

CIORAN AND SCHOPENHAUER

Ciprian VĂLCAN

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(Résumé)

Nous avons essayé de démontrer que Cioran fait preuve dans ses volumes roumains d'une bonne connaissance de certains motifs-clé du système présent dans *Le monde comme volonté et comme représentation*, pourtant il ne s'approprie pas ces thèmes, ne les intègre pas à sa réflexion, mais les critique en permanence au nom de son attachement pour la philosophie nietzschéenne. Le pessimisme, l'amour comme ruse du génie de l'espèce, le prêchement de l'ascèse, la clamation du besoin de dépasser les limites étroites du moi, l'accent mis sur l'importance de la pitié dans un comportement moral, tout cela représente des solutions inacceptables de la perspective du jeune turbulent et assoiffé de vécu autant paradoxaux que possible qui est Cioran. Pour lui, Schopenhauer est un partenaire de dialogue, mais non pas un maître, un adversaire redoutable, mais non pas une source d'inspiration. Une fois avec son œuvre de langue française, nombre de réflexions schopenhaueriennes de *Parerga et paralipomena* semblent devenir intéressantes pour Cioran et leurs échos sont perceptibles dans ses livres jusqu'à la fin de sa vie, sans avoir pourtant une importance particulière pour l'économie de sa pensée, bien qu'elles nourrissent quelques-uns des plus savoureux aphorismes et imprécations dirigés contre les philosophes académiques, les glosateurs ou les amateurs du jargon qui simule la présence de la réflexion, ainsi qu'une série de fragments consacrés au style et au processus sinueux de l'écriture.

Mots-clé: Cioran, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, pessimisme, ascèse, style, économie, l'amour, pitié

Besides the numerous statements approximately related to Cioran's relationship with Schopenhauer, Marta Petreu's extremely solid thesis asserts that Schopenhauer's metaphysics together with Spengler's philosophy of history and culture would make the two essential sources for understanding Cioran's thought from the beginning to the end, without his transition to

the French cultural space to mark any caesura in this regard: "In Cioran's work, Schopenhauer's philosophy of the irrational, blind, unconscious will was completed by the romantic philosophy of the instinctive development of the historical organisms – the great cultures – from Spengler's philosophy of history and culture. In their organic complementarities, the two visions of the late German Romanism provided Cioran the frame, the premises and the etalon through which he saw the world, the human being and the history. They convinced him to stake, as a history creating factor, on everything belonging to the unconscious, irrational, instinctive and telluric realm." Furthermore, Marta Petreu thinks that this influence can be identified extremely punctually in two of Cioran's youth volumes - *On the Heights of Despair* and *The Book of Delusions*, stating they would have a Schopenhauerian metaphysical fundament. Evidently, such an undertaking is rather risky and it seems unlikely to get the unanimity of the exegetes of the Cioranian work. Even if Marta Petreu's general thesis has not been directly discussed yet, Livius Ciocârlie has a different opinion regarding the volume *On the Heights of Despair*, appreciating that in his first book Cioran is Nietzschean.

Leaving aside for a moment Cioran's relationship with Spengler's philosophy, we come back to the fact that we have previously demonstrated that Cioran's youth works are impregnated by the Nietzschean elements which do not represent just a touch of color, stylistic marks, or surface elements, yet being essential for understanding the fundamental axes of Cioranian vision. The contact with the texts has not allowed the identification of Schopenhauerian elements significant enough to basically act as potential competitors to the discovered Nietzschean motives. In addition, while we have tried to describe in details, thoroughly presenting the way in which some Nietzschean themes operate in the Cioranian work, Marta Petreu confines at naming the central concept of the Schopenhauerian system – the irrational will – and considers that, starting from identifying its importance for Cioran, a conclusion regarding the significance of Schopenhauer's philosophy for the Romanian thinker can be drawn firmly enough. Yet the will is a concept with a large circulation in the space of the German Romanticism and of the European philosophy, hence proving its presence at Cioran without demonstrating the

appropriation of other Schopenhauerian related themes, is not sufficient. That is why, in order to make this aspect clear, we shall proceed to a minute inventorying of Schopenhauerian themes present in Cioran's texts, aiming to determine to what extent they meet his approval, being integrated as essential parts, as fundamental acquisitions for the mechanism of his thinking, or being used as a necessary stimulant, as a training partner – criticized or rejected. We hope that at the end of our investigation we shall be able to convincingly demonstrate that whether there are detectable Schopenhauerian influences in Cioran's works, as well as how important they were for the construction of the meditation of the philosopher from Rășinari, thus contributing, among the others, to the acceptance or the rejection of Petreu's thesis.

1. One of the reasons why Schopenhauer's philosophy had a great influence at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of 20th century is its ruthless pessimism, the desolating image it creates on the existence. After the period of optimism and trust in the capacity of the reason to improve the human living conditions, after decades of unflinching adhesion to the idea of an infinite progress, an epoch of terrible doubt concerning the fate of humanity follows. In the new context, the pessimism becomes a real fashion, and its beacon-philosopher, Schopenhauer, is famous everywhere. A thinker who adopts the fundamentals of the vision of life from the Schopenhauerian metaphysics must declare himself a pessimist, therefore, if Cioran is so much behold to the German philosopher with his entire work, we should discover the formulas of his pessimism. Yet, at least in his early work, as previously emphasized, Cioran does not hesitate to criticize the pessimism over existence considering it a matter of cowardice, a kind of capitulation in front of the vicissitudes of life, the inability to face the challenges of the human being's tumultuous flux. To him, adopting a pessimistic attitude makes the proof of a deficit in vitality, of the incapacity of proposing any heroic vision, the only one suitable to cross swords with the tragic sense of existence. Neither pessimistic, nor optimistic, Cioran adheres to Nietzsche's grandiose solution of always saying "yes" to life, creatively receiving the fatality of becoming through an energetic *amor fati*, trying to pass over the sterile opposition between optimism and pessimism through an almost unbearable intensification of living. In this

context, the Schopenhauerian pessimism is an obsolete formula, an acceptance of being defeated without fighting, while Cioran firmly delimits himself from it: "Schopenhauer states that if we knocked at the tombstones to give life back to the dead, they would all refuse it. I think that, on the contrary, they would die of joy again.

All the thoughts which keep me apart from life drive me crazy. The eternity? To be buried alive...

The more I read the pessimistic thinkers, the more I love life. After reading, I regret I am not a fiancé".

In our opinion, the pessimism becomes an essential note of the Cioranian thought just after having abandoned the frenetic Nietzscheanism of the youth, starting with publishing his French work, also as a result of the failure of his generation's projects to profoundly modify the Romanian realities. Yet, it seems difficult to determine if the roots of this new image of the world are nourished by the Schopenhauerian philosophy or if they are rather the outcome of the numerous oriental, especially Buddhist texts he had read. The transformation is radical as instead of the boundless activism and tragic grandeur, Cioran starts pleading for detachment, for the ironic contemplation of the creation and destruction of the things, for surpassing the veil of appearances in the attempt to have access to the saving neut behind all the existences.

2. Young Cioran also discusses many times another famous motif of the Schopenhauerian system is that of love as a sly trick used by the genius of the species to ensure life perpetuation. For Schopenhauer this ruthless perspective is a sign of lucidity by which he succeeded to decrypt all essential mechanisms of the will-to-live, applying his discoveries in the area of love, less studied by the philosophers. The most complex presentation of this theory is made in the *Metaphysics of Love*, one of the addenda to the 4th book of *The World as Will and Representation*, of which we quote for exemplification: "The general sexual instinct, as it appears in each individual's conscience, without seeking out for another determined individual of the other sex, is, in itself and aside from any external manifestation, nothing else but the will-to-live. But when it appears in front of the conscience with an individual determined as an object, this

sexual instinct is in itself the will-to-live as a clearly determined individual. In this case, the sexual instinct, although it is actually pure subjective need, knows very well to put on the mask of an objective admiration and thus to mislead the conscience: because nature needs this strategy to hit its aims. Yet, no matter how objective and well hidden under sublime colors this admiration might appear, still this amorous passion aims nothing else than the procreation of a determined individual; and the main proof of this fact is that essential is not the reciprocity of love, but the possession, meaning the lust.”

The reasons why Cioran invokes against this theory are of two types. The first starts from denying Schopenhauer's rightness in demanding that the illusions should be speared for the sake of a more profound truth, in the name of getting to the essence. Profoundly Nietzschean, Cioran cannot do else but requiring the cultivation and multiplication of the illusions, denying the existence of an authentic substratum, denying the possibility of parting the world in phenomena and essences. To him, even if we accepted the premises of Schopenhauer's theory of love, even if we have adhered to the idea that love is just illusion, this fact would not diminish its value and it would not reduce its intensity, because the individuals who are captivated by the mystery of such a fiction would not be able to feel at all the disappointment of the lucid and cynic demystification, remaining forever happy, prisoners of their own illusion: "If you say that in John's love for Mary there is nothing else but the gender of race that creates individual illusions and uses the beings as instruments, does it mean you degrade somehow the interior, psychological absolute? John and Mary's illusion? Yet there is nothing above it. This is everything. Schopenhauer is right to claim that life is a dream. Still he falls into a serious inconsistency when, instead of encouraging the illusions, he discloses them, making us understand that there could be something besides them. Everything is deception, a sweet and bitter one. It is obvious that reality or truth *could not* be."

The second reason starts from the extraordinary intensity of the erotic feeling. Cioran thinks that such a force, able to furnish even temporary the being's void, cannot be reduced to the role of a simple auxiliary, of a subordinated force, moreover, it cannot serve a trans-subjective cause, using

the ego as a simple puppet, especially because of the heartrending sufferance it induces to it: "The deeper meaning of love is not intelligible neither through the <gender of the species> nor through surpassing the individuation. Who may think that it could get such stormy intensities, of an inhuman gravity, if we would be simple instruments in a process in which we personally lose? And who can admit that we would engage ourselves in such a huge sufferance just to be victims? The sexes are capable neither of such abdication, nor of such deception."

3. Schopenhauer's attempt to dam up the torrent of the irrational will resembles a crusade against the instinctual human being, considered the most obvious manifestation of a blind impulse, of the fatale animalism inherent to its profound nature. The liberation from the sufferance circle of the world can be achieved just by surpassing the will-to-live thanks to a detachment in relation with the individuation principle, thanks to the surpassing of the egotism and subjectivity. The main paths through which it is possible to escape the grip of the will are the aesthetic contemplation and the asceticism. The first involves the individual's capacity of attaining a perfect objectivity, of entirely identifying himself with the object he contemplates, therefore, achieving a state in which all the laws governing the world of phenomena are suspended: "the one sunk in this contemplation is no more an individual (as the individual has disappeared in this very contemplation), it is the subject which understands purely, set free from the will, the pain, the time." It is more the path followed by a genius as he is inclined, due to his exceeding cognitive power to get free of the will and to become a perfectly exact mirror of the world's being".

The second way of defeating the constraints of the will is the asceticism. It results as disgust against the sufferance of the existence, as a wild opposition against the will-to-live, manifested through all the phenomena in the world. The one practicing it, the wise man or the saint, ceases to want, trying to become indifferent to everything around, assuming chastity, the volunteer poverty, the mortification of the body by serenely accepting the sufferance and by practicing a much more severe fast, ending by death through inanition. the supreme step of the liberation from the will-to-live and the only suicide

manner able to lead to the denial of the essence of the will.

Young Cioran, always exalting the superabundance of life, the frenetic demonic sense of becoming, the excess, the orgiastic, is a dreadful opponent of any concepts that aim to diminish life experience, to strangle the instincts, to spiritualize the existence. Believing just in the intensification of the sensations, in the need to feel more and more acutely the whole range of affects caused by the plunge in the liberating world of appearances, he criticizes in numerous fragments the error made by those who try to divide the reality in two completely separated spheres – the one of the truth, the certainty, the essential, and the one of the illusion, the vague, the futile. Attached to his Nietzschean vision of the dynamic of the universe, he can do nothing but rejecting any trial to plead for objectivity in knowledge, for surpassing the subjectivity. Being objective means to be impersonal, unperturbed, and unable to catch the real rhythms of life. It means to pretend that you can subject the chaos to the becoming: “Not seeing in things more than they have. Seeing what they are. Not to be you in them. *Objectivity* is the name of this curse – which is the curse of knowledge [...]. You cannot live as a clear-sighted person, you cannot take anyone’s *share*, and you cannot take part to anything. Being partial – meaning creating *false absolutes* – the sap of becoming is reborn in our veins. Being with the world’s circumstances is a subjectivity act, a hostility one towards knowledge. The objectivity kills the life and the spirit’s <life>.”

The proliferation of asceticism, of the abandonment, and of the disowning of the flesh and blood human being’s wrap appears to Cioran as the suffering people’s revenge, as a weapon used by the lamenting followers of religions in order to discredit life. He suspects all those who supports such doctrines of strong resentments comparing to those able to abandon themselves to the experiences, following their instincts: “All those who renounced and dedicated themselves to the asceticism practice, living in the desert, did this with the conviction that they had essentially surpassed the human relativities. The access to the feeling of a subjective eternity gave them the illusion of a total liberation. Yet, their incapacity of effective liberation is proved by their condemnation of the pleasure and by their scorn for the people who live just for living.”

4. Schopenhauer tries to demonstrate that through his system our perception upon the world as consisting of a plurality of individuals is nothing else but the effect of the Maya's veil which hides from us the only truth that can be accepted. The one that only the will exists, while everything else is representation, creation of an intellect organized according to the laws of space and time and prepared to manage just the phenomenal world and unable to reach the thing in itself. The sufferance and fright in front of death are reserved just to those who cannot surpass this general level of a vision according to which everything is the expression of will, of the eternal and indivisible will, a will untouched by transition and transformation, while death is nothing else but an accident that does not affect at all the rhythms of the nature, leaving the essence untouched: "Undoubtedly, the individual, under our eyes, is born and he transits, yet he exists just apparently; if he exists, it happens just in the eyes of this intellect that has as a guide only the principle of the sufficient reason, that *principium individuationis*; in this case, yes, he receives life as a pure gift that makes him leaving the nothingness; to him death means losing this gift, a return to the nothingness [...] Birth, death, these words have no meaning but in their relation with the visible appearance dressed up in the will, in their relation with life; the essence of the will is to produce individuals who, as transitory phenomena, are subjected to the law of time, are born and die; but even so they are the phenomena of what, in itself, ignores the time, yet having no other means to give an objective existence to its intimate essence."

To Schopenhauer, the liberation from sufferance, the breach in the circle of phenomena go beyond the self, the pure individual perspective upon the universe, the egotism of any kind. The only way to have access to the dislocation of the impenetrable monad that is the individual is the intuition of the common essence of all the creatures and things, the revelation of the will from behind the numberless forms created by the capacity of representing life. This is also the path followed by the moral human beings who come to do the right thing not for abstract reasons, for pure rational reasons, but because they have the intuition of their identification with the other. They understand that there is no real difference between the victim and the executioner, between the one in sufferance and the one who cause this sufferance, as all are accidents

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of the same impenetrable essence, transitory forms of the will: "the will being what exists in itself in each phenomenon, the sufferance, both the caused and the born one, the meanness and the evil are bound together in the one and the same being; in vain do they seem, in the phenomenon they both manifest themselves, to belong to distinct individuals, even separated by large time intervals. The one who knows can see that the distinction between the one who does harm and the one who suffers it, is simple appearance, that it does not attain at all the thing in itself, that the will is manifest in both of them at the same time."".

Nothing can be more foreign to the young Cioran than the idea that the individuality is the evil that must be surpassed, that the ego is an error we should break away from. Although he was really preoccupied by the problem of individuation, undoubtedly discussed starting from Schopenhauer's texts, the solution he sees is totally different form the one of the German philosopher. The numberless fragments from *The Book of Delusions*, *The Passionate Handbook*, and *The Dusk of the Thoughts* dedicated to this issue consider the phenomenon of individuation an expression of the grandeur of the man's destiny, a reality that should be protected and exalted precisely for the fragility and tragic sense it involves. Cioran thinks that life without the special contour of the individual, without the ephemeral splendor of the ego is just an amorphous construction, an ocean of commonplaces where there is no room for sufferance, for the tragic pain, for the sublime demon of lucidity: "The creatures' separation from the initial chaos determined the individuation phenomenon, a true attempt of life at striving after lucidity. The individual formations came into being as a shout for conscience and the creatures triumphed in their effort to separate themselves from the confusion of the wholeness. As long as the man remained a simple *being*, the individuation *did not exceed the frames of life*, as he was backed by the *wholeness* and he was the wholeness. Yet his zeal for, getting him out of the centre of the nature, gave him the illusion of a possible infinite within individual boarders. Therefore, man started losing his limit and the individuation became his punishment. His painful greatness consists of this. Because without the adventurous course of individuation he would be nothing."".

To Cioran, the individuation is not a temporary detention, an illusion destined to introduce us into the infernal spiral of pain, but the very unique possibility to get away of the trap of the non-difference, of the obscure being's ripple, reaching the clarity of the conscience and ascending in the hierarchy of the existent, inducing a particular tint in the catalogue of the human being by inventing the ego. The plurality is not a regress; it is not renouncing the initial perfection of the completeness, but the only way of opposing the tyranny of the One, of ending the anarchic bestiality of the circularity. The ego is not an illusion; it is the only real important reality, the only formation that gives value to the world: "The individuation reveals the birth as isolation and the death as return. The one who does not cultivate this isolation does not love life, and also the one who is not afraid of the return. Almost no one loves the return which proves nothing else but the fact that this is the way to the world where we have no *name*. The individuation gave life a name. We all have a name; the world preceding the individuation is the life with no name, the life with no *figure*. Only the individuation gave life its *figure*. That is why the collapse of the individuation into death is disfigurement. The man does not love his face which is an accident, but the figure, which is a metaphysic sign. The tremble of the individuation is an antecedent of the disfiguration, is the inkling of the loss of our world."

Valuing the ego and the nobility of his ephemeral destiny, refusing to celebrate the opacity of the principle, equal to itself, the lack of sufferance in the original core of the being, its lazy beatitude lacking any dramatic sense, the platitude of its essential void, Cioran vehemently rejects the solutions that encourage the surpassing of the individuality, its sacrifice in the name of liberty. To him, there is no coherent reason to allow the immolation of the ego, of our subjectivity caught by the frenetic experiment of all the conditions imposed by a "here" and "now", just for the sake of a problematic salvation, of a exhausting reintegration of the principle. The essential error of those positions demanding the abandon of the individuality, the dissolution into a supra-personal absolute or the understanding of the fictional nature of the ego is that which imagines a solution placed on another level, asking the man for gigantic efforts for a destiny that does not regard him any longer,

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going beyond his understanding and fantasizing capacity. The individual is interested just in his own destiny and it is incomprehensible for him to be asked to surpass his egolatry, to step over the boundaries of his nature, pleased with a solution which should satisfy him, paradoxically, just because it leads to his suppression: "The human being has not invented a more precious error and a more substantial illusion than the *ego*. You breathe, imagining you are *unique*; your heart is beating, because it is *you* [...]. I wanted the salvation. And all my belief asked for my disowning of myself. Staring with *The Veda*, through Buddha and Christ, I discovered nothing else but the enemies of my *necessity*. They offered me the salvation in my absence; everyone asked me to give up myself. To be them, or their God, to be *anonymous* in nothing – while my pride wanted my *name* even in the nothingness also."

Cioran's work reflects this tendency of exalting the individuation principle until *A Short History of Decay*, which contains a fragment entitled "The unconscious dogma" meant to describe the each individual's huge passion for himself, for his own ego: "How could you escape the absolute you are? You should imagine a being with no instincts, with no name, to whom its own image is unknown [...] Too present for ourselves, our existence before we were born and after we die cannot influence us in other way but as an idea and just for few seconds; we feel the fever of our duration as an eternity dried out of thirst, still not drained in its principle". After this moment, a radical inversion occurs and the fragments proceeding to a ruthless criticism of the ego become more numerous, getting close to Schopenhauer's vision, even if this change is sustained at the level of the texts by references to oriental motifs, especially of Buddhist origin. Cioran, who returns to a vision which could be considered metaphysic, after he seemed to have stepped over it due to his early fervent Nietzschean attitude, recuperates a series of traditional terminological oppositions and pleads – exactly at the antipode of the Romanian works – for piercing through the veil of appearances, for reaching the contemplation of the nothingness, becoming an adversary of the ego's illusion, of the fanaticism of the individuality.

5. Schopenhauer, a convinced admirer of Kant, an enthusiastic partisan of the revolution that he had initiated in philosophy, manifestly disagrees

with him in just one point – the way morality should be understood. If for Kant the main pillars of morality are the concept of duty and the categorical imperative, two abstract formulas, contradicting the impulses and demanding the ascension to a certain reflexivity degree, estranging the man from his natural inclinations, Schopenhauer believes that morality cannot accept abstract motivations as its fundamentals, cannot be described discursively, as it is always based on intuitive knowledge. The one who does the right thing is not determined by a rational choice, by motivations that can be sketched up into a too a pure conceptual plan, but by the intuition of the fact that the individuation principle has no absolute reality, that by surpassing it one can reach the single correct image of the essence of the universe, according to which everything is the manifestation of the will-to-live; the intuition of the fact that there is nothing else but the identity, while the plurality and difference are fictions valid for the phenomenal world. The individual who ascends to such knowledge cannot see the others as strangers, as simple phantoms whose fate is indifferent to him: “the sufferance he sees in the others’ life touches him almost as his own sufferance; that is why he tries to regain his equilibrium and, for this, he rejects the pleasure, he constraints himself to privations in order to ease the other person’s pain. He knows well that the difference between himself and the others – this abyss, as the evil man sees it – is just a temporary illusion, in the category of the phenomenon. He knows immediately and without considering too much that the reality, hidden behind the phenomenon that he is, is the same inside himself as in the other.”

Building up his vision of morality this way, Schopenhauer gets to the conclusion that the good done to the others results from the awareness of the suffering they experience, it is an attempt to soften their pain, thus having its roots in mercy, the only form of pure love, lacking selfishness. A man of no compassion is someone not able to surpass his ego barriers, unable to transcend his individuality, thus remaining far away from the vision of the common essence of all the beings, unable to do the good thing because of the principles of the phenomenal world that keep him captive.

Similarly to Nietzsche, as we have previously shown, Cioran considers the mercy a form of diminished vitality, a trick used by the helpless and

plebeian ones, a disgraceful attempt to control the instincts, to temper the ego's enthusiasm, a kind of bad-taste: "In the mercy outbursts there is a secret attraction to the "bad manners", to filthiness and degradation. Any monstrosity is perfection comparing to the lack of <good taste> characterizing the sympathy, this *evil* having the *real* appearance of the gentleness."

Cioran mainly reproaches such a feeling for the obliteration of all the differences, the blurring of the distances, the impression that the identification prevails in relation with the other aspects. The young philosopher's vanity finds nothing stimulating in such a vision build just on the stress on the similitude, on the pressure on the common essence of mankind whereas he actually militates for singularization, for the personal effort, for the triumph of distinction: "To lose my sufferance in the others? To discover fellow creatures again and again! To be happy while gardening their stupidity, while cultivating their wickedness – and killing my enthusiasm into disdain?"

The ego is a piece of art nurtured by that pain religion aims to ease. Yet the man's noblesse is just one: aesthete of his own individuality. By torment to settle down the beauty of his limitation and by burning to create its substance".

As we have tried to highlight, a series of the essential themes of Schopenhauer's philosophy are present in Cioran's early work, yet an attentive study of the text has led us to the conclusion that they are not assimilated by Cioran, they do not become integrated parts of his thoughts or of the materials used to develop his personal meditation; however they are always invoked in order to be criticized, being rather used for marking his delimitation from a metaphysic very popular in the Romanian cultural space; he wanted more to underline his distance from an influent and trendy philosopher in a period dominated by an acute sense of decadency and of the end. The central motifs of the Schopenhauerian system are not taken by Cioran, they cannot be found as basic elements of his vision upon the great problems of the existence. The explanation we may find is that, aside from his enthusiasm regarding the Nietzschean thought, which catches mainly his speculative interest, there is an incompatibility between his tumultuous, turbulent and provocative temperament and the desolated, passive lucidity from the pages of *The World as Will and Representation*. Young Cioran is an advocate of the

pathos, of the radical transformations, of the measureless activism, an adorer of the experience; to him, the idea of renouncing, of being torn away from the senses, the idea of evacuating the subjectivity was not stimulating at all. His juvenile ardor finds its necessary fuel in the vitalist formulas which he embraces enthusiastically, permanently searching for the heroic dimension, for the apocalyptic spectacle; therefore the Nietzschean thought is his main model.

Once Cioran has entered the French space, once he has adopted the mask of the skeptic on duty, he detaches himself from the Nietzschean paradigm through which he has viewed the world and he refers more often to those thinkers who can support his new vision. Epictet, Marcus Aurelius, Montaigne, Pyrrhon, Chamfort, La Rochefoucauld are coming now to the foreground. A series of classical statements about renouncing and about the domination of the senses meet the most diverse oriental sources, Buddhist especially, on the ego's evanescence and on the futility of the sensitive world. Cioran seems not to aim at a mainly philosophic foundation of his statements, as he used to during his Romanian period, but to search for what is shocking, absurd, anecdotic, this way trying to dislocate the certitudes of the naïve conscience and to ridicule the theories claiming their universality, discussing any justification of systematic approach. In such a context, in which bizarre and screwy characters, even monsters, incurable cynics or abyssal scoundrels are present, sheltered by the comprehensive Cioranian pages as in a horror museum, Schopenhauer, as a master of insult, as a philosopher displaying the cabman's manners, the choleric author of *Parerga and Paralipomena*, a figure of the excess, fits perfectly.

Evidently, it is not a fundamental reference, a key of the new Cioranian universe; such a key does not exist, because the idea of a central nucleus is refused in the name of a sophistic voluptuousness, for the sake of the virtuosity of the reflexive juggler assisting the twilight of the civilization. It is more the acceptance of the commerce with a character that will govern one of the multiple independent principalities coexistent in his French work. While Cioran's Romanian work can be compared to a powerful, centralized empire

in which the local seniors' striking gestures, egolatric postures, brave acts and nonconformist appearances put at no risk the survival of the throne, the supremacy of the capital, his French volumes seem to be closer to the model of the numberless states making up the Sacred Roman-German Empire; each of them subjected to the moods of some operetta despots, wildly defending their privileges and independence, impossible to be subordinated to the idea of unification. Schopenhauer is the master of such a kingdom and his role in the economy of the wholesome is equal to that of lots of other characters, from Rivarol to Valéry, from Joseph de Maistre to Kleist.

If, as we have shown, in his Romanian works, Cioran analysis a series of the essential themes from the Schopenhauerian metaphysics, and some of the key-motifs in the system presented in *The World as Will and Representation*, subjecting them to a type of criticism inspired by Nietzsche, the French work assimilates a series of the German philosopher's meditations mainly regarding the issues about writing, the relation between the writer and the thought, the one between the thought and reading, between the thinker and the teacher, as well as about the creation process in general. Cioran was himself a consummate writer, always preoccupied by the interrogations concerning the way in which the mysterious transcription of the impressions and inner observations can be achieved in such way to make them accessible and perfectly objective. He was consumed by the fatiguing hunting of the idea, by its exhausting and always unsatisfying capturing in writing. Schopenhauer's meditations seemed to offer him more than a starting point for his numerous questions regarding this topic.

Schopenhauer, always preoccupied to emphasize the importance of an original, perfectly articulated thought able to develop with the necessary rigor an original intuition, an idea present in each of the rather abundant stages of his demonstration, which confirms its validity, is the enemy of the pure erudition, of the mainly professorial science, of the unfruitful accumulation of impersonal knowledge, of any interior finality. The vehemence of his attack against the mere information collectors, against the placid archivist of the most extraordinary creations of the human being's spirit enters a very strong axis of the German culture, leading via Lichtenberg to Nietzsche. All these

bright minds deplore a habit they consider typical of the German space – that of a disproportionate appreciation of the one able to take advantage of the admiration deserved by the magistrate, transferring to his person the entire prestige of the cultural themes he passively spreads around, with no minimum personal contribution. They try to turn attention to the fact that the thinker should be honored and not the compiler, the genius and not the archivist, the fervency of the intelligence and not the hypertrophy of the memory.

Even though he keeps on warning about the risks of reading as purpose in itself, some individuals' only activity, Schopenhauer does not confine himself to criticizing this practice, but he tries to describe the way human being's mind reacts when reading. If the thought is an organic process, a harmonious development of ideas that naturally tend to build up a system integrating all the fruits of personal meditation, viewed as an eminently active phenomenon, having its impulse and reason to exist in itself, needing no exterior stimulation, reading is at its antipode. Reading is the passive imitation of the thinking, an almost inertial developing of the functions of the intellect mobilizing none of the spirit's creative forces. Schopenhauer thinks that it is a prejudice to exaggeratedly encourage reading, pretending that it contributes to the development of the thought, such conviction being – in his opinion – absolutely false if we analyze the specificity of the two phenomena: "When we read, another person thinks for us; we just repeat his mental process. Likewise, the child who learns to write follows the contours drawn by his teacher. In conclusion, when we read, we get, to a large extent, free from the effort of thinking, and hence, our visible relief when, after being caught by our own thoughts, we start reading. Yet, while reading, our mind is actually just the surrounding field for foreign thoughts. That is why the one who reads a lot and almost all day long [...] happens to lose at a moment his ability of thinking by himself, like someone who always riding the horse forget to walk. And this is the case of many well-read people: The read until they have grown stupid." Instead of contributing to the development of the thought, reading harms it, hindering its own flow and loading it with alien notions that do nothing else but confusing its specific rhythm, slowing down its metabolism. Reading does not lead to accelerating the meditation, to its enrichment or

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subtlety. It induces extremely harmful paralyzes, a fatal blockage against the genesis of any original thought. Reading is getting satisfied with a subordinated, passive role – the one of a mere consumer of some ideas owed to other minds. It is to accept a humiliating voluntary servitude, and this happens because there are extremely few minds able to master the read material and to use it constructively while most of the intellects record the information out of inertia, unable to manage and manipulate it according to their particular needs, being completely disorganized by an afflux out of control.

The only situation in which reading is accepted is the one when the individual acquainted to a solid thinking practice notices that he faces difficulties in keeping on the development of his ideas and that he needs a stimulus from outside to restart the machine of his intellect. In this particular case, reading is welcome, being helpful food for a trained mind, just provisory in difficulty and ready to abandon this succedaneum immediately he succeeds in regaining the flow of his meditation: “You do not have to read unless the stream of your personal thoughts has dried out, thing that happens even to the most brilliant minds. But to cast out your original thoughts just to take a book in your hands is a sin against the holy spirit.”

As a consumed reader, who, as his notes from *Notebooks* highlight, obstinately would attend a lot of libraries, from those in Sibiu and Bucharest to the library of Sorbonne and of the Catholic Institute in Paris, Cioran considers this passion a true vice, an ill-fated inclination which has suffocated his creativity, forcing him to follow almost maniacally the others' obsessions, changing him into a lazy and abulic person. For this reason, he launches a corrosive criticism against reading, not using for the antithesis the thought – as Schopenhauer did – but the writing. His diagnosis is identical to the German philosopher's one: reading is harmful because, using the pretext of an intellectual activity, it hinders the orientation towards something really creative, blocking the exercising of precious energies. In takes little attention to read, while for writing one has to mobilize all his spirit's capacity; the extremely complicated thinking process has to be set in. Writing is a valuable exercise, while reading has no benefic effect, thus, paradoxically: “You get closer to creativity when writing a postcard than when reading *The Phenomenology*

of Spirit“.

In addition, the reading excess assimilated to an honorable intellectual effort produced a change in the very field of writing, permitting the appearance of some authors whose works are exclusively nurtured by commenting the others' thoughts, by processing themes that do not belong to them or topics owed to the creativity of other spirits, permanently exploited. Cioran notices that such a transformation means replacing the liberty and the unpredictability of the inspiration by the hegemony of toil, of the devoted work with a controllable and predictable outcome. Those unable to think by themselves withdraw in the position of the commentator without being forced to participate to the fabulous fight with the idea, without having to experience the anguish of the one always waiting for the creative thought. They have no frights, they are not tormented by endless interrogations on their fecundity or sterility, they do not experience the tension of the writing act; as long there are books to be read as a source of their own work, no danger may happen to them, while the proliferation of the glosses or compilations under their signature is assured. To Cioran it is obvious that "you cannot *think* more than two or three minutes a day", whereas reading asks for no special conditions, fact confirmed by a Schopenhauerian observation according to which: "You can always start reading, but not also thinking."

This judgment allows us to get to an largely present theme both at Schopenhauer, and Cioran – the one of the relation between the writer and the idea, of the very complex process at the end of which the vague, fragmentary thought, with its eternally changing curves is fixated in writing, being uprooted from the sphere of the undermined and taking shape. Both are convinced that to create is not a matter of will, is not a pure rational attempt in which one can operate just with perfectly controllable intellectual constants, manipulated no matter the circumstances. From their perspective it seems evident that the human mind is moody and that it needs a series of factors impossible to be anticipated in order to bring to life original and powerful creations. There are no rules; there is no hygiene of the creation, as the classics thought, but everything is dominated – from this point of view – by absolute chaos, by the conjunction of some unpredictable factors permitting the genesis

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of the idea. The subject is not all-powerful, it has not always at hand the whole complex of his endowment, being dependent to a large extent on the anarchic forces latent in him, yet extremely difficult to become manifest.

Schopenhauer starts from the observation that writing is not thinking and he proposes a classification of the writers in three categories: those who write without thinking, those who think while writing and those who write only after they have clearly outlined their ideas. The first ones write from memory or plagiarize the others' books; those in the second category are obsessed with the desire of writing and they think exclusively for this purpose, either for fame, or for money, while the last ones meditate seriously for the pleasure of thinking having no specific purpose. Still even among these there are to types of spirits: those meditating on the things, on the reality, and the ones thinking over the books, over what other people have already said. The latter needs an exterior impulse to develop their judgments which hinder their originality, always remaining under the influence of the inspiring thoughts. On the other hand, the first spirits, independent of any constraints, always meditate directly on the reality, this way creating everlasting works..

The personal thinker has the most difficult mission, because he cannot rely on the flux of a never-ending inspiration. He experiences difficulties, blockage moments, uncertainties regarding the way his meditation will take, because, as Schopenhauer noted: "thoughts are like people: it is not always possible to call them whenever you want; you have to wait for them to come. The meditation on a topic must emerge of its own accord, through a happy and harmonic meeting of the exterior occasion with the interior disposition and the inner incitement [...] not even the brightest mind is able to think at any hour" However, after overcoming this difficulty, his excellence becomes manifest in the accurate way he manages to express his ideas, in his vivid and lapidary style, always dominated by a perfect clarity which excludes the confusions or the obscurity present in the writings of those unable to think by themselves and who do not succeed in completely understanding what they would like to transmit, just because they have incompletely assimilated the others' ideas.

Such a thinker expresses himself naturally, using all the possibilities

given by the common language, without resorting to endless and intricate sentences in order to artificially seem to be profound. Schopenhauer's attack aims at Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, considered intellectual impostors who contributed to a dangerous fashion, determining the proliferation of the insufferable jargon of the philosophic works that fakes people's image of the thinking process, making them consider it a mysterious operation, accessible just to those who are initiated and armed with some artificial words. Schopenhauer's recommendation is simple: "The German writers could benefit by understanding that, on the contrary, if it is necessary, you must as far as possible speak the same language as everyone in order to think as a great spirit: use common words to say common things. Yet, they turned the wrong way up. We can see them forcing themselves to wrap up trivial ideas in great words and to give their ordinary ideas the most extraordinary expressions, the most elaborated, precious and rare sentences. Such sentences always walk on stilts."

Another target of the Schopenhauerian criticism is the teacher, viewed as a mere mercenary, interested just in obtaining a sure income and in prestige, still not at all in searching for the truth. Weak, pliant, always caught in alliances and in miserable backstage arrangements in order to eliminate remarkable people and to support mediocrity, cultivating only borrowed thoughts and displaying the skeptical sufficiency of the one unable to believe in the existential stake of a profound meditation, he is a veritable guardian of the advanced stupidity, being the most deceitful adversary of the original thinker. He always tries to marginalize the thinker, using his academic position, discrediting him exactly for his firmness in acquiring knowledge, even invoking his passion in unraveling the true image of existence, while regarding this passion as hilarious.

The teacher is by his nature at the antipode of the thinker, valuing the erudition and not the originality, the quantity of the intellectual products and not their quality, the group spirit and not the independence of the personal approach, voluntarily limiting his perspective by specialization, by a petty study of a narrow domain and refusing the vast vision, the panoramic view, always acting according to some concrete purposes and never unselfish, in order to

satisfy his pleasure to think for himself. It is what makes Schopenhauer state in his trenchant way: "In short, gorging oneself in the stable of the teacher profession is something very convenient to the ruminants. Those who, on the contrary, are fed by Mother Nature enjoy better the open air."

Cioran seems to adhere to a lot of Schopenhauer's observations, however operating some tonality or note modifications. To him, the most obsessive is the interrogation concerning the way in which an idea can be written down, or a text can be created. Extremely parsimonious with the verb, permanently tormented by a terrible sterility feeling, building up his books largely from the essays written and published previously at Jean Paulhan's request for *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (as Simone Boué declares), he cannot pass over a certain paradoxical image of the reasons that unleash the creative act, which tends to inhibit the possible writer's fervor. Thus, on the one hand, there is the feeling of an absolute gratuity, of the arbitrary event, of the unacceptable hazard given by the fact that the author cannot rationally control his relation with writing, he cannot willingly choose the neither the moments when to write, nor his topics, being subordinated to a multitude of irrational factors that blurs any potential predictability; the writer feels he is the puppet of some anarchic forces that are amused by the sense of insecurity they induce to him, by his perpetual anguish waiting for the deadly moment, the moment when he meets the idea. On the other hand, there is the feeling of a fatal pressure of the same act of writing caused by his physiologic conditionings: a writer could not write differently from what he has written because his judgment is the product of his profound nature, of a basal orientation, neglected at a simple rational exploration, and which models his creativity in an abyssal manner. The inspiration is a function of the bowels and of the spleen crisis's, the intersection of a hereditary patrimony with the capricious anatomy of a particular subjectivity. What we write is the accident by excellence, the pure futility, the expression of a caprice impossible to determine, and the fatal injunction of an impulse which proclaims its invincible necessity; it is the order given by an elemental force, impossible to ignore: "I have no merit that I wrote what I wrote. Everything came from *the farthest* zone of my being: I did nothing but to execute an order, a fatal, irresponsible and inevitable itself".

Yet, both perspectives introduce the ego's terrible note of fragility. An ego that proves to be absolutely unable to claim the paternity of its creations, because, firstly, it is not aware of the way they have been generated, of the mystery of their creation, and, secondly, it cannot stake on the repeatability or on the predictability of others similar; thus he is forced to assume an eternal guilty ignorance, implicitly accepting the role of an impostor, of the puppet-prince deprived of all the attributes of his power, used just to chair some jamborees. For this reason, Cioran's vision upon the incontrollable aspects involved in any thinking process culminating with the creative act is more dramatic than Schopenhauer's. The German philosopher referred to the imponderability present in any creative attempt, he admitted the impossibility of controlling everything rationally; still he did not appear to believe that the ego's sovereignty is threatened as it always manages to assert its intention profiting of a favorable set of circumstances and of its irrepressible enthusiasm for knowledge. At Cioran, the process is more complex and nothing guarantees that the ego will not end suffocated by the contrary tendencies threatening it, nothing certifies the necessary success of the effort of forcing the chaos into a shape, of bringing an idea into expression.

Due to these difficulties implied by writing act, and to the mysterious factors combination governing its genesis, any rational, programmatic intervention does nothing else but impoverishing a work, depriving it of its fascinating goldsmith. To meditate excessively over the art in itself, to take the words for realities, to strictly experiment at the level of the language means to get stuck into a secondary universe, to not have access to the versatile pulsations of the world, to privilege the simulacrum instead of the reality. Similar to Schopenhauer, Cioran thinks that the great writers are those who are able to go directly to reality, without stopping over for stylistic or scholarly meditations. As we have shown, the German philosopher is preoccupied especially by the difference between the personal thinker, always oriented towards the thing in itself, willingly to decode through his own intuitions the cipher of the whole universe, and the thinker who is conditioned by different academic influences, nourishing his wisdom by cultivating the great spirits, without being able of any original thought. However, Cioran insists more

on the difference between writers and literates, namely between the authors who reflect on the reality and those who meditate over the language: "The real writer writes about beings, things, events; he does not write about writing; he uses words, but he doesn't waste his time with them, he does not turn them into the object of his meditation. He will be everything but an anatomist of the verb. The dissection of the language is the obsession of those who, having nothing to say, close themselves up in the act of saying."

Another distinction used by Schopenhauer to establish the value of a thinker, found at Cioran also, is the one between those who think for themselves and those who think for the others. The German philosopher lets us understand that thinking for yourself is to be totally altruist, having no impure intention, aiming just at fulfilling an interior impulse towards knowledge, without speculating the effect such an investigation may have on the others and, therefore, without trying any adjustment, any compromise to get applauses or honors. It is the only honest way a veritable philosopher can take because it is the only one leading to the revelation of the truth: "As far as the thoughts are concerned, their value results firstly from the fact that you think for yourself. The thinkers can be divided in to classes: the ones thinking for themselves and those thinking simultaneously for the others, too. The first are the real personal thinkers in a double acceptance of the word: they are properly so called philosophers. Only they take things in earnest. The joy and the happiness of their lives consist in thinking. The others are the sophists. They try to shine and they search for the fulfillment of what they have obtained from the others. This is their earnestness. A man's style and manner rapidly discloses which of the two classes he belongs to. Lichtenberg is an example of the first. Herder belongs to the second one."

Cioran stays close to such a meditation, moving the stress on the fact that the authenticity of the thought conceived just for yourself, the sincerity governing such a genesis favors its natural assimilation by the others, eliminating any rhetoric volute, any artificial note that could make it suspicious, hindering its acceptance: "Never should one write to *make* a book, namely with the idea of speaking to the others. A thought should not address but the one who has conceived it. It is the indispensable condition for the others to assimilate it

beneficially, to really understand it."

Naturally, establishing such a distinction involves the acerbic criticism of those who deviate from the ideal of the intellectual honesty, and it gives the signal of the pathologies interfering in the spirit's world. One of the most dangerous is the incontrollable proliferation of the language, the abandon of the common expression for some artificial creation with a savant note which would have the mission of communicating contents for which the common language is improper or too impure. Cioran does not adhere to the opinion insistently cultivated by some philosophers according to which it is almost impossible to transcend the metaphysics because of the language as it has in its structure a metaphysical vision of reality. He does not believe that the language is the main obstacle in the way of an original thinking, rather considering that the desire to create new concepts contributes to the installation of the opacity and to the alienation from reality.

Cioran seems to remain the supporter of the Schopenhauerian remark according to which a spirit with clear ideas can excellently use the word familiar to everyone, without resorting to an excessive sophistication that would discourage some categories of readers from the start. He thinks that the use of the jargon is a concession made to an all-powerful intellectual snobbism which appreciates only those forms of the spirit wrapped up in unnatural formulas, travestyng trivial expressions and giving them a profound and mysterious goldsmith: "Among all impostures, the worst is the one of the language as it is the most difficult to be noticed by our times troglodytes. It must be said that Heidegger opened the door to it and that a philosopher, if he wants to experience the ostracism, if he wants the <finitude> to live in his philosophy, he has nothing else to do than rejecting the jargon and using the current language of the common-sense. Automatically, room will be made around him."

Moreover, Cioran attacks the use of the jargon for a psychological reason, remarking that those that make use of it fall into a glaring trap getting so fascinated by their own inventions, viewed as signs of their spiritual excellence, manifest superiority proofs, that they become unable of self-criticism, prisoners of their own artifacts: "If I am against the jargon it is

because it gives rise to an enormous sufficiency and the one using it, the one displaying it is a repulsive person. It is the philosophers' case, even of the good ones.

The philosopher, to Cioran a synonymous of a teacher, collects all the intellectuals' habits, being a supporter of the psychic neutrality, of a sterile vocabulary technique, considered a sign of objectivity. He refuses any affective impregnation of the thought, any inflexion of the idea in front of the feeling or imagination. He is a bureaucrat of the intellect, not at all existentially involved in his projects, appropriating a series of sacerdotal gestures, trying to get prestige from the complicated ceremony accompanying its speculation, for this using the apparent esoteric power of his conceptual machinery.

In this respect Schopenhauer and Cioran have the same opinion, the differences being of a terminological matter. Therefore, for Schopenhauer the main opposition is between the philosopher, a personal, authentic and altruist thinker, and the teacher, a collector of borrowed formulas, unable of personal meditation, totally obliged to the ideas he has discovered in the others' books. Cioran establishes an almost perfect synonymy between the teacher and the philosopher, in opposition to the figure of the thinker, of the individual passionately involved in each of his statements, of the one living in perfect concordance with his thought, avoiding the dissimulation, the solemn pose, the imposture.

In Schopenhauer's case, the main criticism launched against the teacher referred, on the hand, to his incapacity of thinking creatively, just by starting from himself, without the stimulus of some exterior ideas, and, on the other hand, his lack of independence, and the double conditioning he assumes by entering a system controlled by the public authorities, which always have ready at hand the necessary means to satisfy both his desire for earning and his need for prestige, implicitly efficient censorship possibilities. Cioran insists more on the intellectual automatism promoted by this type of professional in culture. He is not interested in the motivations contributing to the configuration of the professorial style, but in the consequences of its proliferation.

Therefore, for him, the teacher enters the category of those unable to meditate on realities, of those needing an academic mediation to think,

agglomerating comments and glosses to dissimulate his sterility, to mask his lack of knowledge, and therefore contributing to the installation of an ineluctable decline of the spirit by privileging the surrogate, by celebrating the succedaneum: "We will have never wilted enough the 19th century because it facilitated the proliferation of that type of glossators, of those reading machines, of that malformation of the spirit embodied by the Teacher, symbol of a civilization's decline, of the style's degradation, of the supremacy of the hard work over the caprice. To see everything from the exterior, to systemize the ineffable, to not face anything directly, to catalogue the others' opinion!... Any comment on a piece of work is bad or futile, because anything that is not direct is null."

Another consequence of the professorial thinking style is the trivialization of the spiritual creations, the inducing of the idea that there is no miracle, no inspiration outburst, and no specificity of the genius, of the superior endowment; but everything is reduced to a disciplined trivialization of the information and opinions, to a maniac and fatiguing cataloguing of the most important writings from a certain domain; the persistent labor and the constant attention being the only ingredient of success, sufficient instruments always at the disposal of the subject whose rationality always triumphs against all the possible difficulties. Cioran deprecates the hegemony of such an image about creation that leads to ignoring the difficulties implied by mediation or by the creation of an original thought, therefore leading to unjustified optimism and to the equality between the obstinate effort and the inevitable installation of the desired outcome, and of the savior inspiration, while things are totally different because of our precarious endowment: "No matter how familiarized you may be with the operations of the spirit you cannot *think* more than two or three minutes a day; you can just try, for pleasure or because of a professional obligation, for few hours to brutalize the words in order to squeeze ideas out of them."

The teacher cannot notice the fragmentary nature of our intuitions and ideas, he privileges the continuity, the fluent flow, the system, less preoccupied by the truth of his message, than by the coherence impression he should leave to the audience in front of which he always imagines himself. Therefore he

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proposes a false model of the spirit, violating the real image of the thought, refusing to accept the contradiction, the censorship, the ellipsis.

Cioran și Schopenhauer

(Rezumat)

Am încercat să demonstrăm că Cioran dovedește în volumele sale românești o bună cunoaștere a unora dintre motivele cheie ale sistemului din *Lumea ca voință și reprezentare*, însă nu își însușește aceste teme, nu le integrează reflecției sale, ci le critică permanent în numele atașamentului său față de filosofia nietzscheană. Pesimismul, iubirea ca vicleșug al geniului speciei, propovăduirea ascezei, clamarea nevoii de a depăși limitele strâmte ale eului, accentul pus pe importanța milei într-o comportare morală, toate acestea reprezintă soluții inacceptabile din perspectiva tînărului turbulent și însetat de trăiri cît mai paradoxale care este Cioran. Pentru el, Schopenhauer e un partener de dialog, dar nu un maestru, un adversar redutabil, însă nu o sursă de inspirație. O dată cu opera lui de limbă franceză, o seamă de reflecții schopenhaueriene din *Parerga și paralipomena* par să devină interesante pentru Cioran și ecourile acestora sînt perceptibile în cărțile sale pînă la sfîrșitul vieții, fără ca ele să aibă însă o importanță deosebită pentru economia gîndirii sale, deși ele nutresc unele din cele mai savuroase aforisme și imprecășii îndreptate împotriva filosofilor academici, a glosatorilor sau a iubitorilor jargonului ce simulează prezența gîndirii, precum și o serie de fragmente consacrate stilului și procesului sinuos al scriiturii.