

## THE ROMANIAN VILLAGES' VIRTUALITIES THROUGH THE LENSES OF DIMITRIE GUSTI'S SOCIOLOGICAL SYSTEM

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*In the interwar period, Dimitrie Gusti, the founder of the Sociological School of Bucharest, along with other remarkable Romanian intellectuals, came to the conclusion that Romania's social, economic, spiritual and political development was to be substantially influenced by the way peasantry's problem was to be taken care of. In thinking so, Gusti initiated the monograph campaigns which were to examine the Romanian village's specific problems from a scientific point of view. Based on Gusti's sociological system, the monographic teams revealed a traditional life shaped by a philosophy that had been the guiding thread of a millenary culture and civilization, namely, the peasant one. Closely following Traian Herseni's book *Sociology Course*, this article is going to present the conditionings of the interwar Romanian village's social life or, in accordance with Gusti's thinking system, its virtualities, its development possibilities, as they were displayed in the analysis carried out by the Sociological School of Bucharest.*

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout the centuries happiness has been defined in various ways. One of them states that happiness could also mean the fulfillment of an ideal tailored at an early stage of life. If we had given credit to this approach of happiness, Dimitrie Gusti should have been a happy man. In one of his writings, the man who set up the Sociological School of Bucharest at the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, reveals one of his youth ambitions: setting up a seminar of ethics and sociology in Bucharest in accordance with the well-known model spread throughout the world by the Solvay Institute of Sociology from Brusells, the seminars held in Leipzig by Bücher and Lamprecht<sup>1</sup>, and last but not least, the criminalistic seminar coordinated by Liszt in Berlin. Always searching a middle route between the theoretical and practical approach of sociology, between thinking and action, Dimitrie Gusti has initially made cautious steps on the realm of sociology, by

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<sup>1</sup> Between 1900–1904, Dimitrie Gusti attended moral philosophy classes at the University of Leipzig, where Lamprecht and Bücher taught universal history and public administration respectively.

choosing *sociologia cogitans*, that is a philosophical perspective on the science to which he has devoted his entire life. Little by little though, he comes to the conclusion that a solely theoretical perspective, now matter how brilliant this could be, cannot boost a society to its maximum potential, and remains pointless. That being said, Dimitrie Gusti's extraordinary scientific career has been always configured by a guiding thread consisting of an inspired and full of valuable results mixture between a theoretical and practical approach of sociology. But that special ingredient that has made a marvellous synthesis between the two different dimensions of Dimitrie Gusti's scientific career, the philosophical and the practical one, it is represented by his teaching activity<sup>2</sup> that he has never given up on, not even when he has been appointed as Ministry of Education.

It is not our intention to fully present the spiritual and intelectual itinerary that Dimitrie Gusti has followed. However, we should mention that he has always been a dedicated scientist who has been permanently tied with his native country's specific problems, being a good citizen and an active intelectual at the same time. We will focus, after a short presentation of Dimitrie Gusti's sociological system, on the way that the Romanian village's virtualities, a social unit that has always played a tremendous role within the material and spiritual development of Romania, are reflected in the analysis carried out by the Sociological School of Bucharest.

Although it is not an ideal political form, the village displays itself as "the human settlement that is most favourable to kindness"<sup>3</sup>, a special world with inhabitants that master almost completely the conditions of their own existence. Cradle of eternity, with specific life, genuine culture and traditions, the village represents a microcosmos that has its own laws. In one of Lucian Blaga<sup>4</sup>'s interwar writings, village is placed in the centre of the world, and described as sharing a cosmical destiny. Between WWI and WWII, the Romanian village meant not ancient, nor patriarchal Romania, but genuine Romania, more than 14 million souls sharing a life philosophy shaped by the values of a millenary peasant culture. It was a time when urban areas had no more than 3 million inhabitants. As we have mentioned earlier, Dimitrie Gusti has always had a strong and vivid bond with "the real country" and its problems, although he was far away, studying in Germany. Writing about the XIXth century agrarian reform and the so-called liberty given by

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout many wonderful pages dedicated to his teacher, Mircea Vulc nescu reveals Dimitrie Gusti's point of view on the teacher's social function. Being both conservative and creative, teacher's social function should provide, on the one hand, an unaltered handing over of values and knowledge that make up his/her class, and, on the other hand, an enlargement of the appropriated cultural patrimony, either directly, by devising new research directions, or indirectly, by creating genuine people of culture.

<sup>3</sup> M. Vulc nescu. (2005). *Opere*, Bucure ti: Ed. Funda iei Na ionale pentru tiin i Art , Vol. II, p. 723.

<sup>4</sup> Lucian Blaga also taught rural sociology. For more details go to T. Herseni. (2007). *Curs de sociologie rural* , Bucure ti: Ed. Renaissance.

this to the Romanian peasant, the brilliant student has purported that a reform that lacked peasants' right to get access to money funds, and also the right to bring cattle to forest and grass-land was only a deceit. Such a reform, that had been tailored by "the legal country", a legal country that had been always blind when dealing with peasant's problems, could have brought not liberty, but famine and death.

Monographical movement, field sociological research with multidisciplinary character, but also a sociological doctrine – a particular way of understanding the role of sociology –, the Sociological School of Bucharest founded by Dimitrie Gusti tried to understand the Romanian village from inside its own world. The main purpose of the monographical sociology is to try to understand the meanings and the problems of a particular world, placed by its inhabitants in the centre of the world, and also to identify its development possibilities.

For Frenchman Le Play, the sociological monograph was just a research method. Imbued with Gusti's brilliant way of thinking, the sociological monograph has been given a new status. It hasn't been just a research method, but a sociological system, too.

#### DIMITRIE GUSTI'S SOCIOLOGICAL SYSTEM. SHORT PRESENTATION

Different both from ethics, science of the ethical ideal, and politics, science that studies the system of means necessary to achieve future society's social and ethical norms, sociology has been defined by Dimitrie Gusti as the way of knowing the present social reality. The founder of the Sociological School of Bucharest firstly presented his sociological system in front of a Romanian audience on the occasion of the maiden lecture of *The Greek Philosophy's History, Ethics and Sociology* class held at the University of Iași on 08.04.1910.<sup>5</sup>

From Gusti's point of view, understanding social reality actually means to explain human social life, a comprehensive approach that necessarily starts from individual. Although the border between individual and its physical-biological surrounding reality is mapped out by certain characteristics such as *self-consciousness* and *will*<sup>6</sup>, Dimitrie Gusti stresses the role of *sympathy*, the most

<sup>5</sup> Starting from 01. 04. 1910, Dimitrie Gusti became full professor of the Greek Philosophy's History, Ethics and Sociology Department at the University of Iași, being transferred 10 years later to Bucharest, where he was given the Sociology, Ethics, Politics and Aesthetics Department at the University of Bucharest.

<sup>6</sup> *Self-love*, the way that every individual takes act of his own identity, *sympathy*, thanks to which every individual can be more than himself, and *religiosity*, pious feeling towards mystery, are the three fundamental dimensions of *self-consciousness* that along with *will* separates human nature from animal nature. According to Auguste Comte, says professor Ilie B descu, there are three elements of human nature, namely, activity, feeling and intelligence, for every one of these existing a corresponding social force in every society: material force, moral force and intellectual force. For further details see Ilie B descu. (2002). *Istoria sociologiei. Perioada marilor sisteme*, București: Ed. Economic, Vol. I, p. 88.

important ingredient of the so-called *sociological apriorism*, namely, individual's ability of being social before entering any association. Due to the structure of human consciousness, every individual, contends Gusti, is a possibility of society, as well as society which, thanks to sympathy, finds itself in every individual as a virtuality.<sup>7</sup> This is the point where the Romanian sociology no longer goes along with the French one, according to which society is a reality outside individuals<sup>8</sup>, a coercive reality that affects every individual. In Gusti's sociological system, society is depicted as a spiritual-objective reality, and not merely as a psychological one.

Society becomes visible through its *social units*, groups of humans that live together. Groups, communities and institutions are just a couple examples of social units. In Gusti's sociological system every social unit, regardless of its size, is characterized by a round o'clock activity which is called *social manifestation*. In order to fulfill every human being's spiritual and material needs, every social unit unfolds particular activities. Subsequently, one can observe, on the one hand, economic manifestations, and, on the other hand, spiritual manifestations or activities that reflect individual's superior needs. Because these activities represents the very baseis of Dimitrie Gusti's sociological system, they have been named *constitutive activities* by the Romanian scientist. There is also another group of activities meant to harmonize the antagonic goals that the constitutive activities usually aim at, that is society's *regulative activities* or manifestations which consist in *political activities* – leadership, organization and administration – and *juridical activities* – which regulate rights and obligations. The last group of activities have a special importance for social reality because, according to D. Gusti, they make it last.

Sociology aims not only at depicting social manifestations, but, as an explanatory science, also tries to find out their roots. In the explanatory model tailored by Dimitrie Gusti, the factor responsible for the appearance of the four mentioned above social activities is *social will*, "a dynamic complex of values, goals and means, the social action's atitudinal basis, foundation and expression of socialization".<sup>9</sup> Social will, that is every human's will in accordance to a social goal, updates the society's virtualities that are named *frames* in Gusti's sociological system. In the absence of social will, society would be only a possibility, because social will is the dynamic factor of every social reality, its very essence. What makes social will that important is the fact that through it every society's frames, the so-called virtualities, are transformed in social activities. This process that makes possible the transformation of society's frames in economic, spiritual,

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<sup>7</sup> Aristotle starts with the premise that humans are *zoon politikon*. It means that every human is a social being due to his nature. That is why, humans take part at social life not out of interest, but because of their very nature. He also adds that an individual that doesn't have the desire to live in society is not a human being anymore, but either God or animal. From Nitzsche's point of view, such an individual is neither God, nor animal. Just a philosopher.

<sup>8</sup> See Emile Durkheim's social facts theory.

<sup>9</sup> D. Gusti. (1969). *Opere*, Bucure ti: Editura Academiei, Vol. II, p. 27.

political and judicial activities through social will is called *social actuality*. It is of great importance to mention that social actuality is always influenced by the society's current dominant values and also by the height of contemporary social goals.

Dimitrie Gusti has succeeded in shaping a typology of the social life's conditional factors that are eventually arranged in four classes: *the cosmic frame, the biological frame, the psychological frame and the historical frame*. One should notice the similarity between the number of social activities and the number of frames, an exact correspondence being established between the type of a certain frame and the type of social activity. Whilst the cosmic and the biological frame reflects one society's environmental particularities, the psychological and the historical frames are considered spiritual frames, that is society's traditions and also its collective spiritual phenomena. Meaning one society's virtualities, the frames are just an outward conditioning<sup>10</sup> of social actions, social processes and social phenomena, the inward conditioning being represented by the group's social will. In the mean time, due to a self-determination of social life, society benefits from a certain autonomy with respect to its frames, an autonomy given by society's influence upon its frames through social manifestation.

It is not our intention to make an exhaustive presentation of Gusti's sociological system, but our article will definitely be incomplete without mentioning the *law of sociological parallelism*. Its first component refers to a parallelism relation between the frames and the social will which indicates that social life is the result of a necessary symbiosis between the frames and the social will.<sup>11</sup> There is also, as a second dimension of this law, a parallelism between the frames, which means that social life is conditioned not only by one frame, but by all four frames in the same time. And last, but not least, the third component of Gusti's law of sociological parallelism shows a parallelism that takes place between the four social manifestations, meaning that every society is characterized by all four activities which are interdependent, but irreducible to one another.

Traian Herseni and Mircea Vulc nescu's perspectives on Gusti's sociological system make it more comprehensible. That is why, the following paragraphs comprise the thoughts of these two significant members of the Sociological School of Bucharest.

According to Herseni's standpoint, every social life has an existence that is conditioned by three different moments: the social will, the social activities and the society's frames. Much attention it is paid in Herseni's writings to the relation between the three moments mentioned above. "The relation between social will and social manifestations is the relation between an individual and its deed. Social manifestations are just the expression of the social will that supports them, which entails the need to stress two issues: the social will is characterized by its

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<sup>10</sup> We emphasize the fact that Gusti believes that the frames are just conditionings, but not causes of social life.

<sup>11</sup> Gusti's formula of social life: W (will) + F (frames) = Social Manifestations (SM).

manifestations, and manifestations have an inward causality in the social will's active nature. The relation between manifestations and frames is the relation between activity and its conditioning".<sup>12</sup>

In the pages of *The History of the Romanian Sociology*, Traian Herseni states that Dimitrie Gusti's sociological, ethical and political system has always had a unique brightness in Mircea Vulcanescu's commentary. The founder of the Sociological School of Bucharest was a remarkable organizer, but, according to Herseni, was not that brilliant at writing. Mircea Vulcanescu, known as the economist and the philosopher of the Sociological School of Bucharest, perceived the social will as a reaction towards the frames' influence on social life, the outgrowth being represented by social manifestations. According to Vulcanescu's perspective on society, which is very close to Gusti's one, one society's frames are just conditionings and not causes of social life, whilst social will is endowed with its own ability to react. It is interesting that from Gusti's point of view social manifestation is obtained by adding social will to the frames. Vulcanescu shares a different perspective on the social manifestation's formula. In his opinion, the social manifestations are not obtained by adding social will to the frames, as Gusti thinks, but by multiplying social will and the frames:  $W$  (will)  $\cdot$   $F$  (frames) = Social Manifestations (SM). Subsequently, it results that  $SM/F = W$ .

Here is a short presentation of a schema drawn up by Vulcanescu which shows how the frames influence the social will and how this one answers back.

FACTOR	FRAME	ACTION	REACTION
SPACE	cosmic	nature	culture
LIFE	biological	race (type)	selection
SPIRITUAL LIFE	psychological	coercion	autonomy tendency
TIME	historical	tradition	innovation

By including all social reality's elements in his theoretical model<sup>13</sup>, Dimitrie Gusti has tried to offer an unitary perspective on society. This is how all unilateral scientific attempts of explaining social life have been shadowed, because the results of partial sociologies, such as historical sociology, geographic sociology, biological sociology and social psychology, become worthy only within a synthesis.

In the following sections of our article, we are going to present an analysis tailored by the Sociological School of Bucharest, in accordance with Gusti's theoretical model, regarding the virtualities of the Romanian village. It is an appropriate moment to pinpoint the difference between virtuality and possibility. Traian Herseni purports that virtualities are inside humans, whilst possibilities find

<sup>12</sup> Tr. Herseni. (1935). *Realitatea socială . Încercare de ontologie regională* , Bucuresti: Ed. Institutului Social Român, p. 124.

<sup>13</sup> Its particularity and value is given by the fact that it is both a research method and a thinking system. It is also a theoretical system that has been successfully tested while its inventor was still alive.

themselves in the surrounding environment. In other words, one society's natural frames can have so many possibilities for which individual has no virtuality, but also the other way around. For instance, Herseni says that a Romanian, although he may have the virtuality of becoming a pilot, he cannot materialize it, because plains hadn't been invented yet. Consequently, although social life is conditioned by frames, it is eventually shaped only by those frames that correspond to the virtualities that one society's members have at a certain time.

#### THE COSMIC FRAME<sup>14</sup>

Defining geography, Simion Mehedin i<sup>15</sup> presents it as a science that tries to explain the connection among the four different covers of planet Earth: atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere and biosphere, individuals being geographical agents of the last cover. We should say from the beginning that sociology pays attention to natural environment only from one perspective: its influences on social life.

There is an interesting and productive clash between sociology and geography, a polemic discussion that has been initiated by George Vâlsan's article<sup>16</sup> *Sociological Researches Analyzed from a Geographical Point of View*.

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<sup>14</sup> There is a good reason why Gusti has named one of the social life's conditionings the cosmic frame, instead of geographical frame. In his sociological system, the cosmic frame illustrates the influence that the whole universe has on society, the cosmic frame being more comprising than the geographical one.

<sup>15</sup> We mentioned earlier in this article that Dimitrie Gusti is the founder of the Sociological School of Bucharest. Simion Mehedin i has set up the Romanian school of geography, whilst Vasile Pârvan has laid the foundations of the first school of archaeology in Romania.

<sup>16</sup> Vâlsan along with Petre Andrei are both very critical towards the monographic sociology. In the geographical researches the monographic method is used quite often, says George Vâlsan. He adds that, in geography, field researches are classified as pedagogical researches and scientific researches. A small number of participants and a long period spent on the field, with a return possibility for the researcher, are only a few aspects that characterize the monographic research carried out by geographers. There are many similarities between the comprehensive effort of the monographic teams organized by the Sociological School of Bucharest and the geographical pedagogical researches, such as a large group of field researches and a short period of time spent on the field. According to Vâlsan, another shortcoming of the monographic researches carried out by the Sociological School of Bucharest is their aprioristic knowledge and the disturbance of the local communication environment. He concludes that the only significant monographs are the regional ones, those centered on local communities being less valuable from a scientific point of view. The reader should not forget Dimitrie Gusti's perspective on sociology, a science which acquires its meaning only by studying the largest social unit, that is the nation, which understanding starts from knowing the Romanian villages' particularities. With respect to Petre Andrei's critical standpoint towards the monographic research, the famous Romanian sociologist from Ia i purports that the Sociological School of Bucharest has never really carried out scientific researches, but rather reformist actions. That is why, concludes Petre Andrei, the sociological monograph is nothing else but a gathering of descriptive material.

Following the idea of Emile Durkheim, according to whom sociology's study object is similar to that specific to natural sciences, Vâlsan contends that this opinion of the French sociologist is out of question. He also adds, mentioning the way Durkheim has defined social morphology, that sociology assesses geography as a second-rate science. In order to be more specific, social morphology is a science that studies the social substratum. From the French sociologist's perspective, society's material form is the result of social division of labor. Consequently, there is no need of geography for explaining one society's morphology.

Being interested in the social function that the geographical factors could have, Ion Conea understands geography as the science of humanized landscape, stating that every natural region has its own personality. One can sense here the influences of Carl Ritter, a well-known German geographer from the XIXth century, according to whom land is a nursery school (*Erziehungshaus*) of human genre, the regional forms of relief profoundly influencing the life style.

But here is Dimitrie Gusti's perspective on the cosmic frame.

When studying one social unit's cosmic frame, sociology is firstly interested in explaining how one society influences its geographical outskirts, the way that a particular community leaves its mark on the environment. For instance, the sociology of space preoccupies itself with the study of one community's reactions towards its natural environment, in this particular science's study object being also included the way that natural resources and climate factors alters the inhabitants' life. Secondly, the effects that nature has on the village is of great importance for sociology. From this perspective, one very important research object is social life's rhythm in the rural areas. It is known that villagers' life has its own specific characteristics. In summer, the locals work quite hard, whilst in winter, on the contrary, because all the tasks related to agriculture have been already fulfilled, there is not much to do. Winter is a season when peasants' life rhythm is rather slow, a special attention being paid to traditional celebrations that make possible a return to a primordial time. Due to unfriendly weather conditions, that are not favourable to agriculture, much of the economical activities are directed towards the domestic industries. From daily's life perspective, the urban life finds itself at the opposite pole in comparison to the village. Whilst in the country the locals work hard in summer, townspeople usually take vacations. In the same time, important institutions, like school and Parliament, close their gates in summer.

Nature's socialization process, that is cultural intervention in nature<sup>17</sup>, having as a result farmed fields, wineries, orchards, drainigs and so on, means human interventions on nature, another point of interest for sociology with respect to the cosmic frame.

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<sup>17</sup> Humanized landscape – houses, roads, crops, deforestations, mines – means one village's vital space, according to Ion Conea.



The way that time flows in the village is a research subject that should also be encompassed in the cosmic frame, according to Ion Conea, one of the main authors of the *Clopotiva Monograph*. He advocates his opinion by stating that the local climate should not be approached only through data collected by meteorology institutes, but mainly through the locals' experience, the understanding of one community's special way of perceiving time being of great importance. And so it is, considering that the planning of locals' activities has been always influenced by time. That is why, the most suitable informants, in order to understand how the elapse of time is perceived in the country side, are the very locals.

The horizontal space, that is the cardinal points' issue and that of the world's regions, the vertical space, namely the problem of hierarchy and that of the outer space, and the perfection's issue, are nothing but projections of villagers' mentality on the cosmic frame, says Horia Bernea.

Although it plays an important role in every monographic research, especially for finding out one village's development potential, especially from an economical point of view, the importance of the cosmic frame should no be overestimated, considering that in Gusti's sociological system it is just one of the four conditionings of the social life.

#### **THE BIOLOGICAL FRAME**

The first attempts of explaining social life are based on analogies with the human body, sociology being dominated by biologism in the early stages of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, a time when organicism and social darwinism theories were at their peak. But soon, the sociological point of view, that had revealed the characteristics of social life, gained ground, and made the once valued biological perspective on society look obsolete. However, Dimitrie Gusti has included the biological frame in his explanatory model of social life, this particular frame along with the cosmic one forming one society's natural frames. The main point of interest of this social life's second virtuality – what we shouldn't forget is that from Gusti's perspective one society's frames are just virtualities of social life – is represented by population. Sociology approaches population from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective, being especially interested in the way that village's life patterns are affected by its inhabitants' life style. From a quantitative point of view, the most important aspects that draw sociology's attention to population's problems are represented by migration, population's structure and its transformations.

The Sociological School of Bucharest has always valued the monographic census, a census that has been usually carried out by specialists. Apart from being carried out by specialists, there is another important aspect that makes the difference between the official and the monographic census: the monographic

teams' members, who carried out the monographic census, have taken into consideration every family's dead members, but also those locals that had left the village for good.

Every demographic census' objective is to provide data regarding a population's structure, that is the number of men, women and children, their age and cultural level. In comparison to demography, sociology is particularly interested in observing and explaining one population's influences on the village's distinctive life. For instance, a village characterized by a high birth rate looks more optimistically to the future, despondency, ossification and resignation being the characteristics of a village with a mostly aged population.

A large number of men, that is more significant than the number of women, has, as a consequence, an increased number of adulteries, quarrels among those who want to get married, and it also favours emigration to other towns or villages. We shouldn't forget to mention the opposed situation, too: one village's male inhabitants are outnumbered by women. The weakening of manners and a rapidly increasing number of unwanted children are just a few outgrowths of such particular circumstances. This lack of balance between sexes plays an important role in expanding the number of bachelors and old spinsters in the population structure. Under these circumstances, most of those that intend to get married are clearly disadvantaged, both male and female inhabitants remaining further bonded with their parents and relatives. Peasant husbandry's central element is the family group which labor power derives from its structure and oldness. Economically speaking, one family's<sup>18</sup> most productive period of time is that when its children are able to work along with their parents. As mentioned before, young people that don't get married stay with their parents, and, as family's older members grow older, they have to work harder and harder in order to earn their living. Another important disadvantage of not getting married is also the lack of support at an old age.

When researching the biological frame, sociology pays special attention to the social effects of natality, nuptiality and mortality. In the countryside, families used to be characterized as fulfilled or unfulfilled depending on the number of children they had, a happy family comprising at least three children. On the contrary, less than three children and the death or the divorce of one spouse are just a few particularities of unfulfilled families.

Demographic problems don't have only villages with population deficits, but also those ones that have to grapple with an extra population which they cannot support. Villages with population deficits face a gradual diminution of all their social and economic activities, which eventually leads to the village's extinction.<sup>19</sup> Under such unfortunate circumstances, local life's resurrection is possible only through a population brought from other areas, marriages with the locals,

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<sup>18</sup> We refer to the maximum labor quantity that a husbandry can have at its disposal at a certain time.

<sup>19</sup> "The Banat is the Romanian people's graveyard". Simion Mehedin i.

colonization and new jobs created by different investors being a few solutions. But special problems have overpopulated villages, too. These ones have to deal with a significant lack of balance caused by the local resources scarcity that cannot support villagers' consuming needs, a sad situation that spurs the inhabitants to migrate, especially the young ones. But migration is not always an option. Low industrialization and arable field that is hard to find in other areas are far from being good reasons which may convince someone to migrate. Consequently, a permanent crumbling of property leads to poverty, starvation, social and spiritual decay.

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAME

As one of the social facts' conditionings, but not a social fact in itself<sup>20</sup>, the psychological frame is displayed by Gusti's thinking system as another factor that influences social life. For instance, public opinion<sup>21</sup> is an important dimension for both the psychological frame and spiritual social activities. Public opinion's manifestation and forming way are aspects related to the psychological frame, whilst public opinion's significance and the way it configures one society's political, moral and economic life are aspects that play an important role from social activities' perspective.

The psychological frame's main point of interest refers to the village's specific mentality. According to Traian Herseni, one village's psychological structure is the most important conditioning of its social manifestations. Unlike the historical frame, that aims at disappeared and also still surviving social phenomena, no matter what their actual form is, the psychological frame's research has to cope with this particular frame's striking actuality, the existing differences between one village's psychological virtualities and its spiritual manifestations being quite difficult to notice. In other words, one social unit's virtualities may also display themselves as social manifestations, namely as social facts, a suitable example being represented by collective social phenomena. However, it is out of the question that, opposed to the psychological frame, are every individual's spiritual traits, such as intelligence and sensitivity.

Sociology shows a special interest in villagers' mental abilities, and, from this perspective, carries out different IQ, personality and manual abilities tests. It pays also particular attention to the locals' ideas, feelings and life philosophy, all these elements of the spiritual life playing a significant role when it comes to

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<sup>20</sup> A frame, as one society's virtuality, is just a potential social manifestation, a possibility for a social fact.

<sup>21</sup> In the countryside, public opinion is thought to be the very "mouth" of the village, sometimes playing vulgar role of gossip and intrigue, but being also an important mean for the values' dissemination.

analyzing the psychological frame. Unlike psychology, for which all individuals have an equal importance, sociology makes some discriminations, for there are important differences from one individual to another with respect to the mark they leave on social life. That is why, a classification has been made, a classification that encompasses, on one hand, social life's preserving and intensifying actors, and, on the other hand, social actors that are responsible for spreading social phenomena, sociology always showing a great interest in the innovators<sup>22</sup> of the economic, spiritual, judicial and administrative life.

Mircea Vulc nescu, who has tried to imbue Dimitrie Gusti's sociological system with a phenomenological approach, is one of the interwar sociologists that has undertaken studies related to the autochthonous spiritual substratum. In his brilliant analysis, the philosopher and the economist of The Sociological School of Bucharest, displays the Romanian soul as an "architecture of temptations", the local spirituality's outward layers being represented by temptations, understood as marks left throughout the centuries on the very essence of the Romanian soul by different people that had travelled all over our country. Paraphrasing one of Valéry's pieces of witicism, according to whom culture is what somebody still has after she/he had forgotten everything, Vulc nescu states that the primordial layer of the Romanian soul has Thracian origins, other influences, such as the Slavic, Byzantine, Greek, German and French ones, meaning just "superficial egos" of the local soul.

In one of his writings, Constantin Noica purported that the Romanian soul had become agrarian for no more than one hundred years, better stated since 1829, when diplomats of the Ottoman and the Russian Empire signed a peace treaty in Adrianopole. According to Stefan Zeletin, 1829 is the starting point of the forming process of a new social class in the Romanian Principates, that is the bourgeoisie. These historical circumstances urge Constantin Noica to ask himself whether the genuine origins of the Romanian soul are pastoral, instead of agrarian. Following the guiding thread of Traian Herseni's book *Pastoral Sociology*, which pages indicates that all superior forms of Romanian culture, such as traditional fairy tales and doina songs, are the result of pastoral loneliness, Noica gets more and more convinced that the Romanian peasant culture has pastoral roots. The well known Romanian philosopher's standpoint grows even more forceful thanks to Ovid Densu ianu, who contends that Romanian peasant culture, in its creative stages, has had a pronounced pastoral aspect. For instance, says Densu ianu, why should most of the popular poems talk about forest if they were created by an agrarian culture? If the traditional peasant culture had been agrarian and not pastoral, autumn should have been more valued than spring, but it is exactly the other way around.

Without clearly indicating the pastoral basement of the Romanian soul, Mircea Eliade states that spring is the season that best corresponds to the local spirituality: "Faith's inconstancy looks more like spring's inconstancy – not like

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<sup>22</sup> Innovators are valued depending on the particularities of the social changes they facilitate, creators being considered more important than imitators.

destiny's implacable law. And if we were to find a season that matches the Romanian soul, that would undoubtedly be spring".<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, these discussions about one people's soul, warns Lucian Blaga, have a tricky base, especially for those that are not enough acclimatized with the thin air specific to the higher regions of the knowledge pyramid, because the dialogue partners find themselves on the realm of ineffable meanings.<sup>24</sup> Paying attention to the warning addressed by the author that places the village in the centre of the world, endowing it with a cosmic destiny, we go back to Traian Herseni's analysis regarding mentalities, that is the very gist of the psychological frame.

Showing a distinctive interest in the villager's economic, religious and scientific mentality, Herseni reveals two main characteristics of the dominant economic mentality in the country side: the lack of interest towards profit and the synonymy between welfare and what it is strictly necessary. Driven by the urge to buy and sell as little as possible, the Romanian peasant has an autarchical economic behavior. That is why, goods or capital accumulation appears to be senseless to him. That is why, there is a significant cleavage between farmer's life philosophy and peasant's mentality.<sup>25</sup> Subsequently, we can understand better now why the peasantry has been always depicted as a "destroyer of machines", a rapid improvement in the villager's traditional life style, that is passed almost unchanged from one generation to another, being considered meaningless. Herseni makes an interesting comparison between peasantry's religious mentality and that specific to townspeople, for the first one the cult paying an important role, whilst, in the second case, the stress lays on dogma. Peasants don't usually show a lot of interest in science. For instance, there are so many cases of people with health problems in the countryside who don't get medical care, because, in accordance with one of the locals' sayings, someone whose turn is not to die yet, gets healthy without the help of a doctor.

#### THE HISTORICAL FRAME

Whilst sociology preoccupies itself with history's general and repeatable forms – periods and historical steps, evolution types –, history pays attention to those historical events that are unique and irrepeatable. From Sombart's point of

<sup>23</sup> Mircea Eliade. (2001). *Textele „ legionare” i despre românism*, Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Dacia, p. 70.

<sup>24</sup> Lucian Blaga. (1937). *Spa iul mioritic*, Bucure ti: Ed. Oficiului de libr rie, p. 22.

<sup>25</sup> "The farmer, no matter how different he is from a townsman, a manufacturer or a merchant, is eventually an output of the same capitalism, is driven by the same entrepreneurial spirit like the bourgeoisie, and has the same life ideals as the bourgeoisie. (...) On the contrary, the peasant represents a historical world prior to capitalism's development, he is the prolongation of a world with senses of a different nature. The peasant husbandry is an autarchical economic unit that becomes capitalist only in its dissolution forms." T. Herseni. (2007). *Curs de sociologie rural*, Bucure ti: Ed. Renaissance, p. 34. The farmer means peasant's end, from Noica's point of view the sudden entrance in the history of the man that has the consciousness of eternity is similar to his extinction.

view, history displays itself as the study of individuality and material aspects, generality forming sociology's point of interest. This is how the University of *Berlin*, with a stress that lays on Berlin, represents history's study object, the *University* of Berlin being what sociology shows interest in.

Problems belonging to the sociology of history are included by the Sociological School of Bucharest in the historical frame of Dimitrie Gusti's thinking system, without limiting social life to this particular conditioning type.

Before we start presenting the main study directions followed by the sociological monograph in the analysis of the historical frame, we mention that there are many important historical writings, in which sociology shows a distinctive interest, writings that describe peasantry's social condition in the XVIIIth and the XIXth century. Because of the feudal system, contends one of the two parties between which a polemical discussion emerged more than one hundred years ago, the land used to be in the ruler and nobles' possession. Consequently, the peasantry had no property rights. On the contrary, says the other party, by the time serfdom was initiated in the XVth and the XVIth century, peasantry used to possess its own lands. Unfortunately, this polemic discussion doesn't help much the historical perspective that sociology is interested in. That is why, H. H. Stahl questions "the document superiority". According to him, because traditional social relations are insufficiently reflected in the written sources, more important data can be obtained by observing one village's social relations that are regulated by the unwritten customary law. In order to surpass this shortcoming, H. H. Stahl suggests an interesting alternative: instead of using official documents as sources of information, as the historians usually do, a sociologist should lay the stress on the study of the archaic social forms that are still actual in the economic and juridical customs, and also in the territorial and community organizational patterns.

In reference to the still vivid forms of archaic social life, in which the sociological monographs show a particular interest, we should say that there are important regional differences, as a result of the Romanian villages' distinctive past. For instance, in the same area, due to peasantry's so many social categories, there are considerable differences regarding villages' morphology. It can be observed autonomous villages belonging to the freeholders and also bondsmen villages, dependent on the local nobles and the central ruler. *Rzeii* or *moenii*, *mazilii*, *dvorenii* and *grnicerii* are distinctive categories of the free men, whilst *inquilinii*, *taxalii* and *luralnicii* represent the bondsmen who had to cope with different fiscal systems. In 1829, George Maior, one of the most important Romanian agrarian economists, undertook a study in the *Fgra* county. The results of his observation made on the 20 villages included in the circle of *ercaia* are displayed in a book called *Romanian's Agrarian Policy*. The author, who advocates his position with strong evidences, purports that from the 20 studied

villages there were not two villages with similar economic and political social relations.

Understanding present through past is another important objective that a sociological monograph aims at, because it is considered that actual characteristics of one village's social life can be better understood by examining the historical roots of the community. In his article called *Peasantry's Social Organization*, H. H. Stahl assesses as wrong a thesis advocated by certain historians who have investigated some Romanian villages. According to them, Romanian villages have been founded by a few related families, present inhabitants being their descendants. That is why, village's land is equally divided between the locals in accordance with the criteria of genealogy, that is the descending line of the village's founders. But Stahl doesn't agree with this standpoint. He gives the example of villages that don't suit this historical explanatory model, such as the villages of ancient Vrancea that were characterized by no proportional joint property.

Another example that advocates the importance of explaining present through past is that of welfare differences between the ex-bondsmen's descendants from Ardeal and those of the local Romanian nobles. After the 1848 Revolution, the bondsmen from Ardeal were put in possession of the land they used to work. In the mean time, because they had lost their lands due to countless conflicts with the Hungarian nobles, the Romanian nobles' descendants grew poor.

Last but not least, when it comes to explaining the historical frame, sociological monograph is also interested in the social evolution. That is why, for understanding distinctive evolution and development stages of villages from different country's regions, the comparative method is usually used. For instance, the extension of village's farmed land indicates a leap that a certain village has made from a pastoral life stage to the agrarian one, a transition that has both social and economical consequences.

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