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Issues

## Petre Țuțea or some axiological anchors for a necessary patriotic education

Venera-Mihaela Cojocariu <sup>a\*</sup>

*"Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, Department of Teacher Training, Mărășești Street nr. 157, Bacău, 600115, Romania*

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### Abstract

Petre Țuțea remains the brilliant sage model in oral formulation. After a life of extremes, "his memorable words" may be regarded as axiological anchors, worthy of generating serious reflections and a return to Romanian specific values. Our study aims at a problematizing reading and text analysis from the perspective of the need to identify and at suggesting to young generations authentic values.

Approaching, with this reading scheme, a number of 5 books published between 1992-2011, has led us to interesting discoveries both in terms of the axiological anchors found as well as the arguments they are supported with.

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### 1. The Problem – Who am I?

Patriotic education is an inseparable and unmistakable component of the integral educational process. Nucleus of moral education, it can be, in any case, neither ignored nor eliminated from the generic action of forming the personality. And contemporary globalization makes it even more actual! A polymorphous term with multiple meanings, the term of globalization will be used in this paper with the meaning of the significant influences that one part of the world has over all the phenomena and processes from the other parts of the world, in terms of all aspects (economic, political and cultural) and their interaction. By its very nature, globalization generates multiple and unexpected effects in all fields and, obviously, in education also. One of them is the unprecedented dissemination of the values and a rich exchange of these together with promoting non- and

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\* Corresponding author. Tel.: Venera-Mihaela Cojocariu, Tel.: +4-074-706-6462;  
E-mail address: [venera\\_1962@yahoo.com](mailto:venera_1962@yahoo.com)

pseudo-values. The impact of mass media and of informal channels is very trenchant in presenting various educational “alternatives” that are facile, consumer-related, “in fashion”, compared to which the autochthonous patriotic education looks obsolete. It suffices to refer to the favorite music of youngsters, to the movies watched at home or in cinemas, to their way of speaking or dressing, to the way in which (and the extent to which!) the esteem for the Romanian language, for traditional music and for national customs is (still) manifested, to the way in which and how much the nation’s religion is treasured. The phone, television and the Internet have become levers of globalization, gates through which there is a constant and injudicious flooding with values mixed with non-values. If the phenomenon is reeling to an adult, to a child or a young person it is disorienting. The axiological roots are shattered from the foundations and, marked by the impulse of the group of friends, of the social environment and of the “fashion” of the times we are now living, they will situate themselves chaotically, still hesitantly, until being able to make choices. We do not know what kind of choices and on what grounds the choices will be made!

The unity and continuity with the family, the past, the history and the traditions are starting to tremble to the point of breaking, being deeply affected, self-identity and national identity are starting to be altered, the phenomenon of estrangement is accentuated and there may occur, at one point, a deep feeling of loss of self. The answer to the question “Who am I?” can no longer be constituted simply, honestly and accurately. We are in a time characterized as “an axiological anarchy – a disease of the European modern society” [1, p. 175]. The paper aims at finding, by relating to Petre Țuțea, an axiologically based answer to the previous interrogation.

## **2. The solution - What is to be done?**

From our point of view, the major solution to this problem is reconsidering and restoring patriotic education as one of the essential vectors of building self-identity. We define patriotic education as the systematic and constant, formative process of forming the awareness of national values and of a behavior that treasures them.

Patriotic education is necessary and very actual, although it may be made to look otherwise. Sometimes, willingly or by mistake, patriotism is marginalized, ridiculed or blamed as nationalism, right or left radicalism. To avoid errors and excesses, we believe that reestablishing it should be done in a unitary way and on the level of the entire educational system, taking into consideration the following essential bearings: identifying the defining national values; identifying the models that may provide the process with real “substance”; making the models accessible and their operationalization by trainers for all categories of age; designing and putting into action some successful formative strategies that may allow the models “to speak”, to be able to trigger emotions, to lead to the patriotic feeling, the pride of belonging to a certain culture and a positive attitude towards national values.

Our approach is in agreement with the “philosophy of nuances” suggested by Țuțea himself. Not just because “everything flows” but particularly because the way in which the thinker bloomed in the Romanian culture after 1989 and, after his death, should be gradated, without losing anything from the value that makes him exponential, and by correlating his entire spirit with his life and major experiences. Our final aim is to trigger reflection upon regenerating the patriotic feeling as an emotional state and, subsequently, as a behavioral axis. Our study is situated on the position of appreciating Romanian values, of respect for the national values of any people fully balanced with respect for universal values with which they are not in contradiction but in complementarity. The idea of interdetermination and mutual support of the patriotic feeling was better expressed by the writer Mihail Sadoveanu: “Patriotism is not hatred against other nations but duty towards our nation; it is not the claim that we are the worthiest people in the world but the urge to become a worthy people” [2].

## **3. Talking to Petre Țuțea... 110 years from his birth and 20 years after his death**

From the 10 volumes published posthumously we have turned our attention to four of them: *Between God and my nation* (1992), *Philosophical writings* (2005), *Fragments* (2007) and *322 Memorable words by Petre*

Țuțea (2009). We have considered that whereas the first and the last volume describe better the way of being and feeling of the man, the other two give us clues about his philosophy. Reading the texts was done with the purpose of identifying and selecting some “national” values, in order to present them synthetically in terms of their pedagogical beauty and formative implications. The values that the thinker places in the foreground of his speech are God, the Romanian people and the Romanian language. From these, we have focused our analysis only upon two of them. So far, we have not come across other Romanian authors that have attempted such an approach.

1. The image about the value of The Romanian people has, for Petre Țuțea, a triumphant value that, although liable to the accusation of subjectivity, may play a tonic role in supporting the national being. He claims that “The Romanian people is one of God’s wonders in his march upon the Earth” [3, p. 22]. He is convinced that, just like with a human being, nobody can take away the roots, the tradition and history of a people: “Nobody can stop a nation from living its tradition and history with its glories and defeats” [ibidem, p. 99]. The terms of the discourse are similar to Mihai Eminescu’s idea that: “Patriotism is not only the love for the land one was born in but, especially, the love for the past without which there is no love for the country” [2] and, in unison with the perspective of father Justin for whom “the nation is my mother, my father, my brother, my sister, my neighbor, my village, my parish and my county and all those who speak the same language, have the same faith and the same ideals” [1, p. 79]. In conclusion, “This is the nation, and neither is it such a dangerous notion” [idem].

In the dispute between cosmopolitanism and conservatism, Țuțea gives priority to the ethnic, declaring that when we introduce our humanity we always belong to a nation. Therefore, we should not say “I am just as simple man” but “I am Romanian, first of all” [ibidem, p. 232]. Supporting the relation between the European and the national level, he will proudly declare: “I am culturally European, but my spiritual basis is that of a peasant from Muscel” [5, p. 127]. And, so as to avoid any confusion, he (re)introduces himself with one of the briefest visiting cards: “My definition is: Petre Țuțea, the Romanian” [ibidem, p. 128]. All his spiritual or material achievements are marked by the creator’s belonging to a nation, this placing an unmistakable print upon everything that is produced: “The universal aspirations of each Romanian, his creations carry necessarily the stamp of the national specificity and of the living style detached from it...Any nation weaves its history out of its own substance” [ibidem, p. 232]. This is not always a simple process, on the contrary, at turbulent times it may mean confrontations, disputes, losses, up to the ultimate sacrifice: “Sometimes this national specificity takes the dramatic form of fighting...because a physical and spiritual order that is always present within ourselves forces us to sacrifice everything for the keeping of our being” [idem]. We could even say that the present time, a time of the crisis of values, may be likened to such a deadlock that demands to wake up from the axiological lethargy, to recover the axis of our own values, to oppose, by all means, unnatural borrowings that have disastrous effects upon the national being. The strategy that Petre Țuțea recommends is that of complete optimism, highlighting the fact that “every time that I think in the spirit of the Romanian nation, I move with all my weapons and luggage (with my hope) in the future” [5, p. 94]. His positive approach to the future relies on the lessons of history, which allows him to conclude: “This nation of ours is so vigorous that I do not doubt the fact that its virtues will get it out of impasse” [ibidem, p. 95; 2, p. 282].

Obviously, he does not doubt at all the inestimable worth of the people he belongs to: “The Romanian people is in no way inferior to the German or the French people. We may not have a Goethe, but we have an Eminescu” [2, 342; 5, p. 93]. He is supported by famous allies in the field of philosophy. Heidegger is one of them when asserting that “the Romanian people will play an important part (...) that will manifest itself in the future in great creations produced by its endless genius, within a climate of absolute freedom” [4, p. 55]. The best example shared by the philosopher himself refers to the moral support constituted by belonging to the Romanian people during the 13 years spent in a communist prison. He does not wish to share with others too much about the hardships he was faced with there, believing that “he cannot offend the Romanian people by saying that such monstrosities took place inside it” [5, p. 126]. In the darkness of his cell, he kept thinking about the Romanian people and his concern, just like that of everybody from his generation that underwent the same trials, was, as he confesses “not to make a fool out of the Romanian people” [ibidem, p. 127]. Can there ever be a more beautiful

national love declaration than this? In a courtyard with 600 people, Țuțea said: “Brothers, if we all die here, in stripes and in chains, we will not be those honoring the Romanian people because we die for it but it will be it that will do us the honor of dying for it!” [ibidem, p. 95]. Exceptional! As a fact, as a patriotic belief, as a possibility of formative exploitation.

That is how he managed to discover the formative valences of imprisonment, being glad that in prison he had the time and the space in which he met true models of culture and national resistance. In this context, he quotes Maniu, who has, as an effect of the experience of imprisonment, the revelation of another deep truth that he shares with him: “What is so great about being a MAN?” [3, p. 79]. Looking back detachedly at the 13 years of incarceration, he cannot help correlating his feelings with the indisputable value of the people he is part of, which he confesses, with soteriological virtues, that he belongs to: “I find consolation - in the historic grandeur of the Romanian people, I am an invisible small wheel, but I am. Everything that I have suffered (...) I would be unconsolated had I not had been living with the firm conviction that I’m honored to suffer for a great people. This is what saved me from madness. That is (...) I represent a great nation, heavy with history and its bright future” [ibidem, p. 341]. His coming out of prison finds him proud of being Romanian and vibrating with the feeling of happiness for belonging to this people: “I am Romanian and, as a Romanian, I believe that I am the hub of the universe. For, had I not been Romanian, I would be nothing (...). I am Romanian by vocation. (...). Everything that I think becomes Romanian” [ibidem, p. 307].

The various and profound experiences that marked his life led him towards very strong convictions concerning the quality of “a good Romanian”, exigencies that any Romanian should consciously take on. When asked by Nae Ionescu about his image of a true Romanian, Petre Țuțea answered, keeping his countenance, by combining the two bases of his patriotism (the Romanian people and the Christian faith): “To die for Romania, without regret, as many times as Romania asks for it; (...) to respect everything that somebody else does that he himself is not able to do” [2, p.95]. Elaborating upon the same idea, the philosopher will add a new profession (detaching himself from and polemicizing with E. Cioran’s pessimism): the idea of trust in the natural existence of our people in Europe, a culturally individualized existence: “The first condition of a Romanian is to believe that the Romanian people is like the trees and animals, like the mineral, the vegetal or the animal world. This indicates a special existence within the European context” [ibidem, p. 330].

There also occurs the difficulty felt by contemporary educators in forming such solid characters as well as the need for firm axiological benchmarks for the growing and education of a good Romanian. Petre Țuțea himself named some of the value anchors that supported him in overcoming nothingness: glorious ancestors (rulers – Stephen the Great – but also men of culture of his time – N. Iorga, Nae Ionescu, Lucian Blaga, Emil Cioran, Mircea Eliade) and the Christian idea [ibidem, p. 343]. Going back to his incurable optimism, he unconditionally links his hopes to the nation that he belongs to entirely: “My hope is in the people” [ibidem, p. 344].

2. Concerning the Romanian language the thinker declares himself in close connection with the Romanian people, manifesting a deep admiration towards it by comparison to other national languages, known as languages of international communication: “The French language is not brighter than the Romanian language” [2, p. 84]. By expressing such attitudes he relates, directly and indirectly, to the authors of Romanian origin (for example, Emil Cioran) who would rather write in French and whom he appreciates as exaggerating and as “falling into the ordinary when saying that: I do not want to spoil my French language with the Romanian one” [idem]. To the same effect, he believes that the cultural tool created by the Romanian people, its maternal language, is one that has virtues of universality, manifesting nevertheless a national pride that goes beyond the limits of objectivity: “The entire universal culture may be spread through the patterns of the Romanian language; this is the merit of the Romanian people: to have created a universal and generally valid tool” [idem]. He conceives it as an integral cultural product: “the Romanian language has full virtues” [5, p. 69]. Its use requires real mastery because: “It is very difficult to handle” [idem], not allowing everybody to use it to its full expressivity: “You should indeed be somebody in order to be able to write brilliantly in Romanian” [2, p. 84]. The intrinsic value of the mother tongue and the way in which one will succeed in using it will situate one on the appropriate position in the cultural

world: “By means of it, one may become an eagle or a choir singer” [5, p. 69]. Also in the context of analyzing the Romanian language, he identifies some of the causes for which it has not turned into a universal language: its incorrect use: “It is true that it is not used properly, but this does not mean that it does not have the quality of global vehicle of the universal spirit” [2, p. 84], “What we lack is courage” [5, p. 69].

His pride of being Romanian is declared in close connection with the admission of belonging to the “beauty of the Romanian language” [3, p. 312]. Petre Țuțea expresses himself lucidly, first by relation to the essential national values and then to the European ones. Without ignoring the fact that the two categories of values cannot be understood but as a unit, he highlights the uniqueness of Romanianism, that by means of which we become and remain “somebody”: “I am consciously Romanian and I am aware of the fact that I belong to a real European nation – the Romanian people! We have a history, a tradition in culture, we have a glorious language” [idem].

#### 4. What can we do?

We are trying, full of anxiety, to recover the initial whole. We are growing more and more unilateral, perhaps more productive but not more accomplished. And, of course, lonelier, without belonging to a whole in which we may find ourselves and out of which we may nourish ourselves with the conviction that we feel the same and we take our nourishment from the same sources! Without the national feeling, deep alienation is irreversible! Țuțea will plead for the unity between the body, the soul and the mind, blaming the rationalistic excess “once the emotional pillars have fallen, the harmonious human being is replaced by one that is crippled, decayed, distorted!” [ibidem, p. 90].

In an attempt to find, together with Petre Țuțea an axiologically based answer to the question “Who am I?”, we inevitably return to his words. It seems that he is constantly reminding us, in very simple words but without being innocent, essential truths: that we are defined by our belonging to a culture, that language is the home of the soul, that without being within your nation you are nothing, that you cannot be whole but at home, that you have to know and love your historic past and the great models, that you have to be proud of what you are, that you have to be optimistic. The great lessons of love for the country should be re-learned, through a natural “eulogy of normality” (as is called one of the themes that Țuțea no longer had the time to give his attention to, as he would have liked)!

For students, especially for those in the Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education, this approach to the national values should turn into conviction. From our point of view, certain axiological focuses dominate the process of their initial training: special attention paid to studying moral education in terms of national values and applying it in various educational contexts; the students’ performing, within the teaching practice, of certain non-formal activities with preschoolers and lower-elementary pupils, with the purpose of knowing and cherishing national values; performing, with students, non-formal activities (debates, students’ circles, visits) focusing on knowing and formatively using local and national values; empowering students with strategies for engaging parents in the educational activity focused upon national values; the practical training of students in building real partnerships with the family and cultural institutions.

Therefore, we are launching the challenge of reviving the dialogues with Petre Țuțea so as to be able to contribute, by modest means, to the melting of models into generations!

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