



The statue of Blaga at his birthplace, Lancrăm. Photo: R.T. Allen

Lucian Blaga

Selected philosophical extracts

Edited by

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Angela Botez and R.T. Allen

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Foreword

It has been said of Dostoevsky that he was Russia's greatest metaphysician. With equal propriety it can be said of Lucian Blaga that he was Romania's greatest metaphysician. His philosophical treatises and his poetry have played a prominent role in the constitution of Romania's distinctive cultural life and history. It should be noted, however, that Blaga's metaphysics, in many respects not unlike that of Dostoevsky, was of a personal and mundane- rooted sort. Although systematic in its analysis of metaphysical details, Blaga never aspired to fashion a closed, final, and fully elaborated system. Throughout his career he succumbed neither to the stratospheric planking of abstract categories that defined much of the metaphysics of the ancients nor to the overdetermination of alleged indubitable knowledge claims within the epistemology of the moderns.

The open-texture quality of Blaga's metaphysics and epistemology, always conjoined with an historicist grounding in the changing patterns of development, had profound effects upon the wider cultural complex as an interweaving of multi-disciplinary approaches to the issues that intrigue the human spirit. For an engagement with such multi-disciplinary endeavors Blaga was well suited. As a veritable polymath, versatile not only in his innovative metaphysics, he was also a published poet, a playwright, a novelist, and a frequent producer of essays. In addition, it is important to note that he was also learned in the physics and biology of his day and was thus able to pursue issues dealing with the crosscurrents in philosophy, poetry, literature, and the natural sciences.

In articulating his multi-disciplinary approach to issues across the spectrum of human learning Blaga was able to draw from many philosophical and cultural wells, including those that sprung up within the Western tradition and those that surfaced on Eastern soil during more ancient times. Blaga's knowledge of world philosophy and culture was broad as it was deep, and in drawing both from Western and Eastern wellsprings his thought is today appropriately nuanced to surmount the residual Eurocentrism that continues to inform certain cultural products of the West. Blaga's world-

encompassing contributions move from East to West and from West to East, enriching the philosophical insights of both.

The implications of such a geo-philosophical breadth of discovery and reflection provides a sheet anchor against any sterile territorialisation that restricts the potential of philosophical conversations reaching beyond the barriers of city-states of the ancient world and the nation states of modernity. Its inner dynamic bodes well for the initiation of a cosmopolitanism that augers in the direction of genuine philosophical conversations across the self-isolating voices of ethnic and national enclaves. Differences regarding thought, discourse, and action will undoubtedly remain, but what will become prominent is the struggle and dynamics to communicate with others in spite of and often because of cultural differences, awakening us to the need to strive for a dialectically enriching conversation of world citizenry. Lucian Blaga can help us achieve such an awakening. The world owes an inestimable debt to the various editors, translators, and commentators for their dedication and diligence in having made possible the production and publication of *Lucian Blaga: Selected Philosophical Extracts*.

Calvin O. Schrag

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Life and Philosophy

Even fifty years after his death Lucian Blaga is hardly known in the English-speaking world, save for his poetry. The aim of this volume is to present, for the first time in book form, sufficient translated extracts from his extensive philosophical publications to show the extent, depth, originality and continuing importance of his philosophical thinking

This Introduction consists of five sections: 1. Life and Publications; 2. An Outline of Blaga's Philosophy in its Contexts; 3. Its Impact at Home and Abroad; 4. Blaga in Relation to Contemporary Continental European Philosophy; 5. Blaga and Contemporary Anglophone Philosophy; 6. An Outline of the Selected Extracts. Inevitably there are some overlaps among them.

1. Life and publications

Lucian Blaga is one of the most prominent persons in the history of Romanian culture. A great poet and philosopher, his works had a decisive influence on the Romanian poetry of the 20th century and on the self-definition of the Romanian national consciousness, and represented a major contribution to the foundation of the metaphysics of knowledge, of the philosophy of unconscious categories and of the philosophy of cultural styles.

Lucian Blaga was born in Transylvania, on May 9th 1895. He was the ninth child of the parish priest (Romanian Orthodox Church) of Lancrăm, a village situated near Alba Iulia in Transylvania, at that time part of the Kingdom of Hungary within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He attended high school and the School of Theology in Transylvania. Then he went to Vienna, where he attended the courses of the Faculty of Philosophy, getting his Ph.D. with a thesis on *Kultur und Erkenntnis (Culture and Knowledge)*. At the age of 15, he published his first poems in the literary review *Tribuna* and at the age of 19, he published his first philosophical essay *Notes on*

Intuition in Bergson in *Review Românul* in Arad. In 1919 he published his first volume of poetry, *Poems of Light* and a volume of aphorisms, *Stones for my Temple*. In 1924 his first book of philosophy *The Philosophy of Style* was published. It was the beginning of a prolific career, which produced many volumes of poetry and philosophical works. The latter would finally constitute the four trilogies (*Trilogy of Cognition, Trilogy of Culture, Trilogy of Values, Cosmological Trilogy*), which define his philosophical system, articulated on central categories such as mystery, style and culture. His work also includes plays, a novel, essays, memoirs and aphorisms. Between 1924 and 1939 he was a press attaché, cultural counsellor and minister plenipotentiary in six European capitals. From 1939 to 1947 he was highly appreciated as the Professor of Philosophy of Culture at the University of Cluj, a position created especially for him. Elected a member of the Romanian Academy, Blaga delivered in the presence of King Carol II of Romania one of the most consistent and expressive reception speeches, *Eulogy to the Romanian Village*, a fundamental text for anyone who wants to understand the special character of the Romanian people. The response was given by another philosopher, Ion Petrovici. Blaga was also a brilliant translator of Goethe (*Faust*) and Lessing. The post-war Communist regime removed him from his chair at Cluj and appointed him as the librarian and a researcher at the University of Sibiu, now named after him, and where he had gone with others during the years when Hitler gave northern Transylvania back to Hungary. He was banned from publishing any philosophical work. Nominated for the Nobel Prize 1956 on the proposal of Bazil Munteanu (France) and Rosa del Conte (Italy), he was on the point of getting the award when the Communist government in Bucharest sent emissaries to Sweden to protest against his nomination with false political allegations.

He died in 1961 at Cluj, and was buried back in the churchyard at Lančrãm, where a fine statue of him in his academic gown stands by his grave. After his death his daughter, Dorli Blaga, began to republish his *Trilogies*, to which she added later works, all of which are now reprinted by Humanitas in Bucharest.

2. An outline of Blaga's philosophy in its contexts

A comparative analysis of Blaga's ideas within the context of modern orientations in thinking would define his position as kindred to and yet different from those of Kant, Goethe, Nietzsche, Spengler, Husserl, Berdiaev, Cassirer, Freud, Jung and Heidegger. His modern

openings toward philosophy with polar concepts, and towards complementarity, define his conceptions as a special form of rationalism, ecstatic rationalism. Together with other Romanians—Vasile Conta, Mircea Florian, Stephane Lupasco, D. D. Roșca, Constantin Noica—Blaga outlines a certain type of discourse specific to Romanian philosophy between the wars, which gave new meanings to metaphysics, unconscious antimonies and relativity. In Blaga's opinion the supreme spiritual value is metaphysics.

In metaphysical creation we can see the very crowning of philosophical thinking. We shall spare no effort in pleading in favour of such an appreciation. The metaphysician is the author of a world. Any philosopher who does not aim at becoming the author of a world simply betrays his own vocation; he may sometimes be a really brilliant thinker, still he would remain an advocate of non-fulfilment ... It is true that a metaphysical vision is never final; that is, no success makes useless a new attempt. A metaphysical vision represents an historical moment, meaning that in a way its fragility is inherent in its very conditions and structure ... We have to get accustomed to approaching metaphysical conceptions from a point of view different from that of regret for their perishability. We are then able to grasp that particular sensitivity of weighing a metaphysical vision according to its depth and inner harmony.

We repeat: whenever we have to judge some metaphysical conception we are asked to use an immanent critique. Under such flashes of light, the transitoriness with which each metaphysical conception is stigmatised grows into a fatality which is inherent in even the most evident achievements of the human mind. Contrary to classic systems, this system I am working on has a symphonic character; it is not the system of a single idea, nor of a single formula; it is structured just like a many-steepled church. This system contains numerous intertwined main leitmotifs, that reiterate from one study to another and a rhythmically alternating succession. Eventually, all studies overflow as a metaphysical vision of the whole of existence; the last volume of each of the trilogies attempts to be a crowning of the others and a metaphysical turning to account of the problems discussed.¹

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As he announced in his 'Philosophical Self-Presentation', Blaga began to organise his work into Trilogies, except for the first three books. To the first trilogy, his daughter added two other volumes, thus making it into a pentology, and she also put together the final trilogy. There have also been posthumously published works which do not fit into the trilogies. Where applicable, the following lists the works in trilogies, with dates of the first publication of each book and of their republication as trilogies, along with the titles of the essays or chapters in each.

Culture and Cognition (1922)

The Philosophy of Style (1924)

The Original Phenomenon (1925)

The Trilogy of Knowledge (1943)

On Philosophical Consciousness (1947)

Introductory considerations; Autonomy of philosophy and metaphysical creation; Philosophy and common sense; Philosophy, science, experience; Philosophical and scientific problems; Philosophy and method; Visionary aspects of philosophy; On scientism; Myth and magic in philosophy; The transcendental accent; The motive of philosophy; Thought and system; Efficiency; Philosophy and style; Philosophy and art; On philosophical consciousness.

The Dogmatic Aeon (1931)

Introductory considerations; Historical aspects of dogma; Transfigured antimony; Metaphysical paradoxes; Contradictions in science and dogma; Prelogical thought and dogma; Enstatic and Ecstatic intellect; Dogma and the transcendent; Dogma and experience; Dogmatism and the theory of knowledge; The perspectives of minus-knowledge; The dogmatic aeon.

Luciferian Knowledge (1933)

Introduction; Paradisaic and Luciferian knowledge; The crisis of objects; Qualitative variation of mysteries; The 'phanic' and the cryptic; The interior tension of problems in general; The double functions of categories; Theoretical ideas; The 'phanic' material; Problems and theories; Directed observation; Levels of revelation; Permanentised mysteries; Minus-knowledge; Transcendent variants and the typology of mysteries; On explanation; Cryptic un-

knowns and 'hiatus' unknowns; The inconvertibility of irrationals; Closure.

Transcendental Censorship (1937)

Introduction; Transcendental censorship; Dissimulating revelations; Ontology of censorship; Integration with mystery; The place of reasons; The level of creations and the apology of mysteries; Knowledge as a 'phenomenon' and knowledge as a 'non-phenomenon'; Metaphysical forms of knowledge; Spirit and realisation; The Great Anonym; Closure.

Experiment and the Mathematical Spirit (1969)

Galilean-Newtonian science and the premises of history; Logicians and the experimental method; Methods, methodological couplings, supermethod; Scientific intuition and Positivist errors; The mathematization of the methods of scientific investigation and philosophical panmathematicism; Modes of rationalisation; Common sense and scientific knowledge; Experiment and theory; The two lines of development and experiments; Experiment in the perspective of what it licences and its fruitfulness; Precise and statistical laws.

The Trilogy of Culture (1944)

Horizon and Style (1936)

The phenomenon of style and methodology; The other world; On personance; Culture and space; Between landscape and the unconscious horizon; Temporal horizons; The theory of doublings; The axiological accent; Anabasic and catabasic attitudes; Formative aspirations; The stylistic matrix.

The Mioritic Space (1936)

The Mioritic space; Bipolar spirituality; The descending transcendent; The Sophianic perspective; On assimilation; The picturesque and revelation; Spirit and ornamentation; On longing; Intermezzo; Evolution and involution; Modelling and catalytic influences; Romanian apriorism.

The Genesis of Metaphor and the Meaning of Culture (1937)

Minor and major cultures; The genesis of metaphor; On myths; Fundamental aspects of cultural creations; Abyssal categories; Fundamental concepts in the science of art; Cosmos and cosmoid; *Sub specie* style; The metaphysical meaning of culture; The impasses of creative destiny; The uniqueness of man.

The Trilogy of Value (1946)

Science and Creation (1942)

Clarifications; The circle of Saros and the Babylonian spirit; Variations on an atomist theme; The other theme in antiquity and modern times; Models of Greek scientific thought (ideas of spheres, qualitative mathematicism, volumes and fullness, resistance to the idea of infinity, resistance to the idea of becoming);

Plato's idea of science; Aristotle's idea of science; The Arabic scientific spirit; The Indian scientific spirit; The great European anticipation; The principle of inertia and its implications; The Baroque involution; Romantic categories; The physics of sensation; Constructivism; The guiding functions of abyssal categories; The adjustment of style to ideas and observations; On the stylistic field; Some problems of the theory of knowledge (categorical concepts—subjective or objective?; categorical concepts—general or not?); The two types of knowledge.

Magical Thought and Religion

On Magical Thought (1941)

Myth and magic; Points of view (Group I, II, III, IV); The co-ordinates of the creative spirit; Myth and co-ordinates; Magic and co-ordinates; The salt of any culture; The magical charge; Experience and superstition; The autonomy of magic; The cognitive function of the idea of magic; Other functions; The polyvalency of the idea of magic.

Religion and Spirit (1942)

Introduction; From Indra to Nirvana; The Tao; Cosmic health; Measure and ecstasy; The generalised miracle; Uncreated light; The birth of the logos; The mystical state and belief; earthquake-belief; The religion of sacred thrill; The definition of religion; The Sacred; Certitude and superconsciousness.

Art and Values (1939)

The theoretical structure; The amphibianism of consciousness; On art in general; Aesthetic satisfaction from art; The autonomy of art; The law of non-transponsibility; Aesthetics of intropathy and of life-experience; Polar values; Vicarious values; Abyssal categories as canalising factors; Tertiary values; Art and genres; The universal man; Accessory values; Crystal, organism, cosmoid; The ethnic, art and mythology; The metaphysics of values.

The Cosmological Trilogy (1980-8)

The Divine Differentials 1940)

Preface; Models of genesis; The Great Anonym, the generator; The maximal limitation of divine possibilities; The divine differentials; Individuals, types, sources; Ontological modes; Finality and parafinality; The theory of formative unity; A metaphysical explanation of evolution; Between the Anonymous Source and individuation; The pluralism of individuation; The organising of space; On history; Another datum: the uniqueness of man; Measure and advantage; Finalistic indetermination; The paradoxes of concepts.

Anthropological Aspects (1947-8)

Introductory remarks; Lamarck and the idea of transformism; Darwin and natural selection; The theory of selection; Specialisation and the level of organisation; Anthropogenesis and the problems

it presents; Problems of biological primitivism, a new explanation; Instinct, intelligence, genius; Archetypes and stylistic factors; Closing remarks; Diagrams.

Historical Existence (1959)

On historiography; The historical phenomenon; The permanence of prehistory; Organism and society; Stylistic fields; Styles and dialectic; The duration of stylistic factors; Stylistic interference; Ideas of progress in history; Phenomena, knowledge, zones of censorship; Oswald Spengler and the philosophy of history; The metaphysics of history.

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Horizons and Stages (1968)

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