, therefore only in an exceptional state, while he himself had always practiced this way of writing, as a consequence of an inborn tiredness, of a basic sickness that has become his natural state<sup>8</sup>.

Cioran uses all the occasions to delimitate himself from Nietzsche, as if he was trying hard to escape the huge and paralyzing force of the influence of a great spirit, of whom Harold Bloom himself speaks<sup>9</sup>. Apart from some of the methods described by the American critic (adulteration, distortion, change of meaning) that serve him as ways of protection at the text's level, he also tries to explicitly reject any possible parallels that the analysts of his works make between him and Nietzsche. That is the very same reason why there are so many fragments in which Cioran speaks of the fact that he got over Nietzsche, that he reached a less optimistic vision upon existence, while the latter had never been able to overcome a certain naïvety due to his shyness and his ignorance of the people, always remaining a philosopher suited just for the young ones, for the innocent ones: "Nietzsche himself seems naïve to me now. I distanced myself from Nietzsche, for whom I used to have respect and admiration. But I realized there was something too immature in his work. So it seems to me. Because I was more rotten, older than him. However, I knew people better. I had a life experience and an experience of the human being which was profounder than his"<sup>10</sup>.

Implicitly, Cioran suggests that there would be thinkers that are suited for each period in life, according to their degree of complexity, to their ability to detach themselves, and to the clarity and quality of the human knowledge

6 Cioran, "Entretien avec Jean-François Duval" in *Entretiens*, p. 42

7 Cioran, "Entretien avec Fritz J. Radatz" in *Entretiens*, p. 167.

8 Cioran, "Entretien avec Benjamin Ivry" in *Entretiens*, p. 210-211.

9 See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1973.

10 Cioran, "Entretien avec Jean-François Duval" in *Entretiens*, p. 56-57.

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that they are displaying. Nietzsche, although he is a genius, although he is brilliantly gifted, would only be a philosopher *ad usum delphini*, precisely because he did not manage to overcome a certain level of illusions, precisely because he did not manage to reach that level of skepticism that would be the mark of a really disabused spirit, of those who were able to distill the entire range of poisons of the existence, thus offering the necessary dose of cynicism to their vision to make it insurmountable. In this class of thinkers, the only ones suited for the really mature people, for those ready to receive the most brutal messages about man and his true nature, there are only very few refined spirits, who are chosen especially from the stoics, the skeptics, some French moralists, and from different nameless losers that have received wisdom in ways not related to books.

Cioran's entire intervention is suggesting that he sees himself placed among the thinkers of the last type, and that he tends to put into the former category the destroyers of illusions, the beasts of lucidity, as he proceeds to eliminating all the possible rivals who need to be discredited on the grounds of their very naïvety, of their endless trust in the utopian improvement and transformation of the human race.

Moreover, by playing the card of wisdom, Cioran criticizes Nietzsche starting from those things that used to fascinate him in his youth, using specifically the details of his life that are in sheer contradiction with the most provocative and final of his statements. In his youth, Cioran had been fascinated with Nietzsche's tragic destiny, with his inner turmoils that led him to insanity by exhausting his vital reserves, as the romantic legend built around the author of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, legend that was embraced enthusiastically by the young Cioran. When he grew up, adopting the image of a disabused skeptic and of a radical misanthrope, he came to attack exactly those details of Nietzsche's life that he found to be scandalously missing a dramatic nature or the potential of provoking revolts. He reproached Nietzsche the normality and kindness of his behavior, the fear of excesses, the bourgeois side of his concrete existence: "There is nothing more depressing and pathetic than Nietzsche's life at Sils-Maria, among other things, where he was acting like a royalty in front of old English and Russian ladies, begging them not to read

his books. He had a special respect for pious women. – In the whole history of philosophy, there is no other individual who has lived in such a contradiction with, I wouldn't say his ideas, but his morals. He was a lamb dreaming to be a wolf"<sup>11</sup>.

Such comments can be often found in his *Notebooks*, in which Cioran does not seem to get tired of showing his revolt toward this separation between the life and the writings, having, of course, the implicit intention of proving that this is the opposite of his own case, that the things he writes, the descriptions of his humors and his darkness are perfectly fitted to his attitude, that there is no such thing as a forged image of the writer Cioran but just an exact and transparent transcript of his perpetual disgust and sorrow, that Cioran the writer is the exact expression of the real Cioran, without masks and without any disguise.

However, the very same huge contradiction, this extreme non-concordance is considered to be the main ingredient of Nietzsche's success, because, as Cioran notices, that is exactly what the modernists expect, it is the spicy element that keeps their interest in his philosophy awake. The modernists' flaws are also reflected in their passions, in their insatiable thirst for gossip and plotting, in their maniacal curiosity, shown when they uncover the most intimate secrets of the great men. Only the paradoxical and the eccentric details, the scandals can get their attention, only the excess can seem fascinating to them. And those are exactly the reasons that make Nietzsche a philosopher suited to the modernists' tastes: „We love when a sick and crippled man, a customer of academies for young Ladies is the apologist of force, of egoism, of the hero that has no scruples. He would have been the image of the type of man he celebrated in his writings, he would have ceased to keep our interest alive a long time ago [...] A small piece of fraud in the tragedy, a bit of dishonesty even in the incurable – that seems to me to be the distinctive sign of modernism.”<sup>12</sup>

The catalogue of the objections that Cioran raises, one by one, against Nietzsche seems to be made in a way that accentuates those very aspects of the

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<sup>11</sup> Cioran, *Cahiers*, p. 770-771.

<sup>12</sup> Cioran, *Cahiers*, p. 110

German philosopher's thinking that prevent him from being another Cioran. Cioran often gives the impression that he is likely to find himself in Nietzsche's image and that he is reproaching him the missing resemblances, the fact that he is not the exact replica of his own image. His critical observations seem almost to show what missing features hindered Nietzsche from being another Cioran.

The true inheritor of Rivarol's satirical verve, expert of the anecdote and of harsh, witty jokes, Cioran compares Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, deciding that the former has a superior sense of humor: "He has the advantage of a sense of humour that *Zarathustra's* poet lacks completely. Nietzsche was too pure, he had lived too little among people, he was too much dominated by the tragic vein to be capable of this form of skepticism that humour implies"<sup>13</sup>.

Being a fervent reader, certain of his own refined tastes and of the value of his esthetical judgments based on a huge encyclopedic culture, he records maliciously the errors that Nietzsche makes in his opinions on different authors, considering him as the equal of Voltaire in the huge nonsense he utters: „Nietzsche, though proud of his own «intuition», of his «flair» , though sensing Dostoevsky's importance, made so many errors, showing his admiration for a lot of second and third-rate writers! What amazes us is the fact that he also thought that Bacon was hiding behind Shakespeare, the weakest poet among philosophers. If we made a list with all his ravings, we would quickly realize that those are just as big and just as many as Voltaire's; still Nietzsche has an excuse: he often makes mistakes because he wants to be frivolous, while the Frenchman did so without any effort"<sup>14</sup>.

Skeptical, always parading about his power of getting healed of all the possible naïveties, of forever facing the dreadful burden of lucidity, ferocious enemy of any kind of utopias and of any kind of projects of reforming the human nature that he considered foolish, Cioran looks down on Nietzsche's attempt to offer new goals to the humanity. Moreover, from his position of

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<sup>13</sup> Cioran, *Cahiers*, p. 767. This remark is contradicted by most of Nietzsche's commentators, who observe the extremely important role played by humour in his work. Alexis Philoneko's observations are significant in this sense, *Nietzsche, le rire et le tragique*, Paris, Librairie générale française, 1995, p. 17-18.

<sup>14</sup> Cioran, *Écartèlement* in *Oeuvres*, p. 1491.



sworn enemy of the imitators and the epigons, position which Peter Sloterdijk emphasizes in a very refined way in one of his comments on Cioran's works<sup>15</sup>, Cioran amends Nietzsche's success, his cohort of disciples, which he considers to be a genuine fall of a really original spirit: "The weak, the sickly, les **grabataires** who *dare* to put forward a new cree of humanity: Nietzsche, the most pathetic and optimistic of all. He moved from pessimism to delirium; that's why he had so many disciples, most of them grotesque"<sup>16</sup>.

Being always attracted by the image of the loser, the unfulfilled, the anonymous wise man, he, as Simone Boué will confess<sup>17</sup>, avoids to appear in public, among people, and to search for success at all costs, the haughty elation of the ego, Cioran reproaches Nietzsche the megalomania of his last writings, that loud proclamation of his unrivaled genius that seems annoying and excessively childish to him: "Except *Ecce Homo*, I don't like the late Nietzsche. What estranges me from him is the megalomania he never gives up. I liked that when I was young; now I changed the *tune*"<sup>18</sup>.

Cioran, obsessed himself by the idea of his incapacity to write, of what he presumed to be his fatal sterility, keeps on showing his admiration for the spirits that suffer from that very same disease, for those whose doubting nature urges them to be very parsimonious with words. Declaring himself a slave of his humors and caprices, a thinker who only writes under the authority of an internal impulse that cannot possibly be censured, while himself represents the main substance of his writing, just like in Montaigne's case, he can only look with a certain compassion, mixed with envy, at those who are able to write anything, anytime and anyway, considering them just mercenaries of their ambitions of success, high impostors, whose creations are not subject to any profound necessity, behind whose creations there is no manifest reality, poor scratchers of the vacuum. The favorite sample for such kind of persons is always Sartre, whose notoriety and apparent facility of writing huge works

15 Peter Sloterdijk, "Le revanchiste désintéressé" in *L'heure du crime et le temps de l'oeuvre d'art*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 2000, p. 152.

16 Cioran, *Cahiers*, p. 775.

17 Simone Boué, "Interview" in Norbert Dodille, Gabriel Liiceanu (éd.), *Lectures de Cioran*, Paris-Montréal, L'Harmattan, 1997, p. 35-36.

18 Cioran, *Cahiers*, p. 760.

often irritates Cioran. The last Nietzsche is not the same and Cioran remarks on his writing: „What is his panting writing?”

Even when he reserves toward Nietzsche an air of unquestionable judgment that cannot be criticized for the perfect Cioran and those that are similar to him.

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20 Cioran, *Cahiers*

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often irritates Cioran, provoking the burst of anger from his *Notebooks*. The last Nietzsche is also included in the category of those who wrote too much, and Cioran remembers to signal how this is different from his own way of writing: „What we can reproach the last Nietzsche is the missing measure of his panting writing, the complete absence of the lost time „<sup>19</sup>.

Even when he get over this tendency of manifesting at any costs his reserves toward Nietzsche's writings, even when he admits that there are a lot of unquestionable qualities in his work, Cioran seems to use the same type of judgment that created the basis of his objections. If, in the first case, Nietzsche was criticized for those features of his works that stopped him from being a perfect Cioran *avant la lettre*, he later insists on the features of his writings that are similar to Cioran's.

Even for those that did not appreciate his intellectual preferences or his way of thinking, the topic of Cioran's style cannot be attacked, because even his worst enemies, those who tried to minimize the philosophical importance of his work, by declaring him just a writer with reactionary tendencies, were obliged to admit the perfection of his writing style. In Germany, as he put down in his *Notebooks*, Cioran was considered, together with Roger Caillois, the best French stylist<sup>20</sup>, while Benjamin Ivry, taking over a very popular opinion, considers him the best author of aphorisms since Nietzsche<sup>21</sup>. In this context, following the lines of his general strategy of riotously identifying himself to Nietzsche, it does not seem the least surprising that the main accent of what he treasures in him falls on the stylistic value of his writings. Cioran admits the liberating role of the Nietzschean manner of making philosophy, which, sabotaging the official style of philosophy, allowed the legitimation of the short text as a privileged genre of reflection, as being the only genre suited for investigating the spiritual physiognomy of modernity<sup>22</sup>.

Moreover, since he was himself an adversary of the jargon and sterility underlying the technical character of the philosopher's writings, he appreciates

19 Cioran, *Écartèlement* in *Oeuvres*, p. 1451.

20 Cioran, *Cahiers*, p. 328.

21 Cioran, "Entretien avec Benjamin Ivry" in *Entretiens*, p. 210

22 Cioran, "Entretien avec Fernando Savater" in *Entretiens*, p. 22.

the beauty of Nietzsche's language and the fact that he didn't feel the need to invent new words in order to express his nuanced thoughts, thus being able to be considered the best German stylist: "Nietzsche is, without any doubt, the best *German stylist*. In a country where the philosophers wrote so badly, a counter-reaction was necessary, the birth of a genius of the Verb, *peerless even among people in love with language, as the Frenchmen are*. For there is no counterpart for Nietzsche in France – in terms of the phrasing, by which I mean the intensity of the phrasing"<sup>23</sup>.

Cioran always insists on the fact that the books' influences are not enough, that those are not able to furnish the equivalent of a concrete experience, especially of a personal one. For him, the really good writers are those who had the kind of knowledge that sufferance created, those who had to fight with their inner darkness, thus obtaining the substance of their texts, actually writing, always, about themselves. The example that is preferred by Cioran is the connection between the life and the work of Dostoevsky, and the force that his writings acquired, due to his dramatic destiny: "Dostoevsky's life was hell. He experienced all possible trials and tensions. He is undoubtedly the most profound writer in terms of inner experiences. He went to the final limit"<sup>24</sup>. He sees himself as a part of that category, therefore his pleading for such a type of thinkers, the only one who is profound and authentic, is actually a *pro domo* plea. Nietzsche earns Cioran's appreciation because he fits that model perfectly, because he can be included among the spirits that are alike in their feverish searches, and because of the risks he takes, the strength that he proves when he thinks against himself, his permanent sufferance, his hallucinating expression and, last but not least, because of the intensity of his cynicism: „The fact that Nietzsche, Proust and Rimbaud survive the changes of fashion can be explained by their groundless cruelty, by their demoniac surgery, by their generosity in offering the poison. Their ferocity makes their writings last, keeping them young. Empty statement? Think of the prestige of *The Book*, an aggressive book, one of the most venomous ever to have been written."<sup>25</sup>

23 Cioran, *Cahiers*, p. 756.

24 Cioran, "Entretien avec Branka Bogavac Le Compte" in *Entretiens*, p. 269.

25 Cioran, *Syllogismes de l'amertume* in *Oeuvres*, p. 749.

## B. Nietzsche

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26 Marta Petreu, *Apostrof*, 1999

27 Susan Sontag,

28 Patrice Bollon

29 Livius Ciocâr

### B. Nietzsche's Influence on Cioran's Thinking

In what concerns Nietzsche's influence on Cioran's thinking, the opinions of those who comment it are rather rhapsodic, in the sense Kant gave this term while criticizing the list of categories proposed by Aristotle. There is no applicative study, not a single attempt to compare the texts or follow the genealogy of an idea. Cioran's exegesis is often limited to approximating formulas, superficial judgments, not giving any evidence to support their ideas. Therefore, we witness a large scale of statements, some minimizing Nietzsche's influence or trying to reduce it to a superficial polish, as it happens to Marta Petreu<sup>26</sup>, others, like the opinions of Susan Sontag<sup>27</sup> or Patrice Bollon<sup>28</sup>, recognizing Nietzsche's importance in the configuration of some specific aspects of Cioran's work, or, like in Livius Ciocârliie's case<sup>29</sup>, pointing out some of Nietzsche's marks, which would be present in a certain volume by Cioran. None of those statements, however, are followed by a convincing demonstration. In all those cases, we find opinions which are based on a certain tonality of Cioran's writing rather than on an attempt to analyze the core of the ideas which hide behind the shiny paradoxes proposed by the writer born in Rășinari. The statements start from an overview of the form rather than of the content, which is mostly due to the methodical negligence of the philosophical consistency of his statements in favor of accentuating their purely literary value, Cioran the thinker being sacrificed in the name of Cioran the writer.

That is exactly the reason why we will make a different type of analysis, trying to discover those intellectual fundamentals that contribute to the genesis of Cioran's thinking, shedding light on those types of structures that are usually ignored as everyone focuses their attention exclusively on the stylistic features of Cioran's writings.

A careful reading of Cioran's volumes leads us to the conclusion – which is surprising when compared to the opinions of the exegesis of Cioran

26 Marta Petreu, *Un trecut deocheat sau "Schimbarea la față a României"*, Cluj-Napoca, Biblioteca Apostrof, 1999

27 Susan Sontag, *Sous le signe du Saturne*, op. cit.

28 Patrice Bollon, *Cioran l'hérétique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1997

29 Livius Ciocârliie, *Caietele lui Cioran*, Craiova, Scrisul Românesc, 1999

we have mentioned previously – that there are numerous proofs of a massive Nietzschean influence that appear in the texts of the French-Romanian philosopher, influence that follows a falling curve, from showy and often pernicious omnipresence in his early writings, in which many paragraphs seem to be merely reformulations of some of Nietzsche's most used and best known ideas, to a refined dilution in the texts wrote in French by the thinker, in which his spiritual maturity leads him to skillfully hide all the themes borrowed from other authors, as a natural consequence of the organic integration of those themes in his own intellectual vision. Far from being superficial influences, far from representing a surface polish hiding the hegemony of other philosophical models, Nietzsche's influences are present at all levels in Cioran's texts written during his youth, being the constant landmarks that organize the restless dynamics of his reflection and serving him as reference elements, governing his ontological, gnoseological and ethical conceptions.

They grow dim and practically disappear in the last of Cioran's volumes, and this distance taken in relation with Nietzsche's thinking is the consequence of a real *Kebrre* that marks the passage from the Romanian period to the writer's French period, when, beyond the continuities that are rather apparent than of substance, and beyond a certain thematic similarity, his thinking records a profound transformation, while he gets to have, in many aspects, positions directly opposite to those he sustained while he was young. This major difference was often ignored by the commentators of his works, which proved to be to attached to the idea of Cioran's work unity, considering that his obsessions and interests stay the same from beginning until the end, and the differences appear only at the level of style, where the often not very polished writing, containing many lyrical accents typical of the Romanian texts, is replaced by the sobriety and the elegance of the forms of one of the most important virtuosos of words in the French prose of the twentieth century.

It is probable that Cioran's confessions contributed to the creation of this inaccurate image, since he always insisted, both in his writings and in the interviews he gave, upon the continuities, upon the core of organic origins of

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his inspiration, and against the changes and movements of perspective that could have been noticed during his work, amusing himself to state that his vision upon the world was practically entirely acquired at the age of twenty, without suffering major changes ever since.

Things actually happened in the exact opposite way, and Cioran's work is the perfect expression of a contradictory spirit that tackles a lot of almost obsessive nucleic themes from ever changing perspectives. The interests of Cioran the thinker stay the same, but the way they report to the central patterns of his reflection varies very much, therefore it is impossible to establish a continuity between his work as a youth and his mature writings. It seems easier to sustain that Cioran's French writings represent an almost systematical and deliberate denial of every belief and spirit formulas he used in his Romanian works, a merciless demolition of the idols he builds due to his youthful frenzy. Cioran seems to fight against himself, and the saying that has become famous, „To think against oneself,” used by Susan Sontag to characterize his philosophical style, can also have this meaning, it can be understood as fighting continuously and furiously with a younger self, with the self that was not experimented enough to put on his skeptical shell and to reject all the mermaid-like voices of the illusions that appear during his lifetime. I have used many arguments to point out this radical change of perspectives in the case of his relation with Nietzsche's figure, and there is an abundance of samples that can be used to sustain such a hypothesis, since practically the only author toward whom Cioran's attitude remained unchanged was Pascal, who was always considered the exemplary writer, authentic and troubling in the verisimilitude of his feelings.

Since we are trying, as announced before, to make an inventory of Nietzsche's influences on Cioran's works, it is better to do so sequentially, by trying to follow the manner in which many German writers' ideas were taken over, and which is the role of those ideas in the dynamics of Cioran's writings. To make it clearer, we will try to present this network of influences, adoptions and changes of ideas according to three axes, by following the ontological, gnoseological and ethical foundations of the writer from Rășinari.

### a. Ontology.

The ontological vision that young Cioran embraced corresponds to his choleric temper and to his strong preference for tragic heroism, for whom what matters more is the enthusiasm, the selflessness, the courage, the power of the will, rather than the refined sophisticated mind games or their fine conceptual distinctions. That is exactly the reason why this perspective is not dominated by a reflection toward the never-ending variations of the relation between the existence and the essence, it is not a meditation upon the pure being or the way in which different characteristics of the being can be found through the mediation of categories, but rather it is entirely governed by the interest in finding the mysteries of the world. The life in capital letters, the life as an ontological principle is the main preoccupation of Cioran the thinker, who firmly believes that the core foundation of the existence is exactly the creation of harmony with the overflowing power of life, with its irrational and over-individual character.

For Cioran, the background of existence is one of dark changes, of chaotic and contradictory movements, the concurrence between creation and destruction, between the imposition of some forms and their necessary overcoming. The world is not harmonious, symmetrical, teleologically controllable, the world is not the island of rationality and evolution that lots of philosophers talk about, influenced either by the belief in the perfection of an all-merciful creator, or by a set of ideas specific to the Enlightenment. The world is mastered by the merciless exigency of becoming, of infinite change, of the cruelty of a process that takes place fatally, meaninglessly and senselessly: „The true dialectic of life is a demoniac and agonizing one, in the perspective of which life appears to be meandering in an eternity of night full of phosphorescences that amplify the mystery even more.”<sup>30</sup> Cioran's image of the anarchical tumult of life, of its barbaric and delirious rhythm, is an echo of many of Nietzsche's texts dealing with the abyss of existence, with the terrifying magma that boils and agitates behind the temporary forms that are installed to make everyday life possible: „Do you know what «the world» is to

30 Cioran, „Împotriva oamenilor inteligenți”, *Discobolul*, no.9, May 1933, p.1-2 in *Revelațiile durerei*, op. cit., p. 106.

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me? Do you want me to show it to you in my mirror? This world is a monster of force, without a beginning, without an end, a eternal sea of strength with bronze waters, that do not grow, do not diminish, do not tear apart, it only transforms the being, as a whole, into an insignificant quantity, an economy that has no loss and no gains, but which does not have growth and changes either, which is surrounded by « nothing » else than its own boundaries, nothing to fall down, to get wasted, to extend endlessly, only a determined force that is limited to a determined space, but not a space with empty parts, rather a force that is everywhere, a game of the forces both inside One and inside Multiple, growing here while they get simultaneously diminished there, a sea of forces that rolls in billows and turmoils, forever changing, climbing forever back with the unaccountable number of the years of a cycle, with the flux and reflux of the forms it fibbed, running from the simplest to the most complex, from the calmest, coldest and the most petrified ones to the hottest, wildest and the most contradictory of them [...] like a becoming that has no peace, tiredness and boredom<sup>31</sup>.

As Michel Haar notices, the omnipotence of this vision of the chaos that rules the profound reality of universe has two functions in the economy of Nietzsche's texts. First of all, it tries to eliminate all the optimistic visions of the way in which the universe functions, from the stoic image of the world like a huge cosmic animal to the different theses that emphasized the order, the beauty and the finality of the world's organization. Secondly, it ensures the substance upon which will be exercised the action of the schema made by the will for power, since the chaos is only naming all those raw powers of nature, both those animate and those inanimate that the will for power submits to its irresistible imperialism<sup>32</sup>.

In Cioran's case, this dramatic perspective upon the never-ending game of forces that lay at the foundations of the existence has the role of enthroning a very vivid vision of a tragic heroism, that opposes both the optimistic theories about the fate of the universe and the apocalyptic visions of the pessimist.

31 Friedrich Nietzsche, *La volonté de puissance*, I-II, trad. par Geneviève Bianquis, Paris, Gallimard, 1995, aphorism 1067.

32 Cf. Michel Haar, *Nietzsche et la métaphysique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993, p. 181.



Cioran tries to propose, following closely the spirit of Nietzsche's texts, a courageous confrontation of all the trials that life imposes and the exalted embracing of all their consequences, rejecting the passivity, the monotony, the resignation. If, in Nietzsche's case, the proclamation of *amor fati* is the consequence of his paradoxical conception of the eternal return and of the importance he attributes to the will for power, Cioran, who does not seem to be interested in Nietzsche's cyclical conception and who regards the concept of the will for power as useless, keeps only the idea of a possible synthesis between optimism and pessimism that is meant to surpass them both.

The solution that Cioran foresees for a good integration among the cosmic rhythms is the enforcement of feeling, the worship of life's paradoxical cannibalism, the acceptance of the horrors and the dynamism explosions that compose the vital flux: „Brothers, I wish to you that the life inside you gets so intense that you die and get destroyed by it. Die of too much life! Destroy your life! Howl the howling of life inside you, sing, in your last songs, the last whirls of your life”<sup>33</sup>

This abundance of vitality, this enthusiastic hurl into the vortex of existence is the only way for men to live with dignity, without falling prey to naïve speculations about a world regulated by the ineluctable laws of the progress, nor to the whipping reflections upon the absurd that dominate the universe and keeps humanity trapped in an infinite horizon of disasters. Noticing the lack of sense is not an opportunity to lose hope, but represents the privileged way to fortify oneself, deciding to face the accumulation of facts and events that destiny puts forward, with one's entire being, without resentments and reserves, simply enjoying the fact that one is alive, caught in the movement of the monstrous show that the world is performing, the fact that one is an actor of the irrational cosmic play.

It is exactly because he misses a philosophy that would state the importance of life, a philosophy that was referred to as the philosophy of Yes by Nietzsche, Cioran, who uses a rhetoric close to the lyricism of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, never stops proclaiming the need to worship life, to become

<sup>33</sup> Cioran, *Cartea amăgirilor/The Book of Delusions*, p. 81-82.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, 1

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adherers of the feeling: „You will have to repeat one thousand times that only life can be loved, the pure life, the pure act of life, that we are dangling off the conscience, hanging into nothing.”<sup>34</sup> From this perspective, the only capital sin is the depreciation of life, the frustration of its unconscious élan with the help of the rational mechanisms that question its meaning and that tend to deny its absolute value, the value as a goal in itself.

A hostile attitude against life can only be explained by an organic disequilibrium, by a vital insufficiency that allows a generalized disgust to settle and which, in this way, forbids the maintenance of an intimate connection with the profound phenomena of the world, which favors the hegemony of an abnormal vision, determined by a qualitative homogenization of the entire spectrum of reality, which becomes dull, monotonous, filtered by an atmosphere of perpetual depression<sup>35</sup>, which makes impossible the attachment for things and beings.

Behind this Cioranian conviction, we can easily identify Nietzsche's thesis, expressed very clearly in *The Twilight of the Idols*, according to which the negative judgment made against life is the sign of decaying spirits, of the spirits that have an abnormal perspective upon the world because they don't have enough vitality, a perspective which stops them from perceiving the unsurpassable character of life, the impossibility and inefficiency of trying to control it with the help of an evaluation which would try to catch its essence and to frame it into a rational paradigm: „The judgments, the value judgments upon life, no matter if they are for or against it, can never be true in the end: they only have the value of symptoms and should only be taken into consideration as symptoms - such judgments in themselves are rubbish. You really have to stretch your hand and catch this amazing subtlety, that the value of life cannot be estimated. Not by someone who is alive, since such a person is himself involved, by being an object of the dispute rather than its judge; nor by a dead person, for a different reason.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, 138.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 143.

<sup>36</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Crépuscule des idoles*, trad. par Jean-Claude Hémery, Paris, Gallimard, 1995, p. 109.

But Cioran operates a change in Nietzsche's texts. If, for the German writer, life is only a particular case of the will for power, a means to develop the forms of power, the author of *All Gall Is Divided* rejects the idea of the possibility to subordinate life to another principle, therefore considers the existence of the will for power to be futile: „It is not the power that needs to define the throb of this life, but the shared ecstasy needs to get closer to the beings in immaterial vibrations [...] Man, in his ideal form, dreamed himself strong, a beast, and, because of that, he was only able to live at the periphery of life. But the time has come when the human form of existence needs to be eliminated in order to get in touch with the depth of life which is covered by man's illusions.”<sup>37</sup> Cioran sees here the projection of an anthropomorphic illusion and he refuses to accept the transformation of the will for power into a cosmogonic principle, into the main force that shapes the deepest aspects of life. For him, life corresponds to Nietzsche's will for power, and the features that he attributes to life can be entirely identified in the texts that describe the way the will for power functions. This way, when he describes the abysmal vortex of life he writes: „Life is like a long agony and, in its function of a road to death is nothing else but a different statement of the demoniacal dialectic of life, according to which this creates forms only to destroy them in an irrational and immanent productivity. The multiplicity of vital forms does not sum up into a convergence beyond the vitality or into a transcendent intentionality, but rather realizes itself in a crazy rhythm in which you cannot recognize anything but the dementia of becoming and destruction. The irrationality of life manifests itself in this overflowing expansion of forms and contents, in this frenetic tendency of substituting new aspects to those that were used, while this substitution does not represent a considerable addition or a qualitative increase”<sup>38</sup>.

But the dialectics of the will for power works at Nietzsche in the exact same way, because, as Jean Granier notices<sup>39</sup>, the will for power expresses, in

37 Cioran, *Cartea amăgirilor/The Book of Delusions*, p. 79-80.

38 Cioran, *Pe culmile disperării/On the Heights of Despair*, p. 37-38.

39 Jean Granier, *Le problème de la vérité dans la philosophie de Nietzsche*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1966, p. 464.

the unity of the same creative élan, both the act by which the matter is given its form, and the insurmountable tendency to transcend any finite position, any significance which was predetermined. This way, on the one hand, the will for power will be behind the creation of the world of forms, by its conservative, reactive aspect, and on the other hand, its active, effervescent, always boiling, dimension will impose the transgression of those forms, making it impossible to limit itself to a closed system of interpretations.

Consistent, in spite of his pleasure to cultivate the paradox, with Nietzsche's vision about the forces that make the entire world move, won over by this dynamical image which suits his temperament, Cioran borrowed other key elements from the German philosopher's thinking, and thus proved himself an almost Orthodox Nietzschean in the texts of his youth, which apply, in his specific way, the theses of his master. His reflection is almost entirely dominated by motives and solutions of Nietzschean structure that he assumes in an almost organic way, finding them suitable to express his way of reporting himself to existence. Although Cioran's writing is very imprinted with the spirit of Nietzsche's philosophy, although even the tonality of Cioran's texts is strongly influenced by a certain rhetorical voice, specific to the author of *Zarathustra*, Cioran is only interested in those of Nietzsche's reflections that answer some questions that he feels almost instantly he needs to ask himself, surpassing any bookish mediation. That way, he is not at all preoccupied with many concepts that are central to Nietzsche's *Weltanschauung*, like the eternal return, the will for power, the overman. Although he is profoundly Nietzschean, he is not a servile one, a Nietzschean that would mechanically appropriate certain theses only because they belong to the master. He only uses those nuclei of ideas that permit him to express himself better, that correspond to his dominant affective tonality. That is the way we should understand the numerous confessions about the vital sources of his philosophy, about the organic inspiration of his reflections, not in the sense that they did not suffer any influences from another thinker, not in the sense of a spontaneous elaboration, unconditioned by books, but in the sense that the fact of getting closer to them was strictly determined by his needs, like a natural incorporation, like the digestion of a food that is absolutely

necessary for his spiritual metabolism, somehow in the direction sketched by a flashing note made by Valéry : "There is nothing more original, more *like himself* than to feed himself on others. But one must digest them. The lion is made up of assimilated lambs"<sup>40</sup>.

### b. Gnoseology

Cioran has proved to be interested in those Nietzschean theses that seem to possess a bigger explosive content, in those reflections which shock common sense, that represent a scandal for the bourgeois against whom he feels that he must fight, by ridiculing his certainties and shaking his self-confidence. That is exactly why he embraces enthusiastically what we could name the Nietzschean gnoseology, the German philosopher's theory about the way in which our cognitive mechanism is falsifying the structures of reality, by trying to offer a stable image about the world, an image that would hide the abyss of becoming and the tireless impulse towards transformation and change, enforced by the hegemony of the will for power.

Thus, according to Nietzsche, the conservative aspect of the will for power is oriented towards imposing a stable structure of the reality, which would mask the deeper chaos, the strange agglomeration of anarchical forces that determines the unforeseeable and dramatic evolution of life, factors that might endanger the survival of the human species, which is always searching for continuity, safety, firm contours. In order to fulfill its goals, the will for power must impose a static perspective on life, by severely limiting the function of becoming, of discontinuity, of the movement, by privileging the construction of a world of constant shapes intermediated by knowledge. Knowledge is not a disinterested activity, it is not a contemplation oriented towards the revelation of the Noumena, as the supporters of the classical philosophy used to think, but a process of taking over reality. It is not a reflection of reality, the search of a preexisting truth, but it can be defined as trying to conquer, to brutalize and falsify reality<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Valéry, *Tel Quel*, 1, in *Oeuvres*, II, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, p. 478.

<sup>41</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *La volonté de puissance*, I, translated by Geneviève Bianquis, Paris, Gallimard, 1995, p. 85, aphorism 195.

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8

But the main engine of knowledge is faith, the anticipation of the nature of what is going to be discovered, and, therefore, the shaping of reality according to the exigencies of the subject involved in the process of knowing. It is the creation of a world that corresponds to his vital projections and that ensures the necessary conditions to preserve and perpetuate the species, modifying the traditional vision upon truth as *adequacy rei et intellectus* and replacing it with a more pragmatic definition, according to which, truth is only what is useful<sup>42</sup>.

For Nietzsche, this kind of truth is the core element of the machinery which is created and controlled by the will for power, in order to produce, on a regular basis, the necessary level of illusions that allows life to continue. It is the result of a willingly erroneous interpretation that tries hard to eliminate from the universe everything that is contradictory, illusory, subject to change, in order to replace it with what is permanent, unchangeable, identical to itself.

The depreciation of the senses for knowledge, the minimization of the importance of the body and of its instinctive wit, are all part of this program, and so is the privilege accorded to reason and to the ideal world, originated in Plato's works, by urging that the essences be searched, the perfect models of the insignificant realities from the mundane world, the only ones that can satisfy the inertial need of the human intellect to find again a universe perfectly controlled by the laws of logic, in which everything is predictable, calculated and constant, from which the very idea of surprise, discontinuity and multiplicity is eliminated. In this context, the appearances become the main vehicle of the errors, the royal way in which those messages jam the exclusive orientation toward the strictly delimited horizon of the Forms, and, for that reason, they are always blamed, being considered an irrefutable proof of the precarious way in which our world is composed, and of the need to save ourselves by relating the perfection of the superlunar ideal. Nietzsche is a merciless adversary of this model, which he considers to be the product of a humanity mined by decadence, unable to create, distrusting its vital possibilities, and that is exactly why he does not waste any chance to extol the

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 83-83, aphorism 192.

virtues of the appearances and to criticize the imaginary superiority of a world that does not actually exist, being a mere projection of the human intellect, caught in the trap of its own fictions.

He starts a real crusade against this image of the world, trying to rehabilitate those very features of the reality which were depreciated due to the predominance of a vision that tried to freeze the flood of the becoming and to petrify reality. This way he tries to topple Plato's model, which he considers to be responsible for the inversion of the natural relation between imagination and reality, he tries to emphasize the value of the concrete, the immanent, the fluidity, by eliminating the traditional paradigm about knowledge and truth, paradigm which is exclusively based on searching for certainties and which starts from a substantialist hypothesis about the being. The goal of his struggle is to cast light on the very features that were eliminated by the idealist *Weltanschauung*, to create questions about all the fictions elaborated by such a system of thinking, to describe that face of the world which is carefully hidden by the supporters of this model.

In order to apply his intentions, Nietzsche, in his fragments, draws a sharp, almost Heraclitian description of the world, pointing out the dramatic ontological discontinuity of the universe, its qualitative richness, the profound gap between realities that are considered identical, the nonexistence of the Forms, the static, the rigid, and the complete hegemony of the becoming, the eternal flow, the endless changes. Starting from there, he proposes a multiplication of the images of the world, relying on the premise that there are no facts, just interpretations, that the reality must be seen through a prism that shows the perspectives, that forbids the proclamation of a single concept about truth: "There are lots of eyes. Even the sphinx has eyes - : therefore there are lots of «truths» and therefore there is no truth"<sup>43</sup>.

The different reflections upon truth made by Nietzsche have allowed us to recommend, in a previous study<sup>44</sup>, starting from Jean Granier's suggestions, the following typology of truth in Nietzsche: the truth-utility, the truth-probity, the truth-duplicity. The first kind of truth, which we mentioned briefly

43 Friedrich Nietzsche, *La volonté de puissance*, I, p. 349, aphorism 540.

44 Ciprian Vălcan, *Recherches autour d'une philosophie de l'image*, Timișoara, Augusta, 1998, p. 50-64.

in the previous pages, is the result of the effort of the will for power to control the continuous effervescence of the becoming by imposing a set of categories and concepts that are meant to confer some uniformity and predictability to the reality. In this case, the truth is mistaken for the utility of life, it is a way to contribute to the biological preservation of the species, by devising a protective shield of illusions. The truth-probity expresses the tendency of the will for power to always overcome itself, to shatter the world of Forms that is imposed by its conservative aspect and to „accept the risks of a battle for the final Truth of the Being,”<sup>45</sup> to enter an adventure that threatens to sacrifice the life in the name of a final truth, an incomprehensible and abysmal truth. The truth-duplicity implies an extremely complex game between hiding and revealing, between truth and falsity, by trying to get over both the glaring illusions of idealism and the dangerous search of those who try to include the final and chaotic realities of the world. For this purpose, they use the pattern of art, not understood in its particular sense as a merely aesthetic activity, but as productivity in a large sense, as a continuous production of forms.

If the idealist lie had unfavorable consequences on life, because it denied entirely the possibility of a tragic reality, against which the individual must fight, trying to obtain the hegemony by devaluing and discrediting the competing variants, the falsification that art imposes is a virile and healthy one, which starts from the recognition of its fictitious character, which encourages the life and allows man to join immanence, by maintaining a perpetual fight between truth and illusion: „There is only one world, and this world is false, cruel, contradictory, tempting, senseless ... The real world is a world constructed this way. *We need the lie* in order to *live*. The fact that lie is necessary to live is a part of this awful and dubious existence [...] «Life must inspire trust»: the task established this way is a terrible one. In order to fulfill it, man must be an inborn liar, he must be, more than anything else, an *artist*”<sup>46</sup>.

45 Jean Granier, *op. cit.*, p. 448.

46 Friedrich Nietzsche, *La volonté de puissance*, II, p. 146, aphorism 853. Here is also the comment made by Michel Haar on this theory, *op. cit.*, p. 176 : „Life is a lie because it is appearance, dissimulation, an endless game of masks. To survive, one must believe in fictions, in surface effects. What Nietzsche implies by a living lie is the fiction produced by the artistic will for power qui, itself a force of nature [...] In other words, to be a bit of truth, one has to be a bit of lie. Logically speaking, this means that



From the perspective of this complex theory of truth, Nietzsche launches a merciless criticism of the instruments used to impose the truth-utility, warning, also, against the dangers implied by the furious research of the presumed final truth, of the knowledge that the followers of the truth-probity try to acquire. With a rope dance of extreme virtuosity, similar to the one performed in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, he attacks both those that accept without any critical examination the heritage of the traditional vision of the world, strictly conditioned by the conservative, reactionist aspect of the will for power. It manifests itself in the language, the definition of logic, of categories and concepts and those that excessively internalize the impulse of activism, which impose a permanent transcendence of the forms, of the firm contours, the stable features of the world, of the activism that was induced by the creative side of the will for power. The solution towards which his works tend is the realization of the always precarious equilibrium between creation and destruction, individual and shapeless, between Apollo and Dionysus, and, in order to sustain such a project, he is forced to use an emendation of the simplified, reductionist visions, which ignore the complexity of existence and its contradictory character.

α). On the one hand, he proceeds to a genealogical approach of the mechanism of human knowledge, from the way the intellect is constituted and its functions up to its most important creations, which are used to impose the shield of fiction, necessary to protect life and to offer the psychological comfort that the individuals need in the battle for survival, showing to what extent all these are conditioned by their biological function, are purely adaptive, and therefore rejecting the aspirations of objectivity, attributed to it by the supporters of a purely contemplative type of knowledge, perceived as discovering a preexisting truth.

He starts by observing that the human intellect, which has its origins in the manipulation of images, in assembling and recording the different new impressions into preexisting structures that give the illusion of identity, is organized in such a way that it tends to prove the stable and unchanging

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lie is an essential attribute of truth. Thus, when Nietzsche says «life is a lie», he means: life is, this way, the truest truth<sup>47</sup>.

character of reality, being the nature of language, try to, to a great extent, imbued with, to submissively serve the purpose of, a system of representing, to communicate, it is not, accurately all the nerve, to simplifying our perspective, the nature easier<sup>47</sup>.

According to Nietzsche, of the early ages of humanity, the first humans, a rather, refinement, a proof of the blocks, as fixed, unchanging, incorporated in the structure, to think, being unable to, words are therefore forced, are constrained, as long as, inside a metaphysical context.

For all those reasons, to blame for the trust in, criticizing the language, to describe the essence of, serve as a filter to dilute, can be noted and transmitted, philosopher proposes to, nature of the language, The language arbitrarily, and the concept; b) the realities that are not all

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47 Friedrich Nietzsche, *La Généalogie de la Morale*, Paris, PUF, 1968, p. 10.

48 Jean Granier, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

character of reality, being unable to seize the becoming. Then he studies the nature of language, trying to prove that this supposedly neutral tool is, to a great extent, imbued with a static vision upon the world, that it does not submissively serve the purposes of those who use it, but rather impose them a system of representing the reality. The language is not just a code used to communicate, it is not an extremely precise casting which can represent accurately all the nervures of the reality, but a system of signs which contribute to simplifying our perspective upon the universe, making our efforts to master the nature easier<sup>47</sup>.

According to Nietzsche, the language, which was created in one of the early ages of humanity, is a proof of the rudimentary psychology of the first humans, a rather exact copy of their vision on the universe, lacking refinement, a proof of the way they perceive objects and things as compact blocks, as fixed, unchangeable realities. The prejudices of this epoch remain incorporated in the structures of language in such a way that those who try to think, being unable to do so outside the language, being unable to give up words are therefore forced to acquire the articulations of a primitive reflection, are constrained, as long as they do not start a critique of the concepts, to move inside a metaphysical conception which they think is the only possible one.

For all those reasons, Nietzsche thinks that the language is the first to blame for the trust that people have in the logicity of the being, and by criticizing the language it is possible both to annul the claims of the categories to describe the essence of reality, and to question the principles of logic, which serve as a filter to dilute and simplify extremely complex phenomena, which can be noted and transmitted in this way. As Jean Granier shows<sup>48</sup>, the German philosopher proposes three core arguments in order to prove the deceptive nature of the language and the fact that it has no value for knowledge: a) The language arbitrarily implies that there is an identity between the being and the concept; b) the language imposes a homogeneous perspective upon realities that are not alike, creating the illusion that there would be an ideal

47 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Fragments posthumes. Automne 1884-automne 1885*, translated by Michel Haar et Marc B. De Launay, Paris, Gallimard, 1982, p. 192.

48 Jean Granier, *op. cit.*, p. 98-101.

prototype in an intelligible world; the language maintains a harmful confusion between the grammar and the structures of reality, by projecting into reality the grammatical articulations of the language, and by turning the speculations upon the being into simple grammar exercises.

Nietzsche's criticism is also applied to the most important concepts of the intellect (identity, substance, causality, finality), showing that they do not do anything else but follow the main mission of the mechanism of human knowledge, the falsification of the world and its organization according to the norms established by the conservatory aspect of the will for power. We will not insist too much on these aspects, suffice it to say here that Nietzsche accepts only with great difficulty the idea that all the intellectual means that people possess as ways to create a contact with the world fragment their vision on the becoming, offer only a static image, which has no dramatic nature, a comforting image that gives the feeling of security.

β). On the other hand, Nietzsche warns against the explosive potential of that type of knowledge that tries to decrypt the text of the reality in itself, without being intermediated by a protective shield of utilitarian nature. The passion for such knowledge<sup>49</sup> forbids the interpretation of being in an anthropomorphic manner, according to our needs and wishes, being the expression of the intellectual probity which requires deference towards the polymorphic and cruel aspect of the reality, no matter what consequences this might have upon the individuals. In this situation the prevailing aspect of the will for power is that which imposes its procrastination and the abandonment of the utilitarian fictions in favor of a careful investigation of the deeper face of the world to facilitate the observation of those two essential determinations of the being, the plurality and the becoming. But such an action requires a lot of courage, because it imposes the pattern of an existence under the sign of incertitude and permanent risks, an existence permanently faced with the peril of mental disequilibrium, of falling into madness.

That is exactly the reason why Nietzsche thinks that the man cannot survive the trial that the search of the absolute truth implies, because of his

<sup>49</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *La volonté de puissance*, II, translated by Geneviève Bianquis, Paris, Gallimard, 1995, p. 214.

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incapacity to get over the contradiction between the exigency of veracity and the concrete conditions of his living, contradiction that threatens to destroy him, transforming his will to know into a will to die<sup>50</sup>.

The solution that he proposes is the self limitation of the will to know, the acceptance of the masks which are imposed by the creative aspects of the will for power, the refuge into the healthy duplicity of art, the acceptance of the virile lie which is imposed by an aesthetic perspective upon the world, and, implicitly, of that type of truth that we named „truth-duplicity”.

After focusing on a few aspects that we perceive as essential for the description of Nietzsche's gnoseological conception, we will try to prove how much is owed by the young Cioran to this conception of knowledge and truth, by carefully following the numerous fragments inspired by Nietzsche that were published in Romanian, which show without the slightest doubt how powerful was the influence of the German philosopher upon the Răşinari thinker's way of seeing the world.

The young Cioran receives enthusiastically the Nietzschean thesis which he uses in order to legitimate his inborn need for questioning and undermining certainties. By quickly distancing himself from the models offered by the classical philosophy, of the respectability of the system and of a certain manner of treating the issues which is thought to be the only one suitable for a meditation upon the being, he adheres to the way in which philosophy is made in Nietzsche's works, not only because this corresponds to the way he deciphers the structure of the world, but also because it contains a huge potential of rebellion towards the traditional thesis of metaphysics.

The important philosophers before him never cease to warn against the perturbation factor that the body represents, if all their efforts are oriented towards a refined propaedeutical of reason, which needs to serve to a continuous expansion of knowledge and its degree of objectivity, by overcoming the subjectivity and all that comes from our carnal nature. Nietzsche, however, demands that this perspective be turned upside down, by emphasizing the importance of the senses and of an investigation of the world starting from the

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 217.

body seen as a whole, from the body as the only proper means to investigate immanence, highlighting that the universe is a complicated collection of appearances behind which there is nothing. Nothing hides behind the senses, there is no saving essence.

Cioran joins passionately the anti-Platonic revolution that Nietzsche proposes and his Romanian writings confess the conviction with which he involves into this huge philosophical battle. There are lots of fragments inside which he propose what seems to be true odes to appearances, and the tone of those express a conviction that is almost idolatrous, the religious passion of a true believer of the concrete, a convinced admirer of life's demonism.

The main argument that Cioran uses, closely following Nietzsche, is that the arbitrary separation of existence between appearances and essences is an artificial and irrelevant operation, which starts from a hostile attitude towards the concrete, relying on an allegedly more profound level of reality. It thus contributes to the depreciation and calumny of life, being forced to comply with principles which are alien to it, with fake laws that are imposed by this search for what cannot be analyzed: „The biggest crime is not to love life. And who is responsible for this crime? All those who do not have the taste for appearance and who separate the world into essences and phenomena. They love the sea but do not love its waves.”<sup>51</sup>

This observation is directed first of all to Schopenhauer, whom he considers responsible for the wave of pessimism that invaded the western philosophy in the 19th century and which reactivated certain tendencies that existed in the European way of thinking as consequences of inheriting the Christian vision upon the world. He also contributed to a new and powerful depreciation of the vision on life, this time not in the name of a transcendental principle, not as a result of some divine commands, but due to the observation of the absurd and desolating spectacle offered by life. Such implicit criticism of Schopenhauer's philosophy is frequent in young Cioran's writing, and we think it offers us the grounds to reject Marta Petreu's opinion according to which the metaphysical foundation of Cioran's work would be originating in

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51 Cioran, *Cartea amăgirilor/The Book of Delusions*, p. 112-113.

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52 *Ibidem*, p.  
53 Cioran,

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Schopenhauer. Those critics draw attention toward the fact that all the visions  
maintain a dualistic core, all those conceptions of the world that try to  
differentiate the real according to some abstract conceptual constructs are  
inadequate and harmful because they do not allow us to notice the paradoxical  
of life: „Each time you separate the world between appearances and  
ences you are implicitly taking an anti-life position. From any perspective,  
can only lose. The prejudice for the essences is the cult of death”<sup>52</sup>.

The only way to catch life's mystery is precisely the exclusive orientation  
towards the whole suite of appearances, the attempt to exhaust their charm,  
waste their concreteness and their never-ending diversity, by renouncing  
whatever contradicts the natural tendencies of the individuals to fully  
use their vital potential: „Aesthetic piety: to have a religious respect for  
appearances, to walk on the ground without the nostalgia of the sky, to think  
everything is the potential of a flower - not of the absolute. If you never  
regretted that you do not have wings, in order not to spoil the earth with the  
humans' cruel steps, you never loved this earth”<sup>53</sup>.

The attempt to get to a deeper level of reality, to discover truths that  
escape the senses, to maintain the illusion that the mystery is not the amazing  
world of the becoming, that it has to be searched for in another place, in a  
horizon where only reason has access, with its singular power to penetrate  
beyond the veil of appearances, to ignore the texture of the sensations, all  
these are signs of not believing in the power that life has to transfigure things,  
to always offer breathtaking shows, during which the impenetrable destiny  
of the humanity is gambled. For Cioran, all those are futile attempts, that  
can only propagate a diffuse nihilism and an impossibility to explain the  
version for existence, which cannot be deciphered in this way, keeping its  
mask on, preserving its freshness and the power to fascinate, urging us to  
enjoy the magic of the concrete and to renounce the inexplicable worship of  
a nonexistent transcendence, impossible to find *beyond* or *under* the world:  
Behind the world there is no other world hiding, and nothingness does not  
hide anything. No matter how much one may dig, searching for treasures,

52 *Ibidem*, p. 151.

53 Cioran, *Îndreptar pătimăș/The Passionate Handbook*, p. 15-16.

the search is in vain: the gold is dissipated in the soul, but the soul is far from being gold. Slandering life with useless archeology? There are *no traces*. Who might have left traces? Nothingness sustains nothing. What steps might have walked under the earth, when there is no *under*?"<sup>54</sup>

The implicit gnoseology that can be found in Cioran's writings and which corresponds to the vision upon the universe as an anarchical conglomerate of forces is a gnoseology of direct Nietzschean inspiration, which assumes all the key elements of the German philosopher's conception upon knowledge and truth. For Cioran, knowledge is just one of the forms of the human instinct of predator, it is one of the ways in which he tries to extend his ownership on the world, a way that does not hide any special virtue, nor an unusual inclination, but only the will to dominate: „In knowledge, the instinct of the predator is revealed. You want to own everything, to make it yours - and if it is not yours, you want to tear it to pieces. How could you leave anything untouched, when your thirst for the unlimited surpasses the sky and your pride builds rainbows on the disaster of ideas?!"<sup>55</sup>.

In order to fill the universe with enough conceptual characters that would hide the wilderness of the abyss lying at the basis of all existence, in order to hide the features of meaninglessness that mysteriously dominates the cannibalistic metabolism of life, one needs to always hang on illusions, to project a shield of beliefs, powerful enough to ensure the comfortable survival of the individuals, which does not allow them to behold the essential dramatism of nature, the crazy show of growth and decrease, of birth and the irrational haste towards destruction: „People believe in something so they can forget who they are. They kill their time with all sorts of beliefs, sinking under ideals and cuddling around. Nothing would hurt them more than waking up on the heap of pleasant lies, confronted with the pure existence."<sup>56</sup>

Just as Nietzsche, Cioran notices the utilitarian character of the intellect's productions, their mission of filtering, that does not allow the perception of the plural reality and the continuous becoming of all things, contributing to

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54 *Ibidem*, p. 57.

55 *Ibidem*, p. 46.

56 *Ibidem*, p. 99.

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57 *Ibidem*, p. 17.

the building of a stable, homogeneous world always identical to itself. If the world is actually an infernal succession of sensations, a terrible carousel of forms always left behind, a theater of oneness and of the unrepeatable, ourgnoseological mechanism works at the featly distortion of those aspects of existence, proposing instead a comfortable image, in which the constant, the continuous, the measurable and the foreseeable are the main pillars, giving people faith, making them believe that they are on safe ground, with no perils: „Our life only lasts as long as our vital shivers last. Besides this, everything is vital dust [...] Our vibration makes the world; the relaxation of the senses are its pauses [...] The word steals the prerogatives of the immediate nothingness, its fluidity and its inconsistency. How could we free ourselves from the thicket of sensations if we didn't petrify them into forms - into what does not exist? This way we attribute being to them. The reality is solidified appearance.”<sup>57</sup>

The petrification of reality is made especially through the sieve of language, which tries to grasp the situation that might be similar into the compelling net of the identical, by giving preeminence to uniformity and standard, to the detriment of a discontinuous vision, which would pay attention exactly to the differences and the incongruities that can be perceived through senses. The concept's mission is to create world peace, by transforming it into a loyal province of the self, inside which there is no place for the unforeseeable or the accidental, where everything obeys the laws of reason, by following their unchangeable order and denying any intrusions from emotions or sensitivity.

One of the main concepts that are used during this operation of making the world safe is causality, which induces the idea that the relations between things can be directly determined and foreseen through an analysis of the relation between cause and effect, which would represent a satisfactory explanation of their genesis. Appropriating Nietzsche's example, Cioran proves the illusory character of such an attempt to reduce the complexity of the universe's interactions to an amount of foreseeable reactions and he thinks that this only means proposing a comfortable and plausible perspective, in order to hide our impossibility to understand the intimate texture of the

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57 *Ibidem*, p. 17.



phenomena and their true nature: „The difference between cause and effect, the idea that one thing is another thing's source or that it has an actual connection with another satisfies a mediocre taste for intelligible matters. However, when you know that the objects do not exist but flow as a whole in the air, the connections between them do not reveal anything, neither about their position nor about their essence. The world was not born, nor did it die, nor did it stop at a certain point, nor does it become another with the help of time, but indulges in an indefinite forever”<sup>58</sup>.

All the observations made by Cioran make him adopt the theory of truth proposed by Nietzsche. This way, he starts by noticing that the truths that people invoke are nothing more than a systematical effort to falsify reality, to idolize a set of useful errors which make life possible, in such a way that „To live: to specialize yourself in error.”<sup>59</sup> This type of truth, that we called truth-utility, organizes the whole process of the individuals' accommodation to reality, allowing them to ignore the huge dangers that lie waiting, for them, and to feel completely at ease in a world full of meaning, a world governed by so many unbreakable certainties. But, against this truth, another form of truth rises, nurtured by a disappointed and unmistakable lucidity, which tends to discover the direct face of reality, removing with a dark voluptuousness the fictions that tried to alter its true features. It is the type of truth that corresponds to the truth-probity in Nietzsche's writings, but, if in the case of the German philosopher, the main reason for this tendency is a terrible need to know the final truth, „the real truth”, if it is driven by the passion for knowledge, in Cioran's case things are different. The determining element for this type of search is the diminished vitality that expresses itself through it, by endangering the survival of the individuals exactly because it lacks energy, because it suffers from a dangerous illness that threatens the being: „The truth, just like any missing illusions, only stems from a compromised vitality. Since the instincts are no longer able to feed the charm of the errors, in which life indulges, they fill the holes with the disaster of lucidity. You start to see how things really are and you cannot live anymore. Without errors, life is an empty

58 Cioran, *Îndreptar pătimaș / The Passionate Handbook*, p. 26.

59 *Ibidem*, p. 10.

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boulevard on which one walks as a peripatetic philosopher of pain."<sup>60</sup>

Cioran insists more than Nietzsche on the perils that this type of life implies, a kind of knowledge that destroys all illusions. He tends to see this as a cardinal sin, an unforgivable one, directed against nature, threatening to take the individual away from the irrational flow of the living, projecting him into a fatal obsession of searching the truth that permanently opposes conscience to the natural and unreflexive development, establishing, as Klages remarked, an irreducible adversity between the spirit and the life: „Any type of knowledge brings with it a tiredness, a disgust of the being, a detachment, because *any knowledge is a loss*, of being, of existence. The act of knowledge does not do anything except widening the gap between us and the world and making our condition even more embittered.”<sup>61</sup>

In the paradoxical and surprising style of his early writings, Cioran offers a real ode to ignorance and foolishness, seen as an indispensable means to preserve the freshness of the universe, to avoid the intrusions of the spirit in the sphere of life. If the obsessive search for reality threatens to endanger our complicity with the implicit rhythms of nature, making harder our irrational adaptation to the spontaneous mechanisms of vitality, the ignorance is the most precious ally of the living, because it never questions the likely structure of the universe, being satisfied with the certainties offered by the protective functioning of the common sense, by ignoring the problems and denying the doubts: „The fools build the world and the wise men demolish it. In order to put together the pieces of reality and repair the precarious things, one doesn't need the guilty doubt of the spirit, and one's cheeks need to smile like apples before the temptation. As soon as you wake up, you become richer to the detriment of nature. It becomes smaller, because you do not have what to repair when you are caught up in the clairvoyant conspiracies of the demolishing mind. The nature is always poor. We can only help it by not knowing.”<sup>62</sup>

Imposing the devastating lucidity of the conscience leads to questioning the entire architecture of fictions of the world, implies the peril of dissolution,

60 Cioran, *Amurgul gândurilor/The Dusk of the Thoughts*, p. 91.

61 Cioran, *Cartea amăgirilor/The Book of Delusions*, p. 36.

62 Cioran, *Îndreptar pătimaș/The Passionate Handbook*, p. 86.

of entering the mad carousel of uncertainty, of challenges, of lacking being, hindering the careless expansion of life, its extension that is protected by a parade of imaginary constructs with a purely utilitarian purpose. In order to allow the consolidation of the living, to ensure its needed condition to manifest, a spontaneous acceptance of a set of truths and principles is needed, without the ever harmful mediation of the thinking, which inhibits the vital impetuosity and destroys even the most invulnerable certainties: „An individual or an era must breathe unawares in the unconditional status of a principle, in order to accept it as it is. *Knowledge* turns any trace of certainty upside down. Consciousness -a marginal phenomenon of reason- is a source of doubts, that can only be defeated by the twilight of the awake spirit.”<sup>63</sup>

But this is only one of the levels of Cioran's thinking, which do not exhaust the variety of his reflections upon truth, because, just like Nietzsche, he tries to catch its ambiguous nature, the eternal competition between revelation and hiding, the frenetic proliferation of masks and perspectives, going toward the proclamation of a type of truth that is similar to the truth-duplicity in Nietzsche's writings. Cioran's effort is aimed mainly at keeping unaltered the creative dynamism of life, at a way of understanding the overtones of its contradictory aspects, in a way which would protect life from being endangered by eliminating the shield of fictions which is needed for the expansion of the vital impetuosity, but, in the same time, that would not contradict the background fluidity of the world, its plurality and its becoming. The heroic side of living in the world is a key issue of young Cioran's writings, which reflects upon his view on knowledge and truth, forbidding both the passive conformism, the reception of a tamed image of the universe and the dangerous exaltation, the suicidal instinct working for the destruction of all the errors that are needed for survival.

If, at a first stage, we were faced with a warning against the dangers of knowledge and the harmful role it can play due to its characteristic dangers to life, we will see that the Romanian philosopher is not satisfied with an obedient acceptance of the utility-truth and that he strongly criticizes the

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63 Cioran, *Amurgul gândurilor/The Dusk of the Thoughts*, p. 202.

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64 *Ibidem*, p. 73.

65 Cioran, *Cartea amăg*

66 Michel Haar, *op. cit.*,

idea of the certainties lying behind it, proclaiming his rebellion against it exactly because of the mediocrity it seems to impose and the vision that lacks the dramatism of the world. The act of artificially inventing a meaning only serves a cowardly search of stability and certainty, being an ignoble lie that denies the manliness of facing the untamed cavalcade of appearances and tends to devalue the living in agony, the intensity of the ephemeral, impossible to shape, the spontaneous, the intense<sup>64</sup>.

The fight against certainties is one conducted in the name of the creative effervescence of nature, of the paradoxical show offered by the explosive unpredictability of life. To accept a final foundation, to introduce unquestionable nuclei of meaning, to strictly and willingly imitate the entire space of the being, equally limiting the potential of the surprising creations, means to offer the final victory over the crazy substance of the becoming, with its demonic content, impossible to structure, means to give up in front of the illusion that you are controlling the fundamental irrationality of the world. „Let's not build our life on certainties. And we should not do it because we do not have any, and we are not cowardly enough to make up stable and final certainties. Because where could we find, in our past, certainties, stable points, equilibrium or support? Doesn't our heroism begin the very moment we have realized that life can only lead to death, but, nevertheless, we have kept on stating life?“<sup>65</sup>

Cioran's solution is also borrowed from Nietzsche's texts, and it consists of imposing a vision upon the world according to which appearance reunites in itself all the contraries and the becoming transforms itself into an infinite game of interpretations, into a continuous succession of masks that only lead to other masks<sup>66</sup>. The truth is, in such a context, a frenetic superposition of perspectives, an endless challenge, a suite of perplexities and revelations, which is all subordinated to the rich dynamics of life, to its uncontrollable pulse: „The ambivalence and the equivocal are characteristic of the final realities. To be for and against the truth is not paradoxical, because anyone who understands

64 *Ibidem*, p. 73.

65 Cioran, *Cartea amăgirilor/The Book of Delusions*, p. 43.

66 Michel Haar, *op. cit.*, p. 34-35.

its risks and its revelations must love and hate the truth. Whoever believes in truth is naïve; whoever doesn't is stupid. The only straight way to go is on the edge. We can only be perplexed by the final data – a divine and diabolical perplexity. And in this perplexity is born a cosmic smile, instead of the direct smile, the eyes find it impossible to see orders and the eyelid closes to hide them, the senses open themselves onto mysteries, and the thoughts that hold the evidence cover mysteries."<sup>67</sup>

### c. Morals and Religion

The potential for rebellion against the classical values that appears in Nietzsche's philosophy is also used by Cioran to sketch the manner in which he relates to the issues of morals and religion, exactly because his youthful restless, his search for a solution that must necessarily be iconoclastic, the systematically challenging gaze upon the world, all are perfectly suited with the German thinker's writings, finding here a rich enough arsenal to create scandal, to draw attention, to ensure the needed elements for the „bad guy”'s script, which is preferred, during his Romanian period, by the author of *The Fall into Time*.

If, generally speaking, Cioran's formulas are not at all systematical, the philosopher preferring the lively contradiction, the momentary feeling crystallized in words and opposed to a future feeling just as legitimate, this becomes even more true when it comes to judgments about morals and religion. Cioran seems to insist on such issues without showing excessive interest in displaying original or more nuanced views, taking over certain Nietzschean platitudes, as they are, without changing their original meaning. Such an attitude might be justified by the fact that most of the pro-Nietzschean points of view of that period were focusing on the critique of morals and religion, therefore it is possible that this part of Nietzsche's thoughts may have seemed a commonplace to Cioran. Being too often quoted and used in the writings of his contemporaries, the Romanian philosopher found them useless, as he was trying to delimit himself from the others, to proclaim the uniqueness of his heretical vision, of his posture of a damned thinker.

<sup>67</sup> Cioran, *Cartea amăgirilor/The Book of Delusions*, p. 195.

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Cioran uses the best known Nietzschean ideas about religion and morals, but, due to a certain superficiality, he does not also adopt the subtleties of the original writings, simplifying a lot, keeping only the main idea, not the carousel of arguments, shades, the changes of perspectives, ending up by giving the impression of an agitator, interested in the rhetorical effect that his words have on the public, rather than in their philosophical consistency.

Therefore, the view he proposes upon religions in general and Christianity in particular is a saddening one, dominated by an essential mediocrity, by a devastating taming of the instincts and feelings. The perspective that he shows is one of sterility, of internal desert, relying on the omnipotent doubt about life, the flesh, the naturalness of the simplest acts, on a perpetual rebellion against the immanent. The obsolescence of such a spiritual formula, the chain of empty forms that is imposed by it, the whirl of inhibitions and promises, which is transformed into a genuine chastity belt around the firm core of the dogma, all this shape the form of a sickly impossibility to respond to the true needs of the man as a concrete being, as a being that is defined by „here” and „now”: „Each time Christianity falls upon my doubts, an unhealthy pain takes the place of the skeptical pomp and of the aromatic rummages. I cannot breathe in it. It smells dirty. I get closed. Its mythology is worn-out, its symbols are empty, its promises are void. Sinister straying of two thousand years!”<sup>68</sup>

This impression of dullness is also given by the tenacious cultivation of the values which are specific to the many and the poor, by the disarming preaching of kindness, the systematical discouragement of the main forces which are capable of freeing the people’s creative forces, those that act toward the exaltation of the self, as anchors of man’s pride and his combative instincts. They are all the consequence of the true nature of Christianity, an ideology against the aristocracy, a belief which is hostile to the full manifestation of life, a plaintive doctrine of futility and pain, governed by a terrible adversity against the senses and the telluric.

Nietzsche’s writings offer a lot of fragments which might have served Cioran as inspiration for his opinions. According to the German philosopher’s

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<sup>68</sup> Cioran, *Îndreptar pătimăș/The Passionate Handbook*, p. 29.

conception, Christianity is the most harmful creation, belonging to the ignoble representatives of a decaying and powerless humanity, mined by a fatal physiological weakness, which does not allow it to face directly, with its own weapons, the healthy people, which makes it use an almost endless set of tricks and artifices meant to change the data of the confrontation and to ensure, in the end, through the change of the entire grid of values, the final triumph. This slow change of perspectives makes the individual's priorities turn upside down in an incredible manner, orienting him towards an anti-natural attitude with the help of the virus of distrusting the body and the legitimacy of satisfying its instinctual dynamics, a wicked mechanism of demonic influence.

This vision comes as a result of the gradual change of the natural data and the power links that result from them. It is a consequence of the tacit revolution made by those who were disadvantaged by the initial equation of a transparent and easily quantifiable world, in which the powerful and the brave, endowed with a superior vitality, make the rules and hold the power, while the weak wait on the winners of this genetic game of chance, unassuming in their condition of slaves, accepting their own fragility and inadaptation. According to Nietzsche's model, the weak, the powerless, the less gifted for life, who would have been doomed to a perpetual condition of subjects, start a powerful ideological riot, using, as means to ensure their success, the only weapons they are able to handle, those of language and persuasion. They slowly manage to plant the seeds of distrust at the very heart of the ruling class, managing to convince its representatives that the order securing their supremacy is an unjust one, founded on an unworthy worship of the body and the force, which are merely illusions, arbitrary creations of the senses, while the true reality is one that is present in a world beyond the senses, which is not attached to the body and which is purely spiritual. The only ones who would have access to this reality would be exactly those who deny the dangerous cult of the body, the ones who can dedicate themselves to asceticism, avoiding the temptations of life, reducing their feelings to a minimum, preparing themselves for the heavenly state of the end while they still live <sup>69</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> To observe the entire process that Nietzsche describes, see *Par delà bien et mal. La généalogie de la morale*, trad. par Cornélius Heim, Isabelle Hildenbrand et Jean Gratien, Paris, Gallimard, 1971.

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27. Fo  
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Nietzsche, who never stops deploring the success of this movement, the lamentable victory that the slaves have, whose consequences he identifies at all levels of his contemporary society, and which he thinks leads to an unstoppable decadence and to an ever-growing depreciation of life, puts forward a genuine phenomenology of this process. In it, he is trying to understand, firstly, the means used in order to cause such a reversal of perspectives, and, secondly, what changes in the human nature are brought about by such an involution.

If the aristocrat is, first of all, an active being, interested in doing things, not limited by what others might think, loving life passionately and incapable of hypocrisy, despising masks, always keeping the others at a distance, the slave seems to be some sort of a monkey of his master, unable to act on his own, but always ready to react, to borrow and deform certain features of his master's gestures. He has a nature defined by parody, travesty, he is a comedian, a master of disguise, preparing his victory in silence and being helped by a lot of patience, deciding to use his very own weakness, the very own features that, according to the natural order, make him forever inferior to his master. Therefore, the slaves' doctrine will lay emphasis on exactly those things that are considered abject by the aristocracy, creating a vision of the world in which all the core values of their *Weltanschauung* will acquire negative connotations. The world built by the weak ones is a world upside down, a blasphemous response to the world of the masters, it is the world of „no“: „The slaves' moral rebellion starts where the resentment itself becomes creator and generates values: the resentment of beings who are forbidden the true reaction, the act, who stop doing evil only as a result of an imaginary revenge. While any aristocratic moral develops from a triumphant statement of the self, the slave's moral starts by saying from the very beginning “no” to one «from outside», to one who is «different from him» to one who is «not himself» and who is not the act by which he creates. This reversed evaluative grid – this necessary orientation towards outside instead of towards oneself – is specifically a part of this resentment: in order to be formed, the slaves' moral first needs an exterior world, physiologically speaking, it needs an external stimulus in order to be able to function – its action is, essentially, a reaction.”<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27. For an extremely revolutionary interpretation of the notions of “active” and “reactive” in Nietzsche's work, see Gilles Deleuze's wonderful book, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, Paris, PUF, 1962.



According to Nietzsche, the relationship with the enemy, with the "evil", is the crucial element of the two types of individuals' characterization. The aristocrat creates his idea of good starting from himself, from his entire implicit ethics, to derive from here, very generously, his idea of the harmful, of the abject, as an expression of natural unhappiness, without hating his enemy and without trying to slander him. The slave behaves in the exactly opposite way, thinking that the noble individual is „bad”, hating him for his nobility and the naturalness of his attitudes, and building the notion of good as opposite to his features, as a derived notion, with no autonomy; he demonizes his enemy, giving him all the flaws, feeling he must destroy him by any means.

An important part in the resentment mechanism that is shaped aggressively by the slaves is played by the priest, the natural rival of the aristocrat in the battle for spiritual hegemony, the one who contributes to the dissemination of anti-life values, by using his magical and austere prestige to counterbalance the warrior-like perfection of the noblemen. Exactly because he is unable to make a tangible, concrete change of reality, he works upon the spirits, trying hard to modify them, doing his best not to legitimize the act, the direct relation with immanence, to the advantage of a misty mediation with the immaterial, the transcendental. The priest, „life's true black spider"<sup>71</sup>, gathers huge resources of hate, seeming to try to deny even the faintest expression of life, in order to ensure his new reign, and to permanently compromise the aristocrats, the former masters. The guilt, the sin, the guilty conscience, the austere ideals are the main means used to reach such a purpose, and their inclusion in man's self-image will have serious consequences for his very essence.

The new kind of man is dominated by what Nietzsche calls „the «human» worm"<sup>72</sup>, the mediocre individual, petty and tamed, incapable of magnificence and of great deeds, satisfied with the endless surveillance of his internal being, imposed by the interdiction to release his instincts. But, since the energy of those instincts needs to be set free and can no longer do so towards the outside, it turns against himself, provoking a devastating introspection that

71 Nietzsche, *L'antéchrist. Ecce homo*, trad. par Jean-Claude Héméry, Paris, Gallimard, 1999, p. 42.  
72 Nietzsche, *Par delà bien et mal. La généalogie de la morale*, p. 188

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73 *Ibidem*, p. 225-22  
74 *Ibidem*, p. 237

culminates with a powerful feeling of guilt: „The man who does not have outer enemies and challenges, limited by the overwhelming vice of the regularity of virtues, would tear himself off, persecute himself, torture himself, tease himself impatiently, this animal whom they wanted to «tame» and who was hurting himself against the bars of his cage, this unfortunate individual, desperately missing the desert, forced to find inside himself his own adventure, his torture, his dangerous and insecure jungle - this crazy man, this nostalgic and hopeless prisoner has become the inventor of the «guilty conscience».”<sup>73</sup>

The orientation towards the self leads to replacing the bestiality of the act with the bestiality of the thought, giving birth to a real voluptuousness of self-torture by imagining absurd and paradoxical doctrines that only contribute to a deeper guilt by preserving the horrible craft of the vivisection performed on the conscience<sup>74</sup>. The hostility against life reaches its highest degree, the ascetic ideals dominating the entire horizon of the modern man's thoughts, in such a way that we can no longer expect anything else but the natural consequence of this disease, the final fall into nihilism.

Since he strongly believes in his own explanations for man's involution, Nietzsche tries to propose a set of cures which should culminate with the birth of the overman, the man freed from this poison of culpability, the man who is able to regain the harmony with his own instincts, transforming it into an extremely powerful creative force. The first step of this project is the merciless polemical critique of the opposite values and especially of the basic ideas that lie behind Christianity and its adjacent morals. Cioran seems to have been especially sensitive to this provocative, aggressive aspect, limiting himself to the adoption of a set of Nietzschean sayings, without analyzing the minute details.

Consequently, the few fragments of his early works devoted to this topic are focused on a) the idea that guilt is harmful for life, b) religion is a form of taming and a triumph of the weak, c) the criticism of mercy, all these being specifically Nietzschean themes.

As an orthodox Nietzschean philosopher, Cioran demands the final removal of the idea of sin, which is considered an obstacle against the expansion

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 225-226

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 237

of life: „We must remove any thoughts about sin from people’s conscience and we must destroy all the religions and philosophies that spread such a thought by regarding life as sin. To talk about sin without repenting the very idea of sin is the first step in the chain of criminal thoughts. We can only put up with a humanity who does not know the sin, who lives all life’s acts as virtues.”<sup>75</sup>

Another Nietzschean theme which was borrowed as such is the one referring to the weakening effect that religion has on the human nature, the harmful mediocrity it conveys with its meek and humble message, discouraging the frenzy of bravery and violence, the obsession of magnificent deeds, imposing censorship on the instincts, refusing the expansion of noble feelings, reversing the natural meaning of the aggressiveness oriented towards the outside: „Religions, with their hate for everything that is noble, honorable and passionate have infected the souls with cowardice, deprived them of new tremors, of whirling contents. They have not attacked anything as vehemently as man’s need to be *himself*, by revenge. What an aberration to forgive your enemy, to offer him all the cheeks invented by an absurd modesty, so he can spit on the inferior beings you would otherwise instinctively crush under your foot!”<sup>76</sup>

Mercy, Schopenhauer’s main element in his moral vision, is one of the main targets for Nietzsche’s criticism, being a theme that is always discussed as a landmark of the reserve *Zarathustra*’s author adopted towards his former mentor. Cioran does not hesitate to touch this subject too, one of the most easily recognizable Nietzschean points at that time, a nucleus of ideas which, combined with some themes of Byronian and satanist origin, are used by a lot of angry young men to prove their rebellion and their desire to provoke, to announce their project to shock. Obviously, mercy is quickly dismissed, ridiculed, slandered with all sorts of arguments, more or less original, being considered a ridiculous reminiscence of Christianity and Judaism, which needs to be overcome by a generation full of vitality, finally freed from any taboos and drawbacks. Cioran could not possibly miss such a chance to score in the game of defiance, and, very consistent with his riotous project, he writes:

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75 Cioran, *Cartea amăgirilor/The Book of Delusions*, p. 137

76 Cioran, *Îndreptar pătimas/The Passionate Handbook*, p. 47

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77 Cioran, *Amurgul gin*

„In the heap of stains and monstrosities or in the vicious refinement of the mind you will never find a darker and more crooked perversion than mercy. Nothing diverts us away from beauty more than its «fits». And if only there were only beauty! But the underground virtues of this vice turn us away from our essential roles and see corruption in everything that is not produced by the taste for decay, by the swamps and the rottenness, territories of mercy and pretexts for its infernal voluptuousness”<sup>77</sup>.

As we tried to prove, Nietzsche's influence on Cioran's Romanian writings is a central one, manifested at the levels of his ontological and gnoseological vision and also in relation with religion and morals. Alongside with many themes that originally belong to Spengler, Simmel, Schopenhauer and Weininger, the Nietzschean core of thoughts represents one of the main elements that gradually configure Cioran's original thinking, offering him the necessary materials to create his specific philosophical style, with its recurrent themes and its specific way of writing. In the context of a dominant interest for the German philosophy, and in general for the North European thinkers (we should mention here his interest for Kierkegaard, whose influence upon the author of *The Passionate Handbook* cannot be investigated in this limited research), which, as we showed in the previous chapters, is considered much closer to a transfiguring barbarity, to a contact with the authentic sources of life, Nietzsche's figure is tutelary, he plays the part of an idol whose opinions are enthusiastically and very uncritically embraced by young Cioran.

His French period brings with it a different type of readings and privileged intellectual sources, being balanced by a massive return to the great books of the humanistic and skeptical European tradition. He almost always refers to the French authors, who offer him an arsenal of arguments and ideas that contribute to the crystallization of his new self-image, the image of the cursed blasé, one who suffered physically from an insurmountable evil, and who thus became immune to all the fantasies and lies of a humanity exalted by a permanent search for ideals. The new Cioran sets himself apart from his former mentors, and the first idol to be dethroned, in this process

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<sup>77</sup> Cioran, *Amurgul gândurilor/The Dusk of the Thoughts*, p. 28

of conceptual surgery, is Nietzsche, the dangerous prophet, considered to be a true prince of the exalted, a histrionic master of the delirium. If, in *A Short History of Decay*, the first book he published in French, we can easily find a lot of fragments dominated by the German writer's influence, especially in the areas related to knowledge and truth, little by little, Nietzsche's presence becomes less obvious, the foreground being replaced by a series of themes that will contribute to the construction of Cioran's image of a radical skeptic, a faithful lover of doubt.

### Cioran și filozofia lui Nietzsche (Rezumat)

Articolul nostrum consacrat raportului lui Cioran cu gândirea nietzscheană a pornit de la sublinierea radicalei transformări pe care o suferă imaginea lui Nietzsche o dată cu trecerea de la opera românească la aceea franceză. Dacă pentru tânărul Cioran Nietzsche este cea mai fascinantă figură din istoria filosofiei tocmai fiindcă neagă obișnuitele caracteristici ale filosofului în sens tradițional, tocmai fiindcă propune o gândire vie și contradictorie hrănită dintr-o abisală experiență personală, maturizarea lui Cioran impune o percepție diferită asupra autorului lui *Ecce homo*, socotit un filosof *ad usum delphini*, insuficient de cinic și de lucid pentru a înțelege cu destulă detașare sceptică minabila ecuație a condiției umane.

Această transformare e vizibilă și la nivelul gândirii cioraniene : dacă, așa cum am arătat, punctele nodale ale viziunii despre lume a lui Cioran sînt masiv impregnate de elemente preluate din filosofia nietzscheană, de la ontologia lui incipientă pînă la reflecțiile dezordonate despre morală și religie, opera de limbă franceză marchează o desprindere de modelul nietzschean, propunînd un dizolvant melanj între un scepticism acid și o meditație de sorginte orientală asupra vacuității.

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## Cioran et la philosophie de Nietzsche (Résumé)

Notre article consacré au rapport de Cioran avec la pensée nietzschéenne a eu comme point de départ le soulignement de la radicale transformation que l'image de Nietzsche subit une fois avec le passage de l'œuvre roumaine à l'œuvre française. Si, pour le jeune Cioran, Nietzsche est la plus fascinante figure de l'histoire de la philosophie justement parce qu'il a le courage de nier les habituelles caractéristiques du philosophe traditionnel, justement parce qu'il propose une réflexion vive et contradictoire nourrie par une abyssale expérience personnelle de la proximité avec la folie, la maturation de Cioran impose une grille de lecture différente sur l'auteur de *Ecce homo*, considéré comme étant un philosophe *ad usum delphini*, insuffisamment cynique et lucide pour comprendre avec assez d'objectivité la minable équation de la condition humaine.

La transformation de l'attitude de Cioran par rapport à Nietzsche est visible aussi au niveau de sa pensée. Si les points nodaux de son vision de jeunesse sur le monde sont fortement imprégnés d'éléments empruntés à la philosophie nietzschéenne, l'œuvre de langue française marque un détachement de ce modèle, en proposant un dissolvant mélange entre un scepticisme acide et une méditation d'origine orientale sur la vacuité.

**Key-words:** Cioran, Nietzsche, nihilism, vitalism, influence