Codruța Cuceu

Lucian Boia
The Scientific Mythology of Communism

Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2005

At a sincere and unpretentious assessment of *The Scientific Mythology of Communism* we must say that is striking from the very beginning. Its author, Lucian Boia, a renowned Romanian historian, interested mainly in the history of ideas and of the imaginary, but also in the problem of ideologies, proposes us an understanding of historical facts without judging them in moral terms such as *good* or *bad*, *proper* or *improper*. Lucian Boia avoids thus the most frequent misunderstanding in the field of social sciences, and especially the domain of history for decades, - that of transforming every assessment in order to fit a certain ideology. The premises on which the author bases his inquiry regard not as much the fall of communism, but its existence, "its extraordinary capacity of materializing a utopia". The thesis argued for by the entire argumentative system of the book is that communism must be interpreted as a mythology whose essence is given by the spanning of history and from the perspective of the imaginary. The author's approach to communism affiliates in a way to a long interpretative tradition of the question of totalitarianism. This tradition is represented for example by scholars like Eric Voegelin and Raymond Aron who affirmed that fear and terror cannot explain modern despotisms and that a religious feeling is also needed in order to understand totalitarianism. So, according to these interpretations, there is something that transcends the contingency, the contextual consequences of certain actions, and which characterizes and better explains the totalitarian practice.

What seems to characterise any totalitarian ideology is a certain refuse of history as a chain of possible events, as a denial of any hazardous or spontaneous happening. From this perspective, Lucian Boia's makes use, in his interpretation, of a rather meta-historical method which tries to surprise the trans-historical, firm and settled elements that define certain periods of time. At first sight, the contiguity of terms like mythology and science seems conspicuous. But Lucian Boia's entire book focuses on demonstrating the structural duality of communism. This dual structure comprehends, on the one hand, *mythology* which entails a faith in stable principles which transcend political or social canons and, on the other hand, *science* which usually means a rational and coherent argumentation of a theory and also its verifiable ascertainment. In the following, it becomes necessary to describe the two dimensions which made communism a coherent and, in the beginning, an appealing ideology. As Lucian Boia's analysis regards basically the mythological dimension of the phenomenon, the obscure or more or less hidden mythical elements which are inherited from an entire frame of mind which dominated the 18th and the 19th century, the book argues that communism is based on a *reinterpretation* of some obscure or more or less mythical elements inherited from the dominant frame of mind of the 18th and 19th century. A reinterpretation based only on those elements corresponding to a millenarian perspective. These secularized millenarianisms, as the author himself calls them, are entailed by the crisis of the "old", i.e. bourgeois, societal structures. Social, economical or political crisis intervened in a traditional society, brought along by a linear perspective upon history, finds its solution in building a more resistant new order, or in regaining a primordial, undisturbed, and heavenly one. Their function is to cre-

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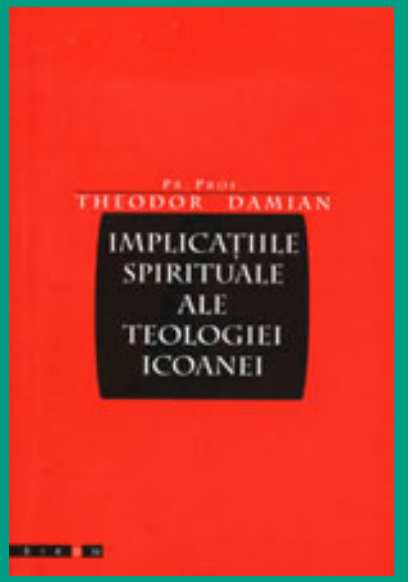
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ate a new, purified society and, as the author demonstrates, even a new world. These millenarianisms have an eschatological attribute too, being situated at the end of history, or even more, being an end of history.

In order to follow the genesis of communist scientific mythology, one should identify and comprehend first the criterions for understanding and judging a system of myths. The Romanian historian's work is quite enlightening in this respect. Some general characteristics of mythology can easily be tracked in the book. The effort to bring the sphere of mythology into a systematic perspective, even if it is not a programmatic or declared purpose of the book, might represent one of the most important theoretical outcomes of the work. Thus, Boia affirms that a certain imperfection of the relationship between theory and reality defines any mythological perspective. From this imperfection emerges the ideal of constructing or inventing an entire universe, fundamentally different. Mythology implies not only a perspective upon the world but also an explanation of the sense of the world and of society, in an exhaustive and judicative form. It represents an extensive system marked by universality and coherence. It represents a diagnosis of a certain state of affairs and it also offers a solution. Some characteristics of mythology such as doctrinaire stiffness and irreversibility of the historical process, that is, the existence of a unique sense of historical becoming are also clearly stated in the book. What is striking about mythology is the fact that it functions like a bond between totally separate levels of society. Thereby, at least in the case of communist, there is a correspondence between economy and mental representations or between the social evolution and the linguistic evolution. Certain nostalgia for unity defines any mythology. The appeal of ideology to mythology is justified by its character of being accessible and not needing, beforehand, a scholarly documentation in order to be understood. The most important issue in communist ideology "is the belief in the capacity of Reason to organize the world in accordance with an implacable logic". Boia names a few types of mythological systems, such as the historical and the political, the socio-economical and the nationalist.

This theoretical overview leads the author then to an analysis of the mythological dimension of communist ideology. Lucian Boia believes that the social and even the political are dominated by the imaginary. Thus he describes communist mythology as a series of contradictions guided by the project of a "global transformation of the world in accordance to a radical scientific methodology". Its main two characteristics are consequently *transformationalism* and *voluntarism,* in other words, man's will to reform the existent order of the world, or even bring a global change.

The author defines communist mythology also as a Philosophy of History. History had to be forced in communism to fit the so called *natural* development of the society. But the only thing that proved to be natural in communism was this pure spiritual or mental construction and the urge to oppressively exercise it because, in fact, he flew against the natural drift of society. Such a structural Philosophy of History had to enjoy an imaginary or mythical historical embedment, because everything from the past had to fit a certain view upon the future. Communist mythology is fluid, having phases of growth and decay. The core of the mythological communism is tracked by the Romanian historian in the work of Marx. He then traces and depicts the main influences brought by the other theoreticians, such as Engels, Lenin and Stalin, who have grounded the communist ideology. The key and magic word of communist mythology is hard-labor. Knowledge and science are only prolongations of labor. If the ideal of reconstructing or at least of restructuring the world rests on its pillars, *myth* and *science*, transforming myth into science by means of anticipation, falsification, simplification or exaggeration, was the main methodology used by communist ideology. Minciurinsim and Marxism answered the methodological need to create a new world. Science came as a warrant of the millenarian dream. For, knowledge tends to explain everything, it is thoroughly controlled, and it is coherent and aims at unifying the differences that characterize separate fields. Thus the connection between mythology and science in the communist ideology becomes apparent. As science is defined by laws and methodology, the communist ideology had to re-



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spect these criteria and imposed at all levels the law of "planned development and the law of ceaseless growth of labor productivity". Science was, on the other hand, judged itself by a scientific criterion and was divided into false science, the traditional science which was a product of class-struggle and real, true and authentic science, the communist science. An opposition described also the relation between the traditional scholars or scientists, with a rather theoretical view upon things, and the new scientists, extracting their knowledge from practical experience and, of course, from labor. The sciences of man had a precarious place between the other sciences, and the intellectuals, if not transformed, then excluded One by one, the sciences were transformed into ideologies in order to train man in the struggle against nature. One of the most important sciences in the ideal of dominating nature was biology. Nature was considered *bad* and had to be corrected. Space had to become homogeneous, man had to become immortal. And he could become immortal if he controlled the social causes of death, if he changed society. Literature and art had to become scientific, their role being identified with that of transforming people's minds. The writer became an "engineer of the souls" and had to embark the spirits on the path of pure thought. Linguistics had to create an essential superstructure for all languages which would, eventually, create a unique language. Historiography had to be submitted to communist teleology and history had to serve the interests of the present and of the future. Action, which pertains to the political, was subordinated to the scientific project and the political was substituted with administration and economic management.

A simple review cannot catch the irony and the detachment of an author who had no other choice, along time, along communism, but to develop those attributes as means of spiritual protection and intellectual resistance. Such a detailed radiogram of the communist society is necessary for every proper social economic and political diagnose. Lucian Boia explains thus the inefficiency in applying social, economical and political democratic principles in this "other world" disordered and perverted by communism.

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Theodor Damian Implicațiile spirituale ale teologiei icoanei

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Într-o lume în care fenomenul secularizării şi al globalizării sunt tot mai prezente, omul contemporan se găseşte în ipostaza unui individ abandonat, expus unor multitudini de probleme, care pot fi de natură financiară, morală, dar şi spirituală.

Theodor Damian încearcă să ofere omului contemporan o soluție de ieşire din criza spirituală în care se află. El pleacă de la constatarea că în Occident este tot mai scăzut interesul omului pentru Dumnezeu, şi implicit pentru religie şi pentru valorile spirituale. Această situație se datorează în primul rând societății de consum în care omul devine un "epifenomen al economiei". La capătul unei radiografii a Occidentului, autorul indică o soluție de salvare a omului post-modern. Această soluție presupune o reîntoarcere a omului la vechile valori religioase (creştine), mai precis o reîntoarcere la Dumnezeu. Omul are nevoie de o nouă sensibilitate la ideea de Dumnezeu. Iar în acest sens, teologia trebuie să rostească din