

Some uncertainties at Romanian beginning of the Philosophy of History

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ABSTRACT

The study is part of the contemporary effort of scanning and philosophical-epistemological exploration of valuable research of the history of philosophy and the philosophy of history. The investigative approach proves that the Xenopolian philosophical ideas are extended in relation to the status of philosophy at the time. It follows that in his writings the scientist uses a philosophic vocabulary and thematizes interrogatively the elevated aspects of the reflection on history.

Keywords: history; philosophy of history; facts; events

1. AN OUTSTANDING PHILOSOPHER OF HISTORY

European acknowledged personality through his original studies of history and theory of history, Alexandru D. Xenopol (1847-1920) is also one of the coryphaei of the Romanian reflection on the philosophy of history. Moving from history to the philosophy of history seems natural: by taking the accuracy towards scrupulosity, the historical discourse becomes the discourse of the philosophy of history. To the satisfaction of the Romanian philosophy of history, A. D. Xenopol has not resisted the danger that the research exceeded partially the field within it started in. Open in himself to the idea of history as literary genre, under the circumstances of exhausting requirements to remain objective in the language undertaking, the historical discourse reaches a historical-philosophical fission. On the other hand, out of concern for the scientific purity of the historical investigation, the historical discourse is impregnated by the ideas of the philosophy of history. Therefore, A. D. Xenopol discovers the philosophy of history as instrument of defense, guarantee and strengthening of the historical discourse. In the strong sense of the concept, A. D. Xenopol is not a philosopher of the history who doesn't realise it. He is not a philosopher of history involuntary, he is a remarkable philosopher, one to be taken into account. Lucid mind beyond the painful experiences applied on himself, he doesn't venture into preprogrammed easy philosophical research, but he works as a philosopher with the easiness of a researcher for whom it is natural to do what he does. In his philosophical effort, Xenopol lies on the edge of the field of history, of the philosophy of history, of the philosophy of culture.

2. STAGES ON THE PATH OF THE XENOPOL'S REFLECTION

a) The stage of working "on philosophical and historical ground". After 1913, writing his intellectual autobiography „The history of my ideas”, A. D. Xenopol has have a clear and balanced perspective on the path of his thinking. Then, scanning his ideational track, he reveals for us an abandoned picture of a irrepressible vocation: the theorist failed as a great philosopher of history only to become a famous historian.

Titu Maiorescu's student, closed to „Junimea”, A. D. Xenopol was a brilliant student. This made him the first scholar that „Junimea” has sent to study in Germany (1867-1871). „During my studies in Berlin, Xenopol reveals, my first Romanian publications, fall on the philosophical and historical ground” (Xenopol, 1967, p. 373). Therefore, A. D. Xenopol has written on a “philosophical and historical realm” the works: “The National Culture”, “The Histories of Civilization” and “Studies on Our Present State”, articles published in the „Literary Talks” magazine from 1868 until 1877. This is the sub-stage of Xenopol's inaugural-philosophical thinking. The three studies are the most valuable of all that has been written in all the philosophy of the Romanian history up to 1900. Xenopol is a philosopher in every sense of the word and it would have been remained an outstanding philosopher if he had just written this set of three studies.

Returned to the country in 1871, as a doctor of philosophy and law, he is hired as a prosecutor at the Court of Iași (1871-1878); subsequently (1878-1883) he has been activating as a lawyer. Alongside he was a professor of history at the Academic Institute, a place where he had completed his secondary education.

In this period of 12 years, interstice that we would call the sub-stage of separation from philosophy and of the settlement in history, he has been publishing in “Literary Talks” studies addressing philosophical-historical, cultural, historical and social-economic themes. The philosophical aspects lose their first rank importance and decrease in scale. Are issued in turn: “Something about people's literature” (1872), “Reforming our settlements” (1873), “On school education in general and especially on the history one” (1873), “On the epigram” (1874), “The Oath at Romanians” (1875), “Herodotus information to our history” (1875), “The geographical base of the Romanian history” (1876), “Our economic status” (1878), “Study of the Romanians' geographical position” (1882), “The French policy in the East”.

b) The axial-historical stage, of the major studies of “pragmatic history” In 1883 he is appointed professor of Romanian history at the University of Iași. The history has now fully won. Following a 5 years work from 1888 until 1893, his monumental “History of Romanians in Trajan Dacia” (13 volumes) has been issued in every year. The work had such a tremendous echo at the time, so that in 1896, under the author's review, it was published in Paris, in two volumes, with a 1000 pages: “Histoire des Roumains de la Dacie trajane”. Between 1883 and 1896 we would call the axial-historical period of the Xenopol's intellectual life. Now the philosophical themes are missing, and to the philosophical issues a minor importance is given. Over the same period, A. D. Xenopol has been publishing “Une énigme historique. Les roumains au moyen âge” (Paris, 1885), „Etudes historique pur le peuple roumain” (Iași, 1887), too. Also, generically, the publishing, between 1896 and 1912, of the “History of Romanians in Trajan Dacia” (13 volumes) belongs to this period.

c) The reflection stage on the philosophy of history.

The period of the great studies of “pragmatic history”, Xenopol (Xenopol, 1967, p. 394) is followed by the theoretical reflection period of philosophy of history. Works like: “Les principes fondamentaux de l'histoire” (Paris, 1899, published in Iași, 1900), „La théorie de

l'histoire (1908), „La notion de valeur en histoire” (1905)” are included here. The idea that for the status of science of history the value is a worthless criterion is compulsive for Xenopol. It induces strategic arguments unnecessary in the historical approaches, but sufficient and beneficial for the philosophical discourse. “The result of our research is the establishment of two great truths:

- that history is a science;
- that the concept of value is entirely foreign to this science and that there is no need to rely on it in order to establish it” (Xenopol, 1967, p. 322).

Therefore, the scholarly ideal of the exhaustive demonstration and the constant to consider history apart from any axiology make the Xenopolian reflection to instantiate philosophical ideas. Fear of not being sufficiently well-founded argumentatively, even when intended purely historical, the Xenopolian discourse draws philosophical facts and ideas in the demonstration activity.

What characterizes this period of meditation is the high standard of the theoretic discourse, the setting of the principles of the historical study, the establishing and strengthening of the relation between law and series, the setting of the yardsticks outside the criteria of the historical objectivity etc. Xenopol is mobilizing now new sociological thematic energies. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the philosophy of history has still questions regarding his area of research. In its turn, the conceptual language used by A. D. Xenopol is one in progress of adapting and consolidation in relation to the investigated epistemic field. Besides clarifying the epistemic object there is the development and improvement of the scientific vocabulary. From this perspective, A. D. Xenopol may fall between those who the teacher Angela Botez calls, in the book “A century of Romanian philosophy”, “creators of language and culture” (2005, p. 39).

In relation to the reflection stages, the periods of creation have the following configuration:

d) The Xenopolian period 1866-1883 was the time during which the philosophy of history did not have a clearly defined field of investigation, and in parallel Xenopol himself hesitated between philosophy and history, which he saw connected on the same “realm”. It follows that from the perspective of the subsequent evolution of philosophy, Xenopol has chosen the philosophy of history initially.

e) During 1883-1896, the period of the pragmatic history, his writings were impregnated with philosophy just enough history to remain pragmatic. The works produced during this period are the arguments for which the professor Lucian Boia has included A. D. Xenopol among the greatest social Romanian historians, along with Dimitrie Onciul, Ioan Bogdan, Nicolae Iorga, Constantin Giurescu and Vasile Pârvan (2001, p. 256).

f) Between 1896-1920, the reflective period, the theorizing of history by reasoning the development of society brought Xenopol at the edge of philosophy which also has a societal field of research. Initially, Xenopol and the philosophy of history have grown in parallel. Now, when Xenopol was teaching theoretically and the philosophy of history was consolidating as a science and the Xenopolian approach was intended theoretically purely historic, the discourse has resuscitated involuntarily the philosophical cogitative vein. In the last part of the path of his reflection, Xenopol has reversed his interest symmetrically: if in the initial pragmatics the philosophy ranked first in the binomial philosophy-history (typically xenopolian), in the final theoretic ideas history is prevailing, without lacking blamably the philosophy of history. The “stages” defined by us find similarity with the “periods” which the well-known researcher

Mihai Popa has set in a well documented and comprehensive study, “A. D. Xenopol – philosopher of history” (2007). He has argued that in “the A. D. Xenopol’s scientific activity we can distinguish three distinct periods: the period up to 1893 is the time of consecration as a historian”; between 1893 and 1899 “a necessary conversion is attained” (...) “from history to a theorist of history”; in “the third period”, 1899-1920, there are “scientific achievements in both areas” and “is a deepening of the systematic outlook” (2007, p. 13).

“In addition, it is to be highlighted that a well-known contemporary of the Romanian scientist, such as Georges Palante, in “Treaty of Sociology” has remembered as revealing the thesis of philosophy of history issued by A. D. Xenopol regarding the historical fact. “The social opposition, being an eternal and necessary social fact, falls within the definition of the laws of causality, namely the laws governing the action of the elements, of the eternal factors of the lives of societies. The facts which are the subject of this kind of laws are what Xenopol calls «the facts of repetition», namely facts that repeat constantly and identically with themselves. To these facts, in Xenopol’s opinion, are opposed «the facts of succession», namely those which change over time due to various influences” (Palante, 2006, p. 132). Also, the elements of Xenopolian ideas are remembered by professor Gabriel Săvescu as interesting even in the third millennium, as the methodological model in understanding and explaining the nodes of “a series of succession”, “characteristic of a valid knowledge” (2010, p. 274). If the history and the inaugural philosophy make him noticeable at national level, the philosophy of history and history of the third stage bring him European fame.

3. CONCLUSION

The path of the Xenopolian reflection has four stages: the stage of the inaugural philosophy, the stage of separation from philosophy and the settling in history, the axial-historical stage and the stage of the reflection on the philosophy of history. It is concluded that A.D. Xenopol is, for his time, a great philosopher of history, the first Romanian with a PhD on the philosophy of history (“The histories of civilization”).

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