

## **IOAN ALEXANDRU AND IUSTINIAN CHIRA – MORAL VALUES AND MODELS**

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*Abstract: In a tumultuous and anguished world of irrational dangers, the religious poetry can submit to a quiver of tranquility and a positive state in which man can stop, even for a moment, to enlighten the meaning of his existence. For this, poetry becomes a cathartic form in an existential-spiritual process, on one hand extracting from the placidity of the pauperized ordinary life, starting from cultural and spiritual values; on the other hand, the advancement towards the harmony of eternal values.*

*One can speak of a rationality of poetry, as the presence of the Supreme Reason in it, by its senses, as seeds of existence. The poet creates through the given reasons in the world, in a superior metaphysical connection with the Supreme Reason. This function is especially inspirational and crucial.*

*Ioan Alexandru enrolls the 60th Generation in a very special way. Continuing the "struggle with inertia" he understood that in order to uncover the great mysteries of the cosmos and of life, it is necessary to descend into the depths of it and from there, to enter the light through a sacrifice, similar to that of a burning candle, in order to light around his own being.*

*Through his religious poetry, the poet proclaims a cosmic liturgy on the altar of the supreme Word, meaning that all the words he uses are offerings to the great Word.*

*The time the poet has spent with great orthodox theologians embellished and ennobled him, sealing his soul for eternity.*

*Iustinian Chira represented for Ioan Alexandru a model of purity, finding peace at Rohia monastery, the place that was so loved and appreciated by the poet. They were both have worthy models to follow in these suffocating and hard-tempered times, which sadly kill spirituality, christianity, and love among men.*

*The corespondence between Ioan Alexandru and Iustinian Chira remain a christian encyclopedia, and we all have to browse its pages that contain love and peace in order to receive forgiveness and light.*

*Keywords: models, light, Supreme Reason, peace, values*

One of the most delicate problems that arise in our postmodern society is, among other things, the boundless lack of models. The twentieth century was characterized by an unprecedented development of science and technology into the detriment of the spirit, even though the great minds of this century gave mankind amazing works and eruditions. The mankind produced a slippage that showed its consequences in the second half of the previous century and which does not cease to show them even today.

It is enough to think about the great horrors of the twentieth century and to realize the lack of a "minimum moralia"<sup>1</sup> that would probably have prevented many of those atrocities.

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<sup>1</sup> The expression belongs to Andrei's Pleșu book, *Minima moralia. Elements for an ethic of the interval*, the 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2008

The postmodern period in which we find ourselves needs more than ever models to follow and to ascend to.

In the following, I would like to present two models of human conduct, animated by the same feelings of human valorization and rediscovery of the Christian values that lead to it.

This is the Christian poet of our loved and precious Transylvania, the poet of the hymns, Ioan Alexandru, and the ascetic who spent most of his life in the mountains of Rohia, the blue-eyed man, the one who was Archbishop of Maramures, Iustinian Chira. They are two impressive personalities because of their way of dealing and living a peaceful and worthy life and regarding the limits of humanity and the state of Christian normality. It is enough to just browse the volume "*Letters*," where mysterious thoughts are inserted, special feelings that animated the two.

The two personalities needed each other. On one hand, the poet Ioan Alexandru was preparing himself for a way of initiation, and he was firmly convinced that the impetus that would take and carry him through the bright, less bright or even gloomy places of his initiation is that of the ascetic from Rohia, Iustinian Chira.

On the other hand, we may postulate that even the ascetic needed the poet to reveal everything he had gathered in his troubled soul in the mountains of Rohia.

In a prophetically manner, Ioan Alexandru perceived this initiatory path when he wrote to his friend: "*I'm preparing for another trip to learn while I am still young, and I am worried again, I am compelled to endeavor.*"<sup>2</sup>

The poet Ioan Alexandru wanted this initiatory journey to take place there, in the Rohia mountains, close to the ascetic. He searched for the loneliness, the core of the forest, where he would try to raise awareness in the tragedy of the man thrown into the world, in a pascalian or heideggerian manner. So he was also talking about the individual being exiled from the beginning of the world: "*I write to you at night in front of some texts. I want absolute loneliness until the end of the world. There in the middle of the forest. What could be done? I want an ascetic nest, without any human step, to read and despair for the tragedy of the man who has been dumped and from the beginning of the world.*"<sup>3</sup>

In his uncertainty the poet seeks a sanctuary to his dear abbot, longs for him and his freedom over the constraints of the world and the tempest of the world. For this, Iustinian Chira constituted for the poet a refuge, a patronizing shield on which he could rest on and enjoy the brotherly love.

The exchange of letters between the two reveals their exceptional characters and way of seeing things. Particularly interesting is the fact that the poet, having the hidden desire to spend his time being near the ascetic, often identifies himself with him, in the sense that he also wants to have an "altar" in the silence of Rohia and from there, to show and preach the world his feelings of love and tolerance for humans.

In a letter addressed to Iustinian Chira on May 14, 1970, the poet undertakes a covered itinerary by the Resurrection light that identifies the ascetic mission with that of the poet: "*Every day must be the day of resurrection, even if you die on the cross is still the day the resurrection, even if you are ill, you are ill with the wounds of the resurrection, even if you have no bread, you are hungry at the dawn of the resurrection, even if you are at the wedding, you are at the wedding of resurrection, even if you drown, you drown in the light of the resurrection.*

*The light of the resurrection has filled so deeply that the shadowy void is bright as light. The light of the resurrection banished the darkness from every corner of the universe.*

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<sup>2</sup> Ioan Alexandru, Iustinian Chira, *Letters*, Cluj-Napoca press, Baia-Mare, 2001, p.18

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, p.19

*There is only resurrection in every pulse of the whole cosmos, in everything and in all there is resurrection, besides the sin that can make it of itself, of its freedom. In sin the image of the resurrection is extinguished. As the sun darkens the serene face of the sea when it is pierced by the swords of the storm.*

*Beloved brother Iustinian, your letter and locution is of value only because it comes through the Holy Grace to me, that it does not walk as a mole with unspeakable lecherous claims, but with an angel of passion, cleansed of clay, comes in the form of an unseen and warm announcement of the eternal and eternally mournful angel, singing with joy. We are above angels, but when and how?*

*When we are all nothing but purity and freedom from the ephemeral and short breathing darkness of this world. The world should not be denied, but transfigured, shifted to the eighth rung. There and then, in the eighth day, man begins to be what he is: the son of God.*

*[...] What you do in the altar in silence I proclaim the world through poems. You are the priest, I am the deacon. "*<sup>4</sup>

The poet was convinced that his mission was closely linked to his nation. So was his confession to the abbot: *"I am here in debt to my Mother's Culture because if I judge myself, I would not move from Topa. I will come back to write my books and die with my simple people, but much more in the truth than in this modern and tired world from here."*<sup>5</sup> Then he continues: *"Dear ascetic brother, I can not imagine myself as poet than sitting next to you. Two Transylvanians having a sacred mission on this planet so that people see us becoming better. That is how we want to remain with great responsibility for our word and our deeds. In this spirit I embrace you from the Danube springs right after midnight "*<sup>6</sup>

The poet Alexandru felt the Light as a significant part of his life. Everything that comes in light, comes from God. His entire poetic universe was created by Light. Even the darkest shadows become brighter in Light, even the darkest soul can change itself in Light. We capitalise the word light in order to have a better understanding of God's presence among the humanity, because God Himself is Light.

In one of his poems, entitled *Quietly Light*, the poet brings out the outcome of having light in our lives. *"He who loves you/Loving you he hopes/That someday you, quietly light day/ Will come to us and rise."*<sup>7</sup> The importance of these verses constitutes the promise of a new tomorrow, of a new dawn and represents hope in this with no moral values and models.

Ioan's Alexandru letters to the ascet were true testimonies of faith, both to God and to their nation. For him, the abbot represented a safety, because he felt so protected by him. In this way he addressed to the abbot, as in the following letter: *"How rich I feel in the world when I know you are there in the sound of the ringing bells, opening the gate of the holy place, putting on your garment, and then entering the mystery of the heavenly liturgy. You are my secret brother, my beloved brother from far away, whose eyes have remained untouched by the rage and darkness of the earth's laws. What a wonderful destiny, what a bright luck!*

*From your youth, you grow up in the candles that go up and shine and it does not end. Then you can be alone and keep the holy books nearby and the hermitage alongside and the bells in uninterrupted music. You know the wind and the dusk, the thunder beating in the anger of the storm, you know the steps of the sky and the weeping of the mighty star, you have touched the tremor of the springs and remember the snowy hills. You know the cuckoo bird, where it lives and the you can recognise the nightingale by its nest. You know that sunrise is*

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<sup>4</sup>*Idem*, pp.43-44

<sup>5</sup>*Idem*, p.25

<sup>6</sup>*Ibidem*

<sup>7</sup> Ioan Alexandru, *Hymns of Joy*, Bucharest, Cartea Românească Publishing House, 1973, page 7

*the Son, and that the noon of the is the heavenly Father, and that the dusk of the sun is the comfort of the Holy Spirit. You know my beloved brother from far away, that man's life is nothing, that the infant grows, and in the afternoon he flourished, and in the evening the kneeling begins in the kiss of the dust* "8

This model of friendship is offered by the love that maintained the two remains a model for all of us today: *"I love you as a brother given by God at my first entrance to a monastery; from the moment you showed God's eyes above the forest at Rohia in the enlightened sky of heaven I came to the sound of the bells and I will come if the Savior shall allow me to until the end of the ages. Love among men is not possible besides God, it must be tested, clarified by the heavenly fire, otherwise it is not an eternal love."*9

Abbot Iustinian Chira has always shown tenderness and understanding to Ioan Alexandru. He saw the poet serving and praying to God at a table of poems: *"I kissed the rose petal as a holy relic that you let fall from the vase you have on the table, in the envelope you sent here. Now it's like a drop of blood pouring from an wounded coast, from a thoughtful forehead or from a crying and broken heart."*10

Their unbreakable bond is a veterotestamentary replica of Ruth's book: *"Your God is my God, every man can say to his brother in Jesus Christ with which he has reached the same level. That does not mean that something changes in God, but on the contrary, people, generations see Him differently. But there is no man, no generation that does not insights God. Each one in its own way. The ancients have seen Him after their own understanding, in statues and surrounding things. Middle and modern age in another way. The generation of cosmic era, of the interplanetary flights, the generation of struggle and sacrifice of our times contemplates God as you write, but they contemplate Him fiercely."*11

It is well known that salvation does not come without sacrifice. We even sacrificed our Lord Jesus Christ so that we can expiate our sinns. Ioan Alexandru emphasized this idea in his poem, *Remembering of the Poet*, when he said the following: *"[...] the poet – crown of thorns worn by his generation"*12

When Ioan Alexandru published the volume *Vămile pustiei*, being vehemently criticized by Nicolae Manolescu, who accused him that his poetry is confused with philosophy and religious meditation, the ascet from Rohia responded with care and wisdom: *"Not at all ... poetry remains poetry and philosophy philosophy. I do not know if I should do this in front of such important people, but I would dare to say that, indeed, from a scientific point of view for the biology teacher who dissects the plant or the flower in front of his students little by little, the petals are not confused with the petiole, nor with the leaves or the stem. Each has its own separate form [...]"*13

The description of Ioan Alexandru and Iustinian Chira is here only partly achieved, because both evoked personalities have a fire burning inside them; they do not do things only to be done, and therefore they can not love only by half.

Both of them were driven by the Supreme Reason, a reason that does need a logical explanation, because the Reason Itself is God. Their hearts were one and only in the eyes of Divinity, thus Ioan Alexandru and Iustinian Chira had, like previously mentioned, an unbreakable bond. A bond that was blessed by the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>8</sup>*Idem*, pp.31-32

<sup>9</sup>*Idem*, p.42

<sup>10</sup>*Idem*, p.143

<sup>11</sup>*Idem*, p.145

<sup>12</sup> Ioan Alexandru, *The questionable inferno*, Bucharest, Tineretului Publishing House, 1966, page 105

<sup>13</sup>*Idem*, p.153

Of course, the words and pages written here are not enough to express the naturally and brotherly connection between the two personalities, but yet, the reader may form for himself or herself an idea of what kindness, faith, true friendship and purity means.

I would like to conclude with a wonderful portraiture that the ascetic from Rohia made for the poet: "*I saw your fountains and your mother resting, waiting at the gate. I found you in the poems, sealed with the same severity that you do everything you do. I saw you as I knew you; whole, unmoved, overwhelmed by the great question. We found Ion Alexandru as a fallen tear from the light of our ancestors` eyes, now transformed into a rough diamond that pours thousands of rays.*"<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup>*Idem*, p.167