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# Culture as Religion and Religion as Culture in the Philosophy of Lucian Blaga

Abstract:
*Mircea Eliade, the renowned scholar of Romanian origin, wrote that Lucian Blaga was the greatest Romanian philosopher of all time. Blaga was intensely interested in both culture and religion as areas of philosophical investigation. Blaga's philosophy proposes a metaphysics that explains the origin of culture and its unrivaled significance to humanity. His philosophy also endeavors to explicate the relationship between culture and religion. Blaga finds that religion is a cultural product, but does not view this as a detriment to religion. On the contrary, according to Blaga, it is the very fact that religion is an expression of cultural creativity that gives religion its beauty. This article will introduce Blaga's philosophy of culture and his philosophy of religion, explain the relationship between them, and show that Blaga accorded high honor to both.*

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## Introduction

In the year that marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Mircea Eliade it seems appropriate to look at the work of the one who Eliade called "The most gifted and critical original thinker" in the history of Romanian philosophy. The greatest of Romanian philosophers, according to Eliade, was the early twentieth century Transylvanian philosopher Lucian Blaga. Eliade once wrote that Blaga was the first philosopher since Hegel who had the courage to create a system that attempts to address all the aspects of systematic philosophy.[1] This broad system includes a very interesting and constructive analysis of the relationship of culture and religion, topics that were of particular interest to Blaga (and to Eliade). The goal of this article is to explicate Blaga's philosophy of culture and his philosophy of religion, making clear the reciprocity of religion and culture in ordinary human experience.

## Blaga's Philosophy of Culture

### Introduction: Place and Method

The philosophy of culture occupies a place of great importance in Blaga's philosophy; it could be argued that his thinking on philosophy of culture is that aspect of his philosophical system that most influences the rest of the system.[2] The philosophy of cul-

ture is interwoven throughout all the areas of his philosophy: not only his metaphysics and epistemology, but also his philosophy of science, philosophy of religion, aesthetics, philosophy of history, and philosophical anthropology.

Philosophy of culture is Blaga's true area of specialization. This contention is supported by the fact that a special chair for philosophy of culture was created for Blaga at the Romanian University of Cluj, and is further supported by the fact that the address that he delivered at his induction into the Romanian Academy was on Romanian culture ("Elogiul satului românesc"). It is also supported by the abundance of his writing on the subject. From his doctoral dissertation (Culture and Knowledge) to the penultimate chapter of his final book ("Oswald Spengler and the Philosophy of History," in "Ființa Istorică"), Blaga is repeatedly found exploring the issues of philosophy of culture. Thus it is no surprise that in his philosophical writings more space is devoted to the philosophy of culture than to any other single area of philosophical inquiry. Blaga sees culture as the single most important factor that distinguishes humanity (and all that humanity creates) from the rest of existence. Culture influences, according to Blaga's theory, all human activity.[3]

Blaga's philosophy of culture includes a further development of the philosophy of culture expounded by Oswald Spengler, as Blaga himself acknowledges.[4] However, Blaga's philosophy of culture is more than a simple restatement or synthesis of these insights.[5] He offers new insights of his own, and integrates his philosophy of culture as a vital part of a complete philosophical system.[6] This introduction to his system will omit certain prominent aspects of Blaga's treatment that are, in their essence, illustrations and/or applications of his thought, in order to focus on the elements of his treatment that are central to his analysis of culture itself.

Blaga's method of presenting and arguing for his philosophy of culture is similar to that employed in presenting other aspects of his philosophy.[7] He develops his system in interaction with a wide range of other thinkers in the field, from ancient Greek philosophers to contemporary thinkers from a variety of specialized domains. At times he adopts certain elements of their systems; at other times he criticizes their findings and offers alternatives. Consistent with his pragmatic and coherence approaches to justification, Blaga does not try to prove his system but instead substantiates it by showing how it can be fruitfully applied to various actual cultural phenomena.[8]

## What Culture Is

Blaga observes that the twin phenomena of style and culture have often been studied, but only as of secondary importance.[9] In contrast to this, Blaga places them at the zenith of his thought, making culture one of the most important elements of his philosophy and, more importantly, of human existence. Culture is, according to Blaga, the sine qua non of humanness.[10] It is culture more than anything else that distinguishes humanity from other forms of animal life.[11] Likewise, it is culture that distinguishes historical events from all other events that occur in time and space.[12]

According to Blaga's analysis, a culture is a collective product of human creativity actuated through a given "stylistic matrix" and within a particular set of concrete circumstances (the concept "stylistic matrix" and what is meant by "concrete circumstances" will be explained presently). Culture is a "precipitate" of the fullness of human existence.[13] Full human existence involves living in the face of and striving to understand

mystery. Therefore culture is the direct result of human life. It is a result of the human attempt to reveal/depict/grasp mystery, an attempt that is an irresistible part of human destiny.

Culture includes all human fabrications that bear the mark of human creativity ("style"). These include works of art, philosophy, mythology, science, historiography, and other human creative acts, everything from the creation of simple utensils to advanced philosophical creations. All of these activities involve the attempt to reveal mystery.[14]

Every cultural creation involves three essential elements: concrete material, metaphorical expression, and style (analyzable into a matrix of elements). The concrete materials of a culture are the physical, intellectual, or spiritual materials that humans utilize in their creations. These are used metaphorically to express ideas, emotions, or intuitions that transcend the material itself. The particular way that the concrete is metaphorically used reflects the style of the user, which is the product of a number of factors called the "stylistic matrix."

## The Categories of the Understanding and the Abyssal Categories

A very important aspect of Blaga's philosophy of culture is his original analysis of the categories of the human mind and how these categories relate to human culture. Although the Kantian influence on this area of Blaga's thought is unmistakable, Blaga departs radically from Kant's understanding of the categories.[15] Whereas Kant argued that humans experience reality through a set of interpretive intellectual categories, Blaga argues that humans are equipped with two sets of categories. The first of these he names "the categories of the understanding." These categories correspond fairly closely to the Kantian categories. Their role is the organization of sensory data in what Blaga terms "type I cognition" (or "paradisaic cognition").[16]

Contrary to many scientists, who take categories such as time and space to be objective realities, Blaga agrees with Kant that the categories of the understanding are subjective. Kant's reason for drawing this conclusion is that the conceptual contents of the categories surpass the contents of experiential data, and therefore cannot themselves be a product of experience, and thus must have their source in the mind itself. Blaga writes that the climate (influenced by the Enlightenment and the growing influence of natural science) within which Kant worked prevented him from positing a supernatural source of the categories, and therefore Kant concluded that if they are a product of the mind, then they must be subjective.[17] Nonetheless, the conclusion that subjectivity is the only alternative left after the elimination of the possibility of an experiential origin of the categories is mistaken. There remains the possibility that the categories are the product of a supernatural source, and furthermore that this source created them as objective.

In Blaga's view, the categories are in fact the result of a supernatural source that Blaga names the "Great Anonymous."[18] However, Blaga is in agreement with Kant that the categories are subjective. Blaga's reason for this interpretation of the categories is quite different from Kant's, and has to do with the structure and purpose of cognition. Blaga's reason for believing the categories to be subjective is that, according to his proposed metaphysics, in order to further its purposes in creation, the Great Anonymous does not permit humans to have objective ("positive-adequate") cognition. The categories are one of the means utilized by the Great Anonymous to guarantee that humanity does not achieve truly objective cognition. The categories act as both facilitators of cognition and as limits to cognition, enabling subjective knowledge but preventing objective knowl-

edge.[19]

According to Kant, the categories of the understanding are a fixed set that is necessarily possessed by all people. Therefore all people have the same immutable categories of the understanding. Spengler argued, contra Kant, that no particular sentiment of spatiality is universal to all humanity, but rather that particular sentiments of spatiality are culturally relative. He argues that there are at least nine different space/time sentiments that are found in different cultures.[20] In reflecting on these views, Blaga observes that, while the perceptions of space, time, and so on appear to be universal, space and time are also constructed differently in different cultures.[21] The categories of the understanding, though subjective, are not affected by culture (and do not bear the imprint of style) because they are not human creations—they are created by the Great Anonymous.[22] He accounts for the apparent variability of the categories by proposing that humans have two sets of categories, not one: the cognitive categories of the conscious and the abyssal categories of the subconscious (also called the "stylistic categories").[23] The former are invariable, but the latter are quite variable. Space and time (as determined by the cognitive categories) are universal concrete horizons of the conscious. However, their "texture" is determined by the abyssal categories of each individual's subconscious, and is therefore variable. For example, space can be conceived as being tridimensional, flat, undulatory, arched, or other ways.[24] Based on its particular set of abyssal categories, the human subconscious attributes to space and time details of structure that are similar to but more determined than the indeterminate structures of space and time in the conscious.[25]

The abyssal categories are both functionally and structurally different from the cognitive categories. Functionally, the abyssal categories lie at the base of all cultural creations and form a complex that Blaga names the "stylistic matrix."[26] The immense number of combinations of the stylistic categories possible within an individual's stylistic matrix accounts for the plethora of possible and actual cultures.[27] Because of this important role in forming culture, the abyssal categories are constitutive of the substance of humanity, whereas the cognitive categories merely enable the integration of objects to the conscious.[28] Blaga hypothesizes that the cognitive categories have more to do with survival and the abyssal categories have more to do with creativity.[29]

Structurally, the details of the cognitive categories are immutable and universal, while the details of the abyssal categories are variable and individual.[30] It is sometimes the case that there are parallel cognitive and abyssal categories, such as in the case of time and space. These are what Blaga calls "doublets of horizons."[31] The two categories of a doublet are complementary but differ from each other in detail.

Both cognitive and abyssal categories are part of the plan of the Great Anonymous for protecting and enhancing created existence. While the specific cognitive categories are direct creations of the Great Anonymous, the specific stylistic categories are human creations. The cognitive categories are one way that the Great Anonymous implements transcendent censorship, while the abyssal categories are a means of implementing "transcendent braking." The two types of categories work together to fulfill the "principle of the conservation of mystery."[32]

## The Stylistic Matrix and its Key Components

Each human subconscious possesses a set of stylistic categories that determine the results of its creative endeavors. This set is what Blaga calls the "stylistic matrix."[33] A

stylistic matrix is defined as a group or constellation of factors that together determine the style of the creations of a person or group of people. It is the sum of all the stylistic categories and their influences upon a person's creativity.[34] This matrix is composed of four primary factors and an unspecified number of secondary factors.[35] Two different creative styles can be separated by as little as one of these secondary factors.[36]

The idea of a stylistic matrix explains why and how creations within a particular culture bear certain similarities and also why they are not identical.[37] It is also that which enables a creation to have a sense of fittingness and context.[38] A judgment that a particular creation "lacks style" may be nothing more than an indication that there are subtle differences between the matrices of the creator and the critic.[39] Conversely, the ability of one culture to appreciate the creations of another is explained by the shared elements of their stylistic matrices, which can enable reciprocal understanding.[40]

Stylistic matrices are shaped by the physical and spiritual environment in which the person or community lives.[41] They are usually conservative by nature, however: they are resistant to criticism and change.[42] This explains why two different cultures sometimes coexist within the same physical environment: their stylistic matrices were formed at a time when the cultures were geographically separate, and although they are not indifferent to their current cultural setting, they do retain much of their old cultural formation.[43] Nonetheless, it is possible for the factors that make up a particular stylistic matrix to change, which leads to a change in the stylistic matrix itself.[44]

The four primary components of any stylistic matrix are: 1. The horizon of the subconscious; 2. An axiological accent; 3. A particular sense of destiny; and 4. A particular formative aspiration (*nazuința formativă*).[45] The first of these, the horizon of the subconscious, refers to the particular way that a person's subconscious mind structures space and time, and therefore the particular forms of the abyssal categories that imprint the spatial and temporal aspects of a person's creations.[46] A variety of spatial horizons are possible. Blaga gives the following examples of spatial horizons of particular cultures: Arabian culture—veiled space; Babylonian culture—twin space; Chinese culture—rolled space; Greek culture—spherical space; popular Romanian culture—undulatory space; Saxon culture—infinite, tridimensional space.[47]

There are at least three possible temporal horizons of the subconscious: past (pictured as an artesian well), present (pictured as a waterfall), and future (pictured as a stream).[48] These horizons sometimes combine and overlap, causing blurring or hybridizing of the horizon.[49] The temporal horizon of a culture is reflected in the creative constructions of that culture, including its histories and its metaphysical creations. Blaga mentions as a particularly European view the idea that there exists a clear history that can be understood by anyone.[50] Each view of history is a "possible perspective" that will appear true to the extent that it resonates with the subconscious matrix of the beholder.[51] It is thus that stylistic matrices become, for Blaga, the basis of history (as well as a major force in historiography).[52]

The second component of a stylistic matrix, the "axiological accent," refers to an attitudinal reflex of the subconscious that is superimposed upon the spatial and temporal horizons. Although the subconscious is intrinsically united with its horizons, it is not always in complete accord with them.[53] The axiological accent is a valuation of the respective horizons of the subconscious, an evaluation that is positive, negative, or neutral, resulting in an affirmation of, negation of, or neutrality toward the spatial or temporal horizon. A particular horizon can have different senses depending on the accent it

receives.[54] A negative axiological accent does not result in the annulling of the particular horizon, but rather in that horizon being used in a negative way in the construction of cultural creations.[55]

The third component of a stylistic matrix, the "sense of destiny," refers to the attitude or predisposition of the subconscious that influences how it views life as a trajectory within the horizon of the subconscious.[56] This movement can be one of advancing toward the horizon (which Blaga labels "anabasic"), one of withdrawal from the horizon ("catabasic"), or it can be static ("neutral" or "vegetative").[57]

Blaga gives several examples of the sense of destiny in different cultures. According to Blaga, Europe has the following components to its stylistic matrix: an infinite horizon (spatial and temporal), a positive axiological accent, and an anabasic sense of destiny.[58] India has an infinite horizon (spatial and temporal), a negative axiological accent, and a catabasic sense of destiny. On Blaga's analysis nihilism would have a negative axiological accent but an anabasic sense of destiny.[59] Ethiopians have an infinite horizon and a neutral sense of destiny, while the ancient Egyptians have a pronounced catabasic sense of destiny, which Blaga compares to Heidegger's "existence towards death."[60]

The fourth of the key components of the stylistic matrix, the "formative aspiration," refers to the human drive to imprint one's own inner form on the things around oneself.[61] This drive takes different forms in different cultures. Blaga notes three distinct possible forms that the formative aspiration takes: individualized, standardized, and elementized.[62]

Through each of these approaches those that employ them aspire to reveal "truth," to portray through their creativity things as they really are. Each believes that his/her respective approach is the correct approach.[63] In response to the question regarding whether these attempts reflect objective reality or a "style of thought," Blaga affirms the latter.[64]

In the individualized form of the formative aspiration the emphasis is on the expression of the individual and the individual's perspective. Blaga gives as examples of individualized formative aspiration German culture, and specifically mentions Shakespeare, Leibniz, the physician Pauli, Goethe, Fichte, Kant, the Reformation, and above all, Rembrandt.[65] In the standardized form the emphasis is on the expression of the universal element of a type of phenomenon. The best example of this is Plato, with his elevation of the form over the individual. Other examples include the Renaissance and Catholic theology.[66] The elementized form emphasizes the conceptually fundamental aspect of a phenomenon. It reduces phenomena of the same type to their ideal expression, eliminating incidental variations and producing representations of the phenomena that surpass the objects themselves. Examples of the elementized form include Egyptian and Byzantine art and Byzantine metaphysics.[67]

These four primary components and an unnumbered quantity of secondary components make up the stylistic matrix of the subconscious. The stylistic matrix is the inner horizon of the subconscious, and it functions according to its own norms, relatively independent of the conscious. The stylistic matrix is responsible for the unity of attitudes, accents, and aspirations that distinguish one culture from another and that give to a person's conscious the support of continuity and to a person's subconscious the connection to a collectivity.[68] Furthermore, the existence of stylistic matrices witnesses to the creative destiny given to humanity by the Great Anonymous.[69]

## Philosophy of Culture and Blaga's Epistemology

Blaga's philosophy of culture has a direct impact on his epistemology.[70] According to Blaga's analysis, there are two types of cognition: type I cognition (paradisaic) and type II cognition (luciferic). Type I cognition increases knowledge quantitatively, through the numerical reduction of the mysteries of existence by adding new facts to human knowledge. It utilizes the cognitive categories. Type II cognition increases knowledge qualitatively, through deepening the understanding of the mystery of a cognitive object. This deepening of the understanding involves creative constructs that provide theoretical explanations of the phenomena in question. Since all creative acts are affected by a stylistic matrix, these acts of type II cognition are as well. They operate through the application of both the cognitive and the stylistic (abyssal) categories.

Type I cognition is limited by transcendent censorship via the cognitive categories. The abyssal categories do not affect type I cognition.[71] Type II cognition is limited by both transcendent censorship and the "stylistic brakes," which are the abyssal categories. Therefore all knowledge acquired via type II cognition is culturally relative.[72] The abyssal categories function both positively and negatively in cognition, and these two functions are intrinsically related. They function as a structural medium for revelation of mystery and as a limit to this revelation ("stylistic brakes"). Thus the abyssal categories both lead humans to create and prevent human creativity from reaching absolute adequacy.[73]

Corresponding to the two types of cognition and the two types of limits on cognition are two definitions of truth that spring from Blaga's philosophy of culture. In type I cognition, truth consists in a relation of correspondence between an idea and reality.[74] This is what Blaga names "natural truth." This type of truth involves the application of the cognitive categories to empirical data. Because the cognitive categories are not influenced by culture, "natural truth" is not subject to cultural influences.[75]

What is judged to be true in type II cognition, on the other hand, is relative to one's stylistic matrix. What is judged to be true does not depend only upon the criteria of logic and concrete intuition. It involves style, culture, and a feeling of resonance between the proposition and the cognitive subject.[76] "Judgments of appreciation, which refer to 'constructed' truths, will vary therefore according to how the people's stylistic matrices vary, from region to region, from epoch to epoch."[77] This is because what is being judged is not the relation between an idea and a (supposedly) observable reality, but the relation between an idea that is a construct and a reality that is known to be hidden. The fact that the reality is hidden entails the constructive nature of the idea. The constructive nature of the idea implicates the incorporation of culture (since all constructs are cultural constructs according to Blaga's analysis). The incorporation of culture implicates the employment of the stylistic categories, as much in the appreciation/evaluation of the idea as in its construction.

The fact that type II cognition involves culture in its truth-judgments has implications that reach far beyond philosophy. Even science is affected by this conception, since scientific hypotheses and theories are constructs that involve type II cognition.[78] The extent to which Blaga was convinced of this is revealed in his startling statement that "the new physics . . . is more the expression of our kind of thinking and of our style, than the reflection of an objective reality."[79] Furthermore, he argues that the domination of one mode of rationalization over others within science, and the overthrow of one mode of rationalization by another, provide an argument for the significance of style as a factor in scientific change.[80]

Both type I and type II cognition operate by utilizing categories. The categories both facilitate and limit cognition. In this way the two types of categories work together to fulfill the "principle of the conservation of mystery."[81]

## Philosophy of Culture and Blaga's Metaphysics

Blaga's philosophy of culture dovetails with his metaphysics.[82] Blaga's metaphysical system posits the existence of a single source of all other existents and that this source created the cosmos in such a way as to both perpetuate and preserve creation. It created humanity with specific abilities and limits that both motivate and enable humanity to approach mystery, but that also prevent humanity from eliminating mystery.[83]

Blaga's philosophy of culture elaborates one of the devices that the originator of the cosmos put in place to accomplish these goals. That device is style, or culture understood as a collection of stylistic factors. Culture is key to perpetuating through humanity the creative act of the Great Anonymous, for culture is essential to human creativity. Culture is also key to preserving creation, for it prevents humanity from accurately revealing mystery through humanity's creative acts, which (according to Blaga) could endanger the cosmos by allowing a cognitive rival to the Great Anonymous.

The Great Anonymous protects itself from the possibility of human rivalry by the stylistic limiting ("halting" or "braking") of human revelatory acts. The Great Anonymous also prevents this rivalry by creating humanity in such a way that humans put a positive value on style rather than viewing style and culture as limits imposed upon humanity (Blaga calls this tactic "transcendent conversion").[84] According to Blaga's metaphysics, culture is a positive value, but it is also a necessary and useful limit upon human revelation of the mysterious.

The stylistic categories function both positively and as "brakes." This positive/negative duality fuels humanity's creativity—spiritual, mythical, religious, philosophical, scientific, and artistic.[85] The limits set on humanity are a source of both disappointment and of rejoicing: the former when the impotence and transience of all human creation is recognized, the latter because there is some success, some limited access to the absolute.[86] Thus the relativity that culture imposes upon all human creations has the perhaps tragic effect of isolating humanity from the absolute, but Blaga asserts that at the same time it gives humanity a dignity beyond comparison.[87]

According to Blaga, it is culture more than anything else that differentiates humanity from other living beings, and culture is essential to full humanness.[88] An "ontological mutation" took place at the very moment when humanity started down the path of creating culture. This mutation transformed humanity from mere animal to a higher form of being.[89] At the point when humans began to live with an awareness of and desire to penetrate mystery, humanity figuratively left the Garden of Eden and became what Blaga calls "luciferic man." Up to this point humanity was incompletely human. With the inception of life in the horizon of mystery and for the revelation thereof and the appearance of the stylistic categories in the structure of humanity, humanity is completed.[90]

## Claimed Practical Benefits of Blaga's Philosophy of Culture

A practical benefit of Blaga's philosophy of culture is that it yields a number of

explanations to perennially vexing problems. For example, Blaga's theory provides an explanation of how styles are originated. Two views on the origin of style are widely accepted. It is often supposed that a particular style is initiated by an individual and then others imitate that style, causing its spread. Conversely, it is sometimes held that a style exists independently of any individuals and imposes itself upon individuals. Blaga rejects both of these views. Against the first view he points out that expressionist painters, Bergson's psychology, and Mach's physics all reflect the same fundamental style, but that they were ignorant of each other's work, therefore imitation cannot be the explanation of how they came to share the same style. Blaga's theory of a subconscious stylistic matrix, however, nicely explains this parallelism: the appearances of the same style in the works of people within the same culture who are not aware of each other's works are due to their shared stylistic matrices. Differences between their works are explained by variations between the particular secondary categories within the stylistic matrix of each individual.[91]

Similarly, Blaga's theory of style illuminates the nature of the relationship between an individual and a collective group. The problem involves questions such as, what is the relationship between an individual and a collectivity to which that individual belongs? What distinguishes an individual as belonging to one collectivity rather than another? What is it that distinguishes between different collectivities? Why are there differences between individuals within the same group? Is a collective group a real unit, or is it nothing more than a collection of individuals, the latter being the real existent? Or are individuals merely exponents of the group, and the group the real existent?

Blaga reviews and rejects the solutions proposed by romanticism, positivism, and naturalism. His own partial solution to the problem (he grants that there are other aspects in addition to the stylistic one) sees the collectivity as a community of individuals with a shared complex of abyssal categories (a shared stylistic matrix).[92] The individual, on Blaga's view, shares in these categories and has additional categories that are unique to that individual. Particularly individualistic people can, moreover, reject some of the categories shared by that individual's group. Therefore the individual is neither merely a component of the collectivity, nor is the community merely a conglomeration of individuals. When viewed through the lens of Blaga's philosophy of culture, the distinguishing characteristics and "familial resemblances" of both the individual and the group are seen to result not from one or the other being a "real existent" but from shared and not-shared abyssal categories.[93]

This explanation of the relationship between individuals and communities leads to an elucidation of a further problem: the problem of cross-cultural communication. The question of whether it is really possible to overcome cultural barriers and have effective cross-cultural communication is not a new one. Many have argued that cross-cultural communication is doomed to produce misunderstanding. Blaga takes it as evident that this is not always the case. He argues that any overlapping elements of two different stylistic matrices facilitate communication between the matrices. He states that points in common can be sufficient not only for communication between the two, but also make possible the influencing of one culture by another and the "contaminating" of one culture by another.[94]

A further benefit of Blaga's philosophy of culture, and in particular his view on the thwarting of the human aspiration toward the transcendent, is that it confers meaning upon the relativity of all human productions. That human creations are always of finite scope, limited duration, and mitigated success is often viewed as a human shortcoming. Blaga's philosophy of culture provides an explanation for these "shortcomings"

that shows their value and removes their condemnation. Humanity's aspiration toward the transcendent is laudable, and the failure to reach this goal is a result of important factors that are necessarily beyond the human reach.[95] The creation of humanity with an insatiable desire for the transcendent is, according to Blaga's philosophy of culture, an expression of the care that the Great Anonymous has for creation.[96]

## Blaga's Philosophy of Religion

### The Definition of Religion

Religion and religious themes are found throughout Blaga's works. He has two books specifically discussing religion (*Gîndire Magică şi Religie* and *Curs de Filosofia Religiei*), and his writings on metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of culture also contain materials relevant to this topic.[97] In fact, his philosophy of religion should be seen as a corollary of his metaphysics and philosophy of culture.

Blaga seeks to define religion in such a way that his definition is in accord with the empirical phenomena that are conventionally labeled "religious" and with the previous conclusions of his philosophical system.[98] He discusses and rejects Schleiermacher's definition of religion as a feeling of unconditional dependence on the absolute, since there are religions that lack either belief in an absolute or a feeling of dependence on the absolute.[99] He rejects Max Scheler's and Paul Tillich's definitions, since the former could also describe poetry and the latter could apply to metaphysics.[100] He discusses problems with the psychoanalytic explanations of religion proposed by Freud and others, listing four attributes of religion that distinguish it from other psychological phenomena.[101]

The definition that Blaga settles on is the following: "Religion circumscribes, in any of its variants, the capacity of self-summation or self-surpassing of the human being in ideal correlation with all existence, but especially in ideal correlation with the ultimate elements or coordinates of existential mystery in general, which man both reveals and/or considers revealed through constructs of a stylistic nature."[102] Several aspects of this definition require further elucidation, especially the terms "self-summation" and "self-surpassing," and the state of "ideal correlation."

The capacities of self-summation (*autototalizare*) and self-surpassing (*autodepăşire*) are described, respectively, as the lower and upper limits of religiousness. Self-summation approaches the revelation of the ultimate using all of the human faculties and aptitudes, cognitive, emotional, volitional, intuitive, and imaginative, in the effort to reveal the transcendent. Self-surpassing religion, on the other hand, attempts to transcend the inherent limitations of these human faculties and aptitudes. Although Blaga does not give a specific example of self-summarizing religion, he discusses mysticism as an example of self-surpassing religion. Most actual religious practice falls somewhere between these two extremes.[103]

The phrase "ideal correlation with the ultimate elements . . . of existential mystery" could be taken to suggest that through religion humanity succeeds in grasping the transcendent. That this is not Blaga's intent is clear from the subsequent reaffirmation that all revelation of existential mystery occurs through stylistic constructs. Immediately after giving this definition, Blaga reiterates his metaphysical scheme, according to which humanity exists in the horizon of mystery and for the revelation thereof, and according to which all human attempts at revelation of mystery are limited by the framework of style and therefore do not fully attain their goal.[104] According to Blaga, all religions are

constructs and are therefore subject to stylistic determinants. He draws this conclusion not solely on the basis of the dictates of his philosophical system, but also on the basis of his empirical analysis of world religions, which indicates that all religions are influenced by cultural/stylistic factors.[105]

What Blaga refers to as "ideal correlation with the ultimate elements or coordinates of existential mystery" is a state of reciprocity that exists between the subconscious elements that affect the processes of self-summation and self-surpassing and the manner in which humanity reveals ultimate mystery in religion.[106] According to this theory religion is a human creation, but humanity is also molded and shaped by religion. The influences are reciprocal, and because of this reciprocity, humanity and religion are matched to each other. Because of this reciprocity any metaphysical or mythical creation of religion corresponds (more or less) to the being of its human creator, while at the same time having the tendency to mold its creator to its own image.[107] According to Blaga, this reciprocity is unusually important to the understanding of religion.[108]

The specific abyssal categories that structure particular religions vary from region to region, epoch to epoch, and people to people. Therefore every religion is unique. Nevertheless, all share in certain core elements that are reflected in the definition of religion itself.[109] Blaga's definition of religion is, on his own account, "algebraic," meaning that it allows the particulars of religion (the stylistic elements) to vary from one religion to another while maintaining the immutable aspects central to the substance of religion (self-summation/self-surpassing in correlation with mystery).[110]

## Religion and Culture

It is sometimes thought that religion is not a part of culture or is not influenced by culture. It is supposed that religion is a direct product of God or that Divine revelation shelters religion from culture's influence. Blaga argues (at length and repeatedly) that religion is influenced by culture, and that religion itself is a human cultural production.[111] This is one of the main purposes of the large number of chapters in his writings on philosophy of religion that are devoted to the description of various religions. His descriptions highlight the way each religion is *at least in part* a product of the culture in which it is found.

Blaga argues that mysticism is the form of religious experience most likely to be free from culture's influence, since mystical experience is purported to involve direct experience of the transcendent or even a state of unity with the transcendent. In order to ascertain whether a religious experience free of the mediation of culture is possible, he analyzes a variety of forms of mysticism including Neo-Platonism, Sufism, Brahmanism, and Christian mysticism, as well as specific mystics like Lao-tzu in the East and Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, Meister Eckehart, Maximus the Confessor, and Pascal in the West.

Blaga does not question the authenticity of mystical experience, but questions whether they are unadulterated experiences of the absolute.[112] He points out that for a mystical experience to be unaffected by culture it would be necessary for the experience to be acosmic and suprahistorical. Since the ecstatic states and claimed unions of mystics with God that Blaga has reviewed exhibit the marks of style from the cultures in which they take place, they cannot be examples of escaping history into the Absolute.[113] Therefore, concludes Blaga, they are not an exception to the historical nature of human existence but rather are at least in part human cultural creations.[114]

## Religion and Metaphysics

The general outline of Blaga's philosophy of religion could be anticipated by anyone familiar with his metaphysical vision. According to this vision, all of existence is the result of a single cause, which Blaga names the Great Anonymous and the Anonymous Fund. This first cause has arranged its creation in such a way as to both preserve the original creation and perpetuate further creation. Two of the chief strategies employed in accomplishing this are "transcendent censorship" and "stylistic brakes." The former limits the cognitive capacity of created beings, while the latter limits their creative capacity.

Humanity is the pinnacle of creation, and has the greatest cognitive and creative capacity of any created species. The most notable attributes that distinguish humanity from other created forms of life are the aspiration to reveal the transcendent and the drive to create. However, even the human cognitive and creative capacities are subject to transcendent censorship and stylistic brakes. The Great Anonymous has limited humanity in this way in order to protect its own supremacy within the natural order of creation, and in order to perpetuate its own creative activity through its creations.

Religion is one manifestation of the human drive to reveal and create. As such, it is subject to transcendent censorship and stylistic braking. This limits the efficaciousness of the human attempts, entailing that religions remain culturally relative creations aspiring toward the transcendent, rather than achieving the status of suprahistorical revelations of ultimate reality.[115] Although all religion is relative, like any other manifestation of culture, and although it bears the mark of the isolation from the absolute caused by transcendent censorship, it can be viewed positively as a sign of the supreme destiny of humanity to strive to reveal mystery. Furthermore, religion is positive in that it is a response to permanent inner needs of the human being.[116] According to Blaga, religion remains one of the perennial manifestations of the human spirit because it circumscribes the human tendency of self-summation/self-surpassing in correlation with the supposed ultimate coordinates of existence, in the horizon of which humanity is permanently ontologically situated.[117]

Whether the great Anonymous of Blaga's metaphysics can be equated with the God-concept of monotheistic religions is debated. In light of Blaga's epistemology, it seems that the most likely conclusion is that it is not possible to know either that the Great Anonymous can or that it cannot be equated with God. This kind of knowledge of the transcendent is systematically blocked. Although Blaga's metaphysics gives an important place to the concept of the Great Anonymous, his definition of religion does not emphasize the existence of a deity or deities. Consistent with this, and also with Blaga's tolerant attitude toward world religions, it could be said both that belief in an ultimate existential entity is not important to Blaga's understanding of religion in general, and that belief in an ultimate existential entity is important to Blaga's own personal religion.[118]

Blaga's metaphysics yields a theodicy that combines an element of distance between the creator and creation and elements of the type of theodicy often referred to as a "greatest possible good" theodicy.[119] He argues, on the one hand, that the Great Anonymous does not exercise direct control over the creation process, but rather emitted the differentials of which creation is constructed and allows them to combine/interact almost randomly. On the other hand he argues that the existing world represents the best solution to a "grave impasse": how to create the greatest possible world without

endowing it to such a degree that it has the ability to destroy itself. The solution to this impasse opted for by the Great Anonymous, according to Blaga's metaphysical speculation, is the endowment of creation with creative and revelatory desires and abilities while at the same time limiting the successes achievable in response to these desires. Thus while the world may seem to be a very imperfect place, it is in fact the best world possible given the goals of the Great Anonymous: perpetual creation and preservation of that which is created.

## Revelation

The possibility of Divine revelation is an important issue in many philosophies of religion. Blaga views his ideas on this issue as direct implications of his metaphysical and epistemological systems. Blaga views the prevention of positive-adequate human knowledge of the transcendent as one of the primary purposes for the imposition of transcendent censorship and stylistic braking. Therefore Blaga believes that the Great Anonymous is oriented toward preventing human knowledge of the transcendent rather than abetting it. Because of this he has reservations about the likelihood of the existence of Divine revelation.[120]

If Blaga is reserved about the possibility of Divine revelation, he is skeptical about the possibility of any Divine revelation being unaffected by culture. In his writings on philosophy of religion he examines a variety of claimed revelations and finds that all of them exhibit cultural influences. Since culture is a transient human creation, the supposed revelations must also be at least in part transient human creations. Therefore religions based on supposed Divine revelation do not succeed in escaping the inherent historicity of the human situation.[121] This leads him to the conclusion that either the supposed revelations are not revelation or that revelation so adapts itself to the human condition that it is as variable as any completely human creation.[122]

Although Blaga sometimes demonstrates an appreciation of Christianity, it is clear that as a result of the forgoing considerations he rejects the traditional view of the inspiration of the Christian Bible.[123] However, he does embrace and frequently use the term "revelation" in his philosophical writings. The sense of this term when used by Blaga is quite different from the sense that it has when used by most theologians. Blaga uses the term to denote "any . . . positive display of an existential mystery in the spotlight of human cognition."[124] Considering how broad a realm of cognitive objects is circumscribed by the phrase "existential mystery" in Blaga's philosophy, it is evident that Blaga considers all human cognition to be revelation. Additionally, he considers all creative constructs to be revelations, whether they occur in the arts or in theoretical studies. In Blaga's writings the term revelation is a metaphor for any attempt at approaching external reality. He adds that none of these attempts is completely successful, but that this does not preclude partial successes within the limits of transcendent censorship.[125] On Blaga's analysis, "spiritual revelations" have nothing to do with Divine revelation, because the former are (at least in large measure) productions of the *human* spirit.[126]

In Blaga's schematization, human creative acts take the place of revelation in the conventional sense. Through creative constructs humanity grapples with and comes to a greater appreciation/understanding of mystery.[127] This *could* be viewed as an indirect revelation instigated by the Great Anonymous, since in Blaga's metaphysics human creativity is a result of the grand plan of the Great Anonymous for creation and is framed

by the cognitive/creative limits imposed therein. This brings Blaga's use of the term "revelation" somewhat closer to the traditional theological usage, but only infinitesimally so.

Blaga is not unaware of the possibility for contradictory revelations latent in his use of the term revelation. In the context of his philosophy of art he notes the polyvalence of nature, commenting that, "In reality, nature changes its appearance, somehow taking to itself the characteristic tendencies of the art of the time."[128] This is consistent with his implicit view that his philosophy of religion provides a better explanation of the phenomenon of religious diversity than does the traditional view of religion as being revealed by God.

There are differences between human creative revelation as it is found in religion and other types of human creative revelation of mystery (e.g., metaphysics, science, art). Most human attempts at revelation, such as those of art and the natural sciences, indiscriminately address any mystery whatsoever. Both religion and metaphysics focus exclusively on the ultimate mysteries of existence. As discussed earlier, however, religion aspires to reveal mystery through the means of self-summation and self-surpassing in correlation with the decisive coordinates of existential mystery.[129]

## Certainty

A sentiment of certainty regarding religious beliefs, sometimes referred to as a feeling of "conviction," is one of the more philosophically interesting aspects of religion. Blaga discusses certainty in the final chapter of *Gîndire Magică şi Religie*. Mysticism in particular is often accompanied by an intensified sentiment of certainty, but many other forms of religiosity also involve conviction about religious beliefs. Blaga examines the basis of the claim to certainty on the part of the mystics, since it represents what may perhaps be the most extreme case. He concludes that although mystical certainty may be more intense than ordinary certainty, it is not more objective. He argues that the apparent subjectivity of mystical experience is an indication that it, too, is subject to transcendent censorship and stylistic braking.[130]

Blaga makes no argument against the feeling of certainty that often accompanies religious belief. On the other hand, it is clear that Blaga's epistemology and proposed metaphysical system leave no room for apodictic certainty in any religion or in any other sphere of human cognition.[131] Transcendent censorship and stylistic braking together thwart any possibility of human knowledge reaching a state wherein cognitive error is not at least a possibility. Using the terminology of Blaga's epistemology, "paradisaic" cognition is limited to organizing "the given world" through the employment of categories of understanding. These shape all paradisaic cognition, distorting its objects. Luciferic cognition, on the other hand, reaches beyond the given to creatively address other problems. Luciferic cognition employs stylistic categories, however, and these shape all luciferic cognition, distorting its objects as well.[132]

This lack of apodictic certainty pertaining to religious beliefs does not undermine the justification of religion, according to Blaga. The subjectivity of religious beliefs puts them on par with all other types of human belief. Religion needs neither objectivity nor apodicity to be legitimate. According to Blaga, religion is legitimated by two other considerations: 1. its status as a cultural creation, an attempt at revelation of mystery in accord with human destiny; and 2. its status as a manifestation of the human tendency to self-summation and self-surpassing in correlation with the ultimate mysteries of exis-

tence.[133] Perhaps it could be stated that, according to Blaga, religion is not validated by its grasp of the transcendent but rather by its reach for it.

## Theology

Blaga's thoughts on theology, and on its uses, limits, and justification, reflect his conclusions regarding religious certainty. In one of his earliest systematic works, *Eonul dogmatic*, Blaga demonstrates great respect for some of the theoretical methods utilized by theology. He uses theological reflection as an example of how human cognition can reach beyond the given and explore issues that transcend the limits of empirical cognition and even human logic. For example, in *Cunoaşterea luciferică* he argues that the theological understanding of miracles is a good example of minus-cognition and of the transcending of the laws of nature.[134] He writes that the difference between theology and philosophy is not doctrinal, since they sometimes arrive at the same conclusions, but rather methodological. While philosophy does not presuppose the truth of any particular ideological system, theology begins from the presupposition that some particular religion is revealed truth, and develops its ideas based on that premise.[135]

The very nature of the theological project necessitates that it be a creative enterprise, however, and this precludes the possibility of it attaining a state of apodictic certainty in any of its conclusions. Using the terminology of Blaga's epistemology, theology is luciferic cognition and is therefore subject to stylistic braking. Theological ideas are creations of the human spirit, creations that develop over time and are influenced by the culture in which they are found.[136]

Theological ideas are expressions of the creativity of the human spirit and show the potency of the human drive to reveal the transcendent. These expressions are found in the most ancient and the most modern of thought systems. The sense of the sacred that is expressed in theology is transferred from one object to another—from rock to tree to gods to God to morality and to other ideals, in the case of the West—but Blaga observes that it never completely disappears.[137]

## Blaga and Religions

In his writings on philosophy of religion, Blaga describes and analyzes a wide range of religions and religious phenomena. He treats all of the religions that he investigates fairly and evenhandedly. It seems likely that this is at least in part a result of his belief that a philosophical analysis should not presuppose the truth of any particular religion and should remain open-minded toward all theoretical possibilities.[138]

Blaga's attitude toward world religions seems to go beyond mere philosophical detachment, however. Blaga consistently displays a very great respect for every religion he investigates. This could be a result of his view that all religions are legitimate cultural attempts to reveal the transcendent.[139] It could also be related to his views that all human beliefs are relative, that all knowledge involves constructs that are at best tentatively validated, and that experience is subject to a plurality of legitimate interpretations.[140]

Blaga's own theology has similarities to deism, of a very philosophical sort,[141] though it must be said that the most theological of his statements are intended as metaphorical expressions of things that transcend human language, and perhaps there-

fore have more of an appearance of theology than Blaga actually intends. On the other hand, Blaga writes that the idea of God is "one of the most deeply seated of human ideas."[142] At the same time, he does not utterly reject those religions (like Buddhism, for example) that do not affirm the existence of a single supreme deity, but rather sees in them an alternate interpretation of a reality that surpasses human cognition.

## Conclusion

It has been shown that culture is one of Blaga's primary concerns. Culture plays a central role in Blaga's epistemology, and it does so because of the central role given to culture in Blaga's metaphysics. Culture is the product of the human attempt to penetrate, to reveal, the mysteries inherent in human existence.

It has also been shown that Blaga understands religion as the attempt to reveal mystery in accord with the human tendency to self-summation and self-surpassing in correlation with the ultimate mysteries of existence. Religion is a culturally-mediated attempt to penetrate mystery. Religion does not overcome culture, nor does it escape culture, but religion is a form of culture. For Blaga, this is a positive in favor of religion.

Taking these two points into consideration, it can be seen how closely culture and religion are related in Blaga's philosophy. Both involve the human attempt to reveal existential mystery. "Culture" includes all attempts at revealing mystery; "religion" is culture focused on revealing the ultimate mysteries of existence.

Clearly, for Blaga religion is culture. However, in one sense it may also be said that culture is religion: culture, understood as Blaga understands it, is also a human attempt to reveal mystery "in accord with the human tendency to self-summation and self-surpassing." Both are manifestations of the human drive to reveal and create. Both are responses to inner needs of human beings, and are perennial manifestations of the human spirit in the horizon in which it is permanently ontologically situated. Both hold positions of honor and value in Blaga's philosophy.

## Notes:

1 Mircea Eliade, "Convorbiri cu Lucian Blaga," in *Lucian Blaga: Cunoaştere şi creaţie; Culegere de studii*, ed. Dumitru Ghişe, Angela Botez, and Victor Botez (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1987), 483. Mircea Eliade, "Rumanian Philosophy," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 1967), 233–34.

2 In Blaga's philosophy, "culture" refers to the collective product of human creativity actuated through a given "stylistic matrix" and within a particular set of concrete circumstances. This definition will be elaborated throughout this article.

3 Lucian Blaga, *Fiinţa Istorică* (Cluj-Napoca, RO: Editura Dacia, 1977), 406.

4 Lucian Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil* (Bucharest: Fundaţia pentru literatură şi artă "Regele Carol II," 1935), 102ff.

5 It is sometimes asserted that Blaga's philosophy of culture is merely an application of Spengler's philosophy to the particularities of Romanian culture. I believe this view to be mistaken. Mircea Muthu discusses the similarities and differences between Spengler and Blaga in the chapter "Prospecţiuni morfologice: L. Blaga şi O. Spengler," in *Lucian Blaga: Dimensiuni răsăritene* (Piteşti, RO: Editura Paralela 45, 2000), 57–65, as

does Viorel Coltescu in "Lucian Blaga şi morfologia spengleriană a culturii," in Dumitru Ghişe, Angela Botez, and Victor Botez, eds., *Lucian Blaga: Cunoaştere şi creaţie; Culegere de studii* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1987), 357–79. My own arguments for the difference between Spengler and Blaga can be found in my article, "Blaga's Philosophy of Culture: More than a Spenglerian Adaptation," *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai*, seria Philosophia, 48, nos. 1–2 (2003).

6 See Dumitru Micu, "Lucian Blaga: Un sistem filosofic axat pe cultură," in ed. A. Botez and A. Firuţă, *Dimensiunea metafizică a operei lui Lucian Blaga* (Bucharest: Editura ştiinţifică, 1996), 231–38. Eliade also acknowledged the originality and systematicity of Blaga's philosophy of culture; see Ghişe, Botez and Botez, 482–85.

7 Blaga's philosophical methodology is discussed in Michael S. Jones, *The Metaphysics of Religion: Lucian Blaga and Contemporary Philosophy* (Madison, NJ, USA: Fairleigh-Dickenson University Press, 2006), ch. 3.

8 As Blaga points out, logical arguments are not exempt from the influence of culture and therefore must intimately involve a "stylistic field" if they are to avoid being mere tautologies. Therefore Blaga's philosophy will only satisfy those who share a sufficient amount of his own structural affinity. *Lucian Blaga, Ştiinţă şi Creaţie* (Sibiu, RO: Editura "Dacia Traiană," 1942), 178–80.

9 Blaga, *Fiinţa Istorică*, 498. On Blaga's analysis, culture has two fundamental components: style and metaphor. See Lucian Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii* (Bucharest: Fundaţia pentru literatură şi artă "Regele Carol II," 1937), 386.

10 Blaga, *Fiinţa Istorică*, 292.

11 *Ibid.*, 498.

12 *Ibid.*, 371, 497.

13 Florica Diaconu and Marin Diaconu, *Dicţionar de termeni filosofici ai lui Lucian Blaga* (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedia, 2000), 72.

14 Blaga, *Ştiinţă şi Creaţie*, 151; Blaga, *Fiinţa Istorică*, 496 -97, 510.

15 See especially Blaga, *Ştiinţă şi Creaţie*, chapters 18 ("Câteva probleme de teoria cunoaşterii") and 19 ("Doua tipuri de cunoaştere").

16 Blaga, *Ştiinţă şi Creaţie*, 176; *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii*, 407.

17 *Ibid.*, 184–85.

18 For an explanation of the Great Anonymous in Blaga's thought, see Jones, *The Metaphysics of Religion*, ch. 4, "Blaga's Metaphysics."

19 *Ibid.*, 185–86.

20 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil*, 101–2, 108, 136. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, see vol. 1, ch. 4, "Makrokosmos: The Symbolism of the World-picture and the Space Problem," especially the subchapter "Spatial Depth as 'Time Become Rigid': The prime symbol."

21 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil*, 137–38.

22 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii*, 402; *Ştiinţă şi Creaţie*, 199, 211.

23 Blaga was a contemporary of Freud and Jung and interacts with their views on the subconscious, the existence of which is generally taken for granted today but was controversial in the early 20th century. Blaga views the existence of the subconscious as a postulate justified by the need to explain observed psychological phenomena. Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil*, 97. Regarding the stylistic categories, see *Ştiinţă şi Creaţie*, 174–76, and ch. 9 ("Doua tipuri de cunoaştere"); and *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii*, ch. 5 ("Categoriile abisale"). Vasile Muscă states that, with the introduction of the stylistic categories, "Blaga operates a transfer of criticism from the upper level of the conscience, the

seat of the cognitive activities the analysis of which preoccupied Kant, to the dark basement of the subconscious, the hearth of creative activity." Vasile Muscă, "Specificul creației culturale românești în câmpul filosofiei," in Lucian Blaga, ed. Ghişe, Botez, and Botez, 469.

24 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforie şi Sensul Culturii,* 413.

25 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil,* 109.

26 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică,* 498; *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 409.

27 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 412–413.

28 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil,* 133.

29 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 414.

30 Ibid., 414.

31 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil,* ch. 7, "Teoria dubletelor."

32 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică,* 490, 502–3; *Ştiință şi Creație,* 176 (footnote).

33 In his earlier systematic writings on philosophy of culture, the term "stylistic matrix" occurs and the term "stylistic field" (câmpul stilistic) is missing. In his later systematic writings the terms stylistic field and stylistic matrix are used synonymously, as in Ființa Istorică, ch. 5, "Câmpurile stilistice"; see also Ființa Istorică, 420, 485.

34 Blaga, Orizont şi Stil, 176; Ştiință şi Creatie, 177–78.

35 In some places (e.g., Orizont şi Stil, 177) Blaga lists five factors, listing the spatial and temporal horizons of the subconscious separately. In other places he includes the spatial and temporal horizons under the single heading "horizon of the subconscious" (e.g., *Orizont şi Stil,* 175). I follow this later practice in my enumeration of four factors.

36 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil,* 175.

37 Ibid., 177, 182–83; FI, 420–39.

38 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil,* 178.

39 Ibid., 177.

40 Ibid., 184–85. The chapter "Interferențe stilistice" in *Ființa Istorică* discusses the different ways that stylistic matrices relate to each other.

41 Diaconu and Diaconu, 218.

42 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil,* 179.

43 As an example of this Blaga discusses the coexistence of Saxon and Romanian culture in Transylvania. *Orizont şi Stil,* 115.

44 This is the subject of the chapter "Durata factorilor stilistici," in FI.

45 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil,* 152ff., 175, 179; *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 410.

46 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil,* 109, 179; concerning space see ch. 4 ("Cultură şi spatiu") and ch. 5 ("Intre peisaj şi orizont inconştient"); concerning time see ch. 6 ("Orizonturi temporale").

47 *Ibid.*, 107 (footnote), 117.

48 *Ibid.*, 120–21.

49 *Ibid.*, 127.

50 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil,* 127–28

51 *Ibid.*, 130.

52 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică,* 498, 509. Blaga contrasts this part of his philosophy with that of Hegel, who sees "Ideas" as the basis of history.

53 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil,* 141. Although this suggestion may sound somewhat odd, Blaga points out that there are numerous common examples of similar phenomena. For example, a person is intrinsically linked to his/her self, but this does not entail that s/he positively values all of his/her qualities.

54 *Ibid.*, 150.

55 *Ibid.*, 142.

56 Here Blaga is forced to make recourse to metaphoric language to express his concepts.

57 *Ibid.*, 152.

58 *Ibid.*, 152.

59 *Ibid.*, 153–54.

60 *Ibid.*, 154–55.

61 *Ibid.*, 157.

62 *Ibid.*, 158: modul individualizant, modul tipizant, modul stihial (elementarizant).

63 *Ibid.*, 158. See also Lucian Blaga, *Ferestre Colorate* (Arad, RO: Editura Librăriei Diecezane, 1926), 359.

64 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil*, 161–62.

65 *Ibid.*, 159–63.

66 *Ibid.*, 163–64.

67 *Ibid.*, 164–70. Blaga remarks that the sense of a Byzantine painting is only appreciated when one steps out of the habitual mode of observation (individualized or standardized) and views it from its own, elementized perspective. *Ibid.*, 167.

68 *Ibid.*, 186.

69 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii*, 414.

70 For a more detailed explanation of Blaga's epistemology, see Jones, *The Metaphysics of Religion*, ch. 5, "Blaga's Epistemology."

71 This does not imply that type I cognition is not interpretive—all human knowledge of this world is interpretive, even type I cognition, which interprets based on the cognitive categories. Lucian Blaga, *Experimentul şi Spiritul Matematic* (Bucharest: Editura ştiinţifică, 1969), 657.

72 Blaga, *Ştiinţă şi Creaţie*, 199, 211.

73 Blaga, *Fiinţa Istorică*, 492–94.

74 "ecuaţie intre idee şi realitate" (*Geneza Metaforie şi Sensul Culturii*, 417). Blaga is well aware that this definition of truth raises a critiriological issue, as discussed in the preceding chapter.

75 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforie şi Sensul Culturii*, 417–18. Both types of cognition attempt to reveal mystery. The former does so in a cognitive way that is subject to specific limits, and the latter does so in a cognitive-constructive way that is subject to additional limits. *Ibid.*, 447, 449ff.

76 *Ibid.*, 417–18; see also *Blaga, Ştiinţă şi Creaţie*, 180.

77 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforie şi Sensul Culturii*, 418 (my translation).

78 Ibid., 417–18. A brief but useful discussion of Blaga's writings on philosophy of science and culture is Mircea Flonta's article, "Analiza culturală a cunoaşterii pozitive," in Botez and Firuţă, 257–60.

79 Blaga, *Ştiinţă şi Creaţie*, 160–61 (my translation). See also Angela Botez, "Campul stilistic şi evoluţia ştiinţei" in Botez and Firuţă, 261–66, where Botez compares Blaga's philosophy of science to that of Thomas Kuhn and other recent thinkers.

80 Blaga, *Experimentul şi Spiritul Matematic*, 685.

81 Blaga, *Fiinţa Istorică*, 490, 502–3; *Ştiinţă şi Creaţie*, 176 (footnote).

82 For a more detailed explanation of Blaga's metaphysics, see Jones, The Metaphysics of Religion, ch. 4, "Blaga's Metaphysics."

83 The Great Anonymous uses the cognitive categories to limit cognition and the stylistic categories to limit construction. When humanity tries to penetrate mystery, it turns to the immediate, but this way is blocked by transcendent censorship. Humanity therefore turns to creative constructs, but that way is blocked by stylistic braking. Therefore humanity never completely succeeds in penetrating mystery. In this way humanity is maintained in its permanently creative state. Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 450–51.

84 Lucian Blaga, *Diferenţialele divine* (Bucharest: Fundaţia pentru literatură şi artă "Regele Carol II," 1940), 179, and *Artă şi valoare* (Bucharest: Fundaţia pentru literatură şi artă "Regele Carol II," 1939), 631–32.

85 Blaga, *Fiinţa Istorică,* 510.

86 *Ibid.*, 493, 503.

87 *Ibid.*, 293, 467 ("tragic and wonderful destiny" [destinul tragic şi mareţ]); *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 459.

88 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 441, 442. Blaga writes that culture is at least as essential to humanness as is the physical human form (ibid., 443), and that it is the sine qua non of humanness (ibid., 446). He insists that no other animal life-forms create culture, and that this phenomenon makes humanity unique in the world. See GMSC, ch. 11, "Singularitatea omului."

89 *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 444–45, 353. Blaga states that there are few forms of existence in the universe (he lists inanimate material, plant, animal, and human) and therefore the appearance of this new mode of existence is very significant.

90 *Fiinţa Istorică,* 496 (omul luciferic), 498.

91 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil,* 181–83.

92 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 439.

93 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 437–39; *Orizont şi Stil,* 184ff.

94 Blaga, *Orizont şi Stil,* 185.

95 This philosophy was perhaps of some comfort to Blaga himself, whose struggle to reach God or grasp the ultimate meanings of the universe is reflected in both his poetry and his philosophy, as is explained in Keith Hitchins' introduction to Brenda Walker's translation, *Complete Poetical Works of Lucian Blaga* (Iaşi, RO, Oxford, Portland, USA: Center for Romanian Studies, 2001), 45–48.

96 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 452.

97 Lucian Blaga, *Gândire magică şi religie* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1987); *Curs de filosofia religiei* (Alba Iulia: Editura Fronde, 1994).

98 Blaga, *Gândire Magică şi Religie,* 467.

99 *Ibid.*, 467–68.

100 *Ibid.*, 469.

101 Blaga claims that, contra the conclusions of many psychoanalysts, the basic characteristic of religion (the tendency toward self-summation and/or self-surpassing in correlation with the ultimate elements of existential mystery) is supremely normal for humans. *Gândire Magică şi Religie,* 476–77.

102 Blaga, *Gândire Magică şi Religie,* 470 (my translation). As Tănase points out, this definition is liable to be viewed as unacceptable by many religious practitioners, since it seems to humanize and secularize religion; Tănase, *Lucian Blaga: Filosoful poet, poetul filosof,* 142.

103 Blaga, *Gândire Magică şi Religie,* 472.

104 *Ibid.*, 470.

105 *Ibid.*, 471.

106 This is also explained in Aural Codoban, "Un Blaga ignorat: Filosoful religiei," 377–78. Aurel Codoban, "Un Blaga ignorat: Filosoful religiei." In *Eonul Blaga: Întâiul Veac,* ed. Mircea Borcila (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1997), 381–82.

107 Blaga, *Gândire Magică şi Religie,* 473–74.

108 The eminent Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae has criticized Blaga for making style/culture more fundamental to humanity than religion (Stăniloae, *Poziția domnului Lucian Blaga față de Creştinism şi Ortodoxie,* 13). This criticism may perhaps be guilty of overlooking the reciprocity between human religious creations and style. This reciprocity seems to indicate that religion and style influence each other, which is in fact consistent with Blaga's philosophy of culture. In several places Blaga indicates that religion is one of the basic expressions of the human soul (see, for instance, *Gândire Magică şi Religie,* 505). What is culturally relative is not the phenomenon of religion, but rather the particular form that this phenomenon takes in a given setting.

109 Blaga, *Gândire Magică şi Religie,* 475.

110 *Ibid.*, 475, 480–81.

111 On page 352 of *Gândire Magică şi Religie* Blaga states that religious phenomena inevitably have a stylistic structure. On page 478 of *Gândire Magică şi Religie* he argues that religion, like any other cultural creation, is always under the influence of the stylistic categories, no matter how complex or intellectual the religion is. Even the extremely rationalist religion of Kant is subject to stylistic formation (*Gândire Magică şi Religie,* 475).

112 Blaga, *Gândire Magică şi Religie,* 426. At one point Blaga does write that an ecstatic union with God cannot take place except through the self-deception of the mystic, because there does not exist permeability between humanity and the Great Anonymous.

113 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică,* 503; *Gândire Magică şi Religie,* 373, 417, 439.

114 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică,* 504; *Gândire Magică şi Religie,* 426.

115 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică,* 503.

116 Blaga, *Gândire Magică şi Religie,* 480.

117 *Ibid.*, 474.

118 See Ioan I. Ica, "Filosofia lui Blaga din perspectiva teologică: Reconsiderarea unei polemici," in Mircea Borcila, *Eonul Blaga: Întâiul veac* (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1997), 383–95.

119 Lucian Blaga, *Diferențialele divine* (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură şi artă "Regele Carol II," 1940), 86, 154.

120 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 479.

121 *Ibid.*, 479.

122 *Ibid.*, 441.

123 In one place Blaga asserts that Christianity is a myth affected by the Greek synthesis of religion and culture. Lucian Blaga, *Eonul Dogmatic* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1931), 202–3.

124 Lucian Blaga, *Cenzura transcendentă: Încercare metafizică* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1934), 454 (my translation).

125 *Ibid.*, 454–55.

126 Blaga, *Ființa Istorică,* 502; Ion Manzat, "Elemente de psihologia religiei," in Botez and Firuță, 283.

127 Blaga, *Geneza Metaforei şi Sensul Culturii,* 457–58.

128 Blaga, *Ferestre Colorate*, 360 (my translation). Blaga is quoting or paraphrasing Oscar Wilde, but does not reference his source.

129 Blaga, *Gândire Magică şi Religie*, 471–72.

130 *Ibid.*, 493–95.

131 The renowned Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae argues that Blaga's philosophy makes all knowledge relative and is therefore anti-Christian, since Christianity (and especially Orthodoxy) is based on the certainty of revealed truth. Some might argue that Blaga's view of the human predicament and the resultant epistemological modesty that this view suggests are in fact more in keeping with the Christian view of the inherent limits of created beings, the cognitive consequences of the fall, and the nature of saving faith than are the perhaps immodest epistemological views of theologians like Stăniloae.

132 Blaga, *Fiinţa Istorică*, 492; *Diferenţialele Divine*, 184.

133 Blaga, *Gândire Magică şi Religie*, 488–89.

134 Blaga, *Cunoaşterea Luciferică*, 400–401. He also writes that the Christian doctrine of the two natures of Christ is an abuse of minus-cognition, 399–400.

135 Blaga, *Gândire Magică şi Religie*, 342–43. Blaga states that the presupposition of the truth of a particular religion is totally legitimate for the theology of any religion (Blaga, *Curs de Filosofia Religiei*, 12). Some might object that philosophy's rejection of initial premises is itself a premise and an ideology, but Blaga does not comment on this possibility.

136 Blaga, *Eonul Dogmatic*, 209; *Gândire Magică şi Religie*, 344.

137 Blaga, *Gândire Magică şi Religie*, 486.

138 *Ibid.*, 342–43.

139 *Ibid.*, 180.

140 On the polyvalence of experience, see Blaga, *Ferestre Colorate*, 360.

141 Lucian Blaga, *Hronicul şi cântecul vârstelor*, ed. Dorli Blaga. Vol. 6 of *Opere* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1979), 55. Blaga's theology is most similar to deism when it posits a supreme Creator who initiated creation in such a way that the Creator's continual intervention is not necessary. It is unlike classical deism in that it proposes that the Creator is continually creating by continually emitting additional "differentials." Săvulescu argues that Blaga held that God cannot be understood but can be "known," and that therefore Blaga was a theist. Geo Săvulescu, *Lucian Blaga: Filosofia prin metafore* (Bucharest: A. B. România, 2000), 50ff.

142 Blaga, *Gândire Magică şi Religie*, 367.