ORTHODOXY AND ROMANIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

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*Abstract: The world today heads more and more rapidly towards globalization, towards a world in which identities are seen as a whole that concur for an international equilibrium. Nations are integrated in this process, globalization appearing thus not as something destructive, but as a force which sometimes amplifies specificity. National identity doesn't seem to be threatened, but its report with globalization supposes an interdisciplinary dialogue. In Romania orthodoxy is one of the most defining elements of national identity and, against the international tendency of encouraging tolerance, combating religious discrimination, stimulating interdisciplinary dialogue, it continues to manifest vividly, as a defining Romanian national element. This reality could be tested in an experiment, with the **design**: 2 lots, one randomized of 320 students, one homogenous of 130 students, of intentionality. **Instruments and methods** applied were of quantitative and qualitative type: questionnaire, focus-group method, semi-structured interview. **The results** have shown an increase of the youths' awareness regarding the presence of orthodoxy in their lives as element of national identity; although the general attitude towards globalization and its effects in everyday life is a positive one, we observe a growing tendency towards defending and practicing orthodoxy and awareness regarding its importance in Romanian's national conscience.*

Keywords: Orthodoxy, interdisciplinary dialogue, globalization, national identity, nationalism and universality.

Introduction

The world today heads more and more rapidly towards globalization, towards a world in which identities are seen as a whole that concur for an international equilibrium. In the context of the intense reports between the states members in UE and of the general issue of adhering to this international organism, more than one aspects of nationalism are to be reconsidered, an essential one being the national identity. We start from the assumption that globalization is a force that amplifies specificity. In this global identity the national identities will be redefined in a complex process of renegotiating the place of the national cultures inside them. Ethnicity and globalization do not exclude each other, but on the contrary they are wished to be complementary processes of the contemporary world (Schifirneţ, 2009).

The Romanian public opinion does not have a firm grasp of the real meanings implied by the discourses on European integration. Still, the Romanians seem to have a favorable attitude when asked about this issue, at least at the declarative level. The situation differ when we consider the European behavior and mentality which are not completely structured, thus existing a difference between the favorable attitude for adhering to UE and the real attitude towards integration. The positive image built around the European Union is in close connection which what this means in personal plan. Moreover, a particularity of the Romanian public space is the lack of the Euro–skeptical (Schifirneţ, 2011, 22).Most youth believe that there is a low respect for the human and moral values but they are optimistic regarding the adhering to UE (IRSOP 2005).

Romanian national identity vs. European identity

Identity is an analytical concept which has several contradictory meanings, being a source of sense for the different social actors. National identity is one of the most powerful identities, both at individual and at community level. It expresses collective attitudes, mentalities and behaviors which appear as a result of the historical evolution and of the belonging to the same national state. A nation has unique features which define its identity, like language, religion, culture, habits and traditions (Schifirneţ, 2009, 465).

Romanians consider themselves members of the national state rather than European citizens which they place, in their mentality, after the local and the national specificity. In 2007 was developed a study in Sibiu which confirm the fact that the Romanians identify themselves first of all as Romanians: only 4% of the respondents answered that they have an European identity, compared with 33,6% who identify with national level, 27,7% with regional level and 24,1% with local level. The conclusion was that the Romanians cannot yet perceive an European identity (Dragoman, 2008, 74).

Even if Romanians travel and work overboard like never before in history, thus having a wider opening towards European culture and mentalities, they perceive the European identity as a limitation of the sovereign national state. Those who travel and live overboard tend to compare their Romanian identity with the Romanian soul. The first one is conceived as resulting from the national specificity that can be defined starting from two axes, religious (orthodoxy is the element which conserve our culture and spirituality. Romanians of all ages who travel overboard and who feel misplaced or rootless, often search Orthodox churches for a long time, these giving them a feeling of belonging), and linguistic (the language is the binder of our ethnic identity).

Romanian identity has a historic evolution and continuity. In lots of ways the Romanians from nowadays are identical, in certain ethnic and spiritual characteristics, with the Romanians of all times. Then the Romanian identity is represented by collective representations and mentalities which distinguish them from other national groups. The Romanian identity, in which the myths occupy a significant part, is the expression of the national character, the ensemble of the psychical-moral fundamental features of a nation, constantly found in the behavior, mentality and actions of its members, being thus easy to identify in their behaving manner as national group (Schifirneţ, 2009, 473). This national character reflects the personality of a nation, its identity, it is the result of the conservative instinct developed in front of history's permanent provokes. We may say that it is molded by the historical, economic, political and ethnological contexts and particularities and which make it differ from other national entities.

It is a reality that for at least 200 years the Romanian society travels in a slow and unequal modernization process, influenced both by internal necessities and by external pressures. Each time the Romanian state begun a transition era, the old inheritance was carried along also – this specificity became a brand of the entire Romanian modern history, a legacy which led to one of the Romanian main characteristic: the resistance to what is new, the defensive attitude, the need for axiological traditions and identity elements. Another historic legacy is the frailness of the political life and of the democratic regime and the low civism of a great part of the population (Pippidi, 2000).

Orthodoxy and national identity

The Romanian identity is stated as a constant of the Romanian national character, a sum of the real or imaginary qualities or flaws the Romanians have. The Romanians report themselves to a common fond, made up of ancestry, religion, language, culture, common conscience and they adhere spontaneously at traditions and habits which think they define them.

To certain symbols and beliefs they confer a special significance – the orthodoxy. „We are orthodox because we are Romanians and we are Romanians because we are orthodox", in the Romanian people existing a certain type of religiousness (Ionescu, 1998) – it is one of the traditional beliefs which lies at the very foundation of the Romanian soul.

One of the historical legacies we were talking about earlier is the orthodox confession and the manner in which it manifests as an axiomatic feature in the Romanian life. Most of the times the confessional communities overpass the boundaries of states and nations, being a form of spiritual manifestation with a transnational character. The forms of the cults may vary according to the cultural space, they are colored by the local traditions, by the experiences and the representations of the implicated persons. The habits may differ from one community to another, but at a wider space the resultant is a spiritual profile which becomes a characteristic feature of an entire ethnic group.

For the Romanian space orthodoxy glued the territorial unity and offered an important identity support. From the first centuries of the middle ages it defined the everyday calendar, determined the daily activities and influenced the social gestures and behaviors. Over the centuries existed a strong interconnection between Orthodox Church, State and people, according to the founding Byzantine model.In the entire Balkan area orthodoxy represents an essential element of the cultural identity which binds people with a common religious past. It was often considered the spring and the organic element of the national resurrection even since the ottoman period and the long antagonism with the Muslim world. At a general level, we may state that in this space the concept of national identity cannot be grasped without referring to the religious and cultural element and to the national ideologies which partly developed from the religious realities of orthodoxy. For centuries orthodoxy is the catalyzer of certain modalities of peaceful life and is still offering the spiritual dimension which is so necessary today.

No wonder the orthodox affiliation framed the cultural and religious identity of the Romanians, an identity which has a great power of retention, even in extreme situations. People may easily renounce to certain traditions or habits or even language, but they will never abandon their own faith, which they hold even more powerfully when threatened (Cucoş, 2000). This is not necessarily a matter of practicing orthodoxy – there are individuals who believe less or not at all, but who take part at the orthodox community. It is a matter of personal and collective identity, of the need of belonging and of having axiological landmarks.

Experiment: objectives, design, methods and results

This reality could be tested in an experiment applied on two target groups, mainly of youth with ages between 19 and 30 years. The idea came up during some seminars with interdisciplinary thematic, discussing issues like the international tendency of encouraging

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tolerance, combating religious discrimination and the stimulation ofan interdisciplinary dialogue.

Seminaries based on intercultural education are supposed to transform students not only on cognitive level, but also on an affective and attitudinal level, the human encounters engaging the trainees and the professors' personalities on a more profound dimension. Interculturalityhas a strong psychosocial dimension, its problematic appearing in the last decades as an educational response to the increasing phenomenon of globalization. It is not a new discipline, nor a new science, but it is a methodology which seeks to integrate data from psychology, anthropology, sociology, culture, history etc.. Its aim is to accomplish an education for all, in the spirit of recognizing the differences which exist inside the same society, and it seeks to prepare students to perceive, accept and respect alterity (Cucoş, 2000).

For the students at Educational Sciences, who constituted one of the target groups, intercultural education is a discipline taught in the third year of study, thus having a particularized curriculum, adapted for the professional educational career they follow. The specific competences are constructed on two dimensions – professional (harmonious combining and utilization of knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to accomplish the expectations atwork) and transversal (the development of a pro-active attitude, of facilitation of a person's adaptation to the social environment; the acknowledgement and respect for man's fundamental rights in different periods and conjectures of their existence). The specific objectives are: the optimization of the interactions between students belonging to different ethnic, cultural, racial or religious communities; the optimal solving of eventual conflicts generated by the preconceptions referring to the affiliation to different ethnical, racial or religious communities.

From intercultural perspective, religious education aims the accomplishing of an education in the spirit of recognizing and respecting the differences which exist inside different religions. It does not refer to education for a specific religion, desconsidering the values upon which other religions base. The most important axiom is the valorizing of differences, an authentic religious education being made on reciprocal permeability and acceptance of what is different or of other values than our own. We can see that the accent does not fall on the cognitive dimension of knowledge, but rather on the affective, attitudinal and action ones.

Research design: our research, qualitative and quantitative standard type, developed in the university years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. We worked with two intentionality structured experimental groups, one homogenous of 130 students and another, heterogeneous, of 320. The first target group was represented by the third year students at the SpecializationEducation Sciences, who studied Intercultural Education as an obligatory discipline in the first semester, 1 hour course and 1 hour seminary each week, in amount a total of 28 hours per group. The students were aware about our experiment and they agreed to take part at it. During some of the seminars they were organized into four groups, each representing a specific religious group: Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, Protestant. Each group made a portfolio with various religious information, about traditions, history, specific customs, social and political problems encountered in time. Debates were organized

concerning the Romanian national identity and the presence and endurance of orthodoxy as element of national identity.

The other group was randomly chosen – students at various specializations (from engineers to history and sports), a total of 320 students.

As research methods we used the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview (the peer-group discussions). The questionnaires were applied to students at the end of the course and seminar activities and were meant to measure the degree in which they reported themselves to orthodoxy as an identity element. In the same time they contained semi-objective items where students could freely express their opinions on issues like national identity, European identity, advantages and disadvantages of globalization. The respondents were informed regarding the purpose of our study, the manner in which we will use the obtained information, accentuating the necessity of acknowledging the personal and collective identity, of constructing a healthy opinion regarding the international process of integration, in the same time underlining our intention to discover the ratio in which for them orthodoxy represented a strong element of identity. Regarding the students' opinions, we constructed three main dimensions – orthodoxy as identity element; national identity vs. European identity; general attitude about the integration process and globalization.

The questionnaire items were formulated so that to cover the quantitative and qualitative dimensions, and the appreciations were structured on a five steps scale, from 1 = *none* to 5 = *in great measure*. At the first item (which is relevant for our study)–*The measure in which orthodoxy represents a definitory identity element,* we obtained the following answers:

-in great measure – 83%;

-in large measure – 17%;

-satisfactory– 0%;

-in small measure – 0%;

-none – 0%, thus most of the students considering that orthodoxy was for them a very important presence in everyday life, a landmark compared to which they defined their personal identity and their identity as Romanians.

The majority of favorable answers have shown an increase of the youths' awareness regarding the presence of orthodoxy in their lives as element of national identity; although the general attitude towards globalization and its effects in everyday life is a positive one, we observe a growing tendency towards defending and practicing orthodoxy and a vivid awareness regarding its importance in Romanian's national conscience.

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