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## Elements of Ethnology in high school adolescent personality construction. Premises in knowledge of national identity

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### Abstract

**Objective:** In the actual context of globalization and acculturation is necessary knowledge of national identity. In this respect, we propose an optional class of Ethnology / Anthropology into high school, during a school year.

**Hypothesis:** Minimal knowledge thus acquired, guide the high school teen toward a better contact with the mentality and life philosophy of the Romanian people.

Teaching axes:

\*\*\* Reporting of own developing personality to a ethnic personality impressed by beliefs, myths, religion and its origins.

\*\*\* Defining of individuality as human cannot be done in the absence of reporting: I - the others, I - ancestors, "I and mine".

\*\*\* Humanistic culture as a fundament of personality, regardless of profession subsequently adopted. Of the humanistic sciences, anthropology is pre-defining of psychology.

\*\*\* Because Europe represents an immense ethnic richness, issue of European ethnology currently arise, as a defining lode strengthen respect between nations and preservation of non conflictuality, emotional and territoriality.

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**Conclusions:** Developing a personality can't be made in the absence of ethnological education. Discovering own ethnicity open new horizons of altered understanding, as a premise of good interpersonal relationship.

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**Keywords:** Ethnology, school teaching, anthropology, popular culture

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Given the fact that Ethnology is a science with multiple social and human implications, that it defines the particularity of a nation that brings irrefutable evidence – in this case, of the permanence and continuity of our nation, it seems absolutely natural and normal to be included, as a mandatory feature, in the curriculum of the (pre) university education.

The knowledge of the nation to whom it belongs has a particular importance in the training of a physician, pharmacist, judge, prosecutor, actor, engineer, politician, policeman or IT specialist, especially in the case of those with jobs implying permanent relations with the people of this nation, who they must understand from several points of view, not only the strictly individual one, because we are all marked by ethno genetically in our mentality and behavior. That is why, I do not believe that a class of ethnology would be pointless and worthless, with an ethnology manual drawn up by reputable personalities of this science from our country, a class and a manual providing the students with the compacted and explicit image of Romanian spirituality, from the traditional clothes, pottery, loom, grazing to mythology, doinas (traditional Romanian songs) and ballads, from craft and popular techniques to family relationships, human life habits or those along the year, from dances and architecture to beliefs, creeds and cultural symbols, from popular idioms (= dialectology) to folk poetry hermeneutics, with the meanings, ideas and feelings submitted by the Romanian folklore and the popular culture, as a whole.

The development of Humanities showed that a society is based on cultural and ideological structures. A class of ethnology would be extremely important for the knowledge of these structures and of the vital forces of our Romanian creation and belief, with a coherent, indivisible system, where Christianity and Paganism are interlocked, are mingled in a unique, original and original substance.

I believe that it is a patriotic debt for each of us, keeping the popular tradition, the knowledge of the autochthonous thinking in its entire brilliant complexity.

It is not at all hazardous to state that ethnologic education of future specialists may represent the warranty of meanings, of concepts and principles which they work within their profession. The ethnologic values embody and update three types of values: national, general-human and transcendental.

Each adult is formed in the mentality of their living environment, according to certain patterns which shall shape their personality and shall send them a set of values, with a capitalization system and a life doctrine, with the premises of a philosophy of existence.

Romanian Humanism is one of structure, the direct result of a collective spiritual life experience, certifying the age of a culture lived in a continuous process of completion.

From the Romanian folklore falls off an optimistic conception on world and life, curdled in a human project, with opening towards the future and with faith in it, in its possibilities to create and to send the universal values of Good, Truth, Beautiful, in this corner of the world gifted by God with so much beauty and wealth. These fundamental values correlate with the complementary ones:

joy and love of life, altruism and tolerance, simplicity and serenity, humanity and sufficiency, spirit of justice and sense of measure.

Romanian popular culture had and has a formational influence on the horizons of human life, generating a strong and lasting influence on cult art and literature.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many folklore collectors (Vasile Alecsandri, Nicolae Pasculescu, G. Dem. Teodorescu et al) dedicated their entire life to piously collecting the thesaurus of popular thinking and creation, which they deemed necessary for “the knowledge of the major skills and abilities of nature”.

The ethical side is dominant both in rites, as well as in the overall view confessed by the poetic texts. Romanian were pragmatic by nature, with inclinations towards the material culture. Romanian popular humanism, marked by substrate, is of Geto-Dacian essence, bearing the symbol of the eternal aspiration of the human to self-improvement. The Romanian Ethos has a prospective dimension (meaning the possibility to see into the future and to model the generations for the future. The sphere of Romanian symbols, with the human in the center, shows an anthropocentric conception. It is an open thinking system, projected on all there is in the visible and in the invisible world. The feature of the thinking way of the people, in agreement with the serenity and optimism which characterizes it, is the absence of the **terrifying** from our folkloric creations. There is nothing depressor or occult intervening in the web of the world.

George Calinescu noticed the healthy skepticism, weighing the basic optimism, according to the classical principle of **measure** in everything. Human wisdom and activity (which is also continued beyond this world) remain the spiritual dominants. As a summary of the synthesis, the specialists established as a common general feature, of all folkloric creations, regardless of the genre and the species to whom they belong, the following: anonymous, oral, collective, syncretic, expressive, popular, communitarian, national, didactic-educational (Calinescu, 1941)

Lucian Blaga considered popular culture a monument for the nation’s glory.

At the end of the Middle Ages people become aware, sentimental and spiritual, the affiliation to a community, which may be considered the starting point from where it irradiated, subsequently, the **national principle**, but the notion of **nation** (as promoted by the French Revolution) was imposed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning, the idea of **nation** expressed a universalistic conception on human, in the natural right, as it had been promoted by the **French Enlightenment**. One of the revolutionary principles of this moment was the one stating the right of nations to self-determination (to decide their own fate), this being the climax of the awareness of the collective self.

From the point of view of **Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu**, **Romanism** is humanity, freedom and truth “totally and substantially opposed to **cosmopolitanism**, which means, for him: egoism, slavery and lie”. But, in all his works, there is the inhalation and exhalation of universalism, making him our **contemporary**, introduces us with value added, in the nowadays’ debates of ideas, anticipating the relations of concentric circumscribing of the terms: Romanity, Europeanity, Universality, starting from a common nucleus, marked by their synonymy in essence. “The history of a nation is the most truthful universal history” (Hasdeu, 1879).

The understanding of the cultural past of Europe results from the knowledge of the cultural inheritance of each member. Karl Propp was among those proving that the oldest myths and beliefs survive, still, in the modern popular literature. Outstanding personalities in anthropology, ethnology, dialectology, compared linguistics and from many other adjacent sciences, confirm the hypothesis that Europe’s cultural history is not an amalgam of random causes and effects, irrational product of the hazard, that is complies with a unitary model, well structured, in which there can be

distinguished three layers: a) prehistoric, b) Christian, c) Muslim. Between these periods, which do not start and do end suddenly, there are thousands of years of evolution, of interferences, of variants, which led, eventually, to the existence of a European cultural mosaic, conferring the originality and beauty to the human creation, **by unity in diversity**.

That is why, it is a duty to protect and to keep, from generation to generation, this thesaurus, this mosaic of a priceless value.

Being a European or a planetary citizen should under no circumstance mean, the loss of the national identity, but, on the contrary, its strengthening to overcome ethnic anonymity, which, moreover, can be religious and cultural, damaging the human essence by its depersonalization.

It is spoken intensely about Europeanization, about globalization, a planetary mega test whose purpose is to create another world, structured in another way, disposed, administered, with another geopolitical configuration, other meanings and other ideals. Nowadays, it is believed to be obsolete to talk about **Romania = unitary national state**, as it is mentioned in the first rows of the **Constitution**, consolidated by the unity of language, religion and culture of its citizens. Such a gesture might be an error, creating an error, equivalent – by metaphoric extension – to the state of senility and decrepitude, a feature of very old people.

Terra is currently a planet in a hurry to shake off its past, not entirely honorable and to enter into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium with another look. By definition, the appearance is out-of-date, vulnerable, but the spiritual essence tends towards immortality. Civilization is the freedom of the human spirit to evoke and to respect collective memory, to bring gift of gratitude to the ancestors. Specialists, scholars, politicians, say that this Europeanization process shall last for about 500 years and the globalization might last 1000 years. We will not live to see this, but I am among those who are sure that the human spirit, faithful to itself, shall return with nostalgia and piousness to the resources of the past and shall evoke us, the ones from today, as we evoke the ones from the 5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries, even further, from the centuries before our era.

It is not the national or planetary form of organization, it is not the emergence of supranational bodies and the transnational companies, it is not the dissolution of borders the one which increase the risk of identity loss of a nation, but its own disinterest for its language and traditions, for its material and spiritual culture, the forgetfulness of those who created and formed this culture, unique in its way, irrefutable, which may confer national identity and singularity to its members.

I anticipate the point of view and arguments of the partisans of the incorporation of nations in one absolute and total unit, regulated by repeated selective filtrations and characterized by acculturation.

Even now, we see that civil documents, citizenship, have replaced, as importance, the nationality, this having no more the connotations it used to have, with the disturbing affective meanings which use to unite the past, the present and the future of generations, arising one from another. Then we used to talk about a community identity (a community identical to itself). Now, we talk about a community identity (which is not, by far, similar, as a suggestion, to the previous one), whose proven features are: social solidarity, tolerance and respect of otherness (understanding and acceptance of the culture and religion of the other).

This process of European and global integration has already started and we cannot ignore it. Before the **European Union** lay down difficult objectives: to find formulas of equilibrium and harmony between the multicultural societies, to classify the statute of cultural minorities, to clarify the statute of cultural minorities, to develop Europe's relations with other continents. Romania itself has two major objectives: to reveal and to insure the permanence of European cultural values, on the one hand, and to protect its own ethical values, on the other hand, for, as the chronicler Grigore Ureche stated, "we stood up in front of all evils and all invaders coveted to the riches and beauties given to us by God, in His great generosity" (Ureche, 1647).

National culture, formed by the popular and the written culture – as the obverse and reverse of the same medal, is the depositor of the most lasting spiritual values, firstly – the totality of the symbolic forms of expression, by which a people describes, consciously of itself, of its skills and vocation. Our national culture has value attributes of high order. The 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century were centuries of accumulation and settlings of values, when the notions of **romanism** and **patriotism** became synonyms, as shown in various contexts of ideas by our philosophers Constantintin Radulescu-Motru, Constantin Noica, the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti and many others.

The relation between the notions of culture and cultures is the same as the one between the notion of human and humans. The singular forms represents the notion in its absolute unity and the plural form represents the variety of the forms of manifestation of the unit in individualities, singularities.

#### **Absolute versus Relative**

The contemporary reality is assaulted by fast changes, some of them positive, others negative (even traumatizing), generating the alteration of the human essence.

In this context, that the human cannot be aware of yet, it is imposed, persistently, the re-discussion of the idea of plurality of cultures and the forms of relating and of communication between them (multiculturalism, interculturalism). The philosophic and theoretic speech (with too many and insufficient pragmatic implications, offers a wide range of opinions, from defeatism, skepticism, pessimism, spread at the diplomatic refusal or the virulent critics with violent attacks, some of them armed, interpretable as real crimes against humanity.

From the middle of the past century (the '60s), was installed, with quasi-certainty, the ideas that human acts, inter-ethnic or inter-statal relations are no longer controlled by rationality and creativity. The greatest dangers which lurk the cultural European culture are: the kitsch, the skepticism and the acculturalisation (= deleting the cultural differences).

For sure there are – and we cannot ignore them, inter-human, inter-ethnic, inter-statal, intercultural tensions – some of them natural, other caused. But efforts must be made to overpass and extrapolate the difficulties of communication and of settlement, for the survival of the human race. Constructive solutions are imposed, based on the respect of otherness. Lurked with fatality by natural disasters, by armed conflicts, the humanity must find by itself these solutions, must not wait for solutions from a deus ex machina. Firstly, it must be rediscovered and capitalized the “ethical nucleus of humanity” as Paul Ricoeur called **tradition**, in his book “L’Histoire et variete” (Ricoeur, 1955), meaning having the spiritual energy, active, positive, generator of progress.

Each ethnic community has a dedicated inheritance, a specific way of thinking, with a particular vision on life and purpose of the Human, a set of conventional behaviors (laic or religious), institutions, customs, rites, myths, spiritual creations which are still conveyed orally and which form, as a whole, an identity form of existence and expression.

Unfortunately, the identity crisis symptoms are multiplying and are getting worse, from the individual to the community. The European integration process (= Europeanization) or planetary (= globalization, mondialization) must not cancel the individual’s right to their national and cultural identity. Now, more than ever, traditions must be sacredly kept and passed on to future generations.

The alienation from tradition, from objective or subjective reasons, results in the disorientation, bewilderment, confusion, uncertainty and alienation, predispositions to immorality, violence, deviant social behavior in subhuman and inhuman form. These consequences severely affect, in the first place, the **youth**, who may become stateless, mercenaries, easily to be recruited in paramilitary organizations, for the interests of others. Others become “internationalists”, **migrants** without an objective.

Ignorance and the lack of an ideal, the insufficient anchoring in the system of values guaranteed by tradition and ethnic identity make the young man a sure victim of dehumanization.

Yes, any individual is free in their actions, has the freedom to decide, which they may use without limitation, but their decisions and actions affect everyone around them. Freedom guarantees the individual's right to choice but, more often, the choices affect morally, spiritually and even physically the ethnic community to which that individual belongs. **Tradition means** a summum of spiritual creations unifying temporal dimensions, condensed in a sole geographic point and a singular historic experience. The condition for the survival of a tradition is the respect of its members for it and its permanent recreation by knowledge and perfection, by identification with itself.

There are personalities considering that tradition is an obstacle against progress, modernization, for, sooner or later (in a thousand years) the planet shall present only one indistinct civilization, globalized, based on technologic and intellectual progress, but on psychological and spiritual regress. The Hell as well is paved with good intentions!

There are texts and pretexts accusing tradition and traditional cultures of rigidity, encystations, being unfit for the progresses of communication, nourishing conflict states and intolerance. Sic cogito, thus thinking therefore, this is not the case of traditional communities of Christian essence. Each community offers a personal and original representation of the world and the society. If the questions come from one common stock, generally human, the answers translate the variables of human thought, the possibilities corresponding directly, practically, to reflect and to analyze the deepest problems of human existence. The variety, the specificity and the plurality of traditional cultures is explained by differences of environment, of culture and of geographic and historic conditions. And, however, an ethnic community offers by its traditional values, stability and security to each member.

In the depth of cultural tradition, in its axiological paradigm, in the multitude of its creative possibilities we will find (meaning we will search for!) the resources for enrichment and re-humanization of modern society, where one of the most unpleasant consequences of the incipient process of globalization is the loss of cultural identity.

Psychologists, psychiatrists, psychoanalysts claimed, on numerous occasions, that the membership to a **language**, to an **ethnicity** is very strong in the case of any person, even if in certain objective conditions it remains in latent state in the subconscious.

Each human has the right to life, to a place under the sun and to a God of its own. He will find all these in the tradition of his people.

The Romanian people is tolerant and open, promoting universal values, such as: peace, the good, truth, wealth, beauty, and honor. It supports European and global integration buy not only by acculturation, but also by keeping diversity and cultural identity of each ethnicity and each member.

It supports the expansion of intercultural communication based on dialogue and respect to the other's **culture**, according to the **new concept of humanity** which appear supporting the classical fundamental values, bringing its contribution by its ethnic tradition to the ideal of human personality. More than ever, the planet needs unity in thought and action. A major cultural project is necessary, integrating, with equal, full and legitimate rights, all communities, ethnic and linguistic minorities, whom it must protect and support, in order to understand the purpose of the human in the universe and to save humanity from self-destruction, from annihilation by dehumanization.

This proposal, to introduce ETHNOLOGY as a compulsory study subject, in the pre-university education and at the High school graduation examination in order to prepare the generations from the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium for a world of peace and tolerance, of respect for the other,

of love for our neighbor, regardless of the race, ethnicity, religion, of culture to which it belongs, represents only a first step in this major project.

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