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PHILOSOPHY, SOCIAL AND HUMAN DISCIPLINES SERIES

Traces of the Past

2018

Volume I

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RESEARCH PAPERS

Demythologizing the American Dream: A Rereading of Layl Ab Zayd's *Amr k , al-wa h al- khar* [*America's other face*] (1991)

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Abstract

Amr k , al-wa h al- khar [America's Other Face] (1991) is a travel account about Layl Ab Zayd's journey to the United States, the first travel-inspired narrative about America after *Bid u Sunbul tin Khudr* (1978) [Few Green Spikelets] which includes a collection of impressions about her life as a student in England. As a renowned postcolonial feminist writer, her America-bound narrative records the seven-month stay in different American states and articulates discursive constructions of a counter narrative that attempts both to uncover the American global policy and to demystify the myths of essentializing discourses. Her travel narrative condemns American policy towards third world nations and views America as an advanced state but with an explicit imperial project engaged in practices of re-colonization. Adopting a counter hegemonic stance, Ab Zayd seems to be turning on different occasions into an oppositional force that reconstructs the long suffered invisibility of America's others.

Keywords: *America, Orientalism, postcolonialism, counterdiscourse, travel writing.*

Before moving forward into the discussion of *America's other Face*, it is an urgent choice, drawing on cultural studies perspective, to underline the critical importance of the visual vocabulary on "the front cover and explore its significance in the light of what Gerard Genet calls the paratext". This paratextual element is not fortuitous at all; decoding it allows an insightful reading into the main aesthetic and intellectual concern of this travel account. The front cover of Ab Zayd's travel-inspired narrative bears a delicately caricatured image that shows the statue of liberty as the most powerful and instantly recognizable icon of the USA, in a blemished, disfigured and metamorphosed way. Instead of the usual poetic image of the woman "holding a torch and clutching a tablet", the figure

emerges out of a totally black backdrop as a huge featureless male, with strikingly bulging eyes, holding, an almost ready to-go-off rocket with his right hand raised up in a lofty way, and a book in the left one. So, it becomes clear as the signifiers of the image speak about themselves in straightforward terms that the transfigured statue is meant to invoke the other side of the American discourse on the rest of the world. As Michelle Hartman argues, “like other politically committed texts that critique the United States and its policies in the Third World”, Ab Zayd’s work uses “the statue of liberty as a symbolic site of protest and contestation – particularly against the war”.¹

It is clear from the outset that cartooning materializes a political assertion in explicit imagery in this text, namely in the introduction whereby visually caricatured set of images, satirical in nature, cover most pages to reveal the American policy towards its Otherness. The caricatured image of the Statue of Liberty, as a contextual cue, is worth more consideration. It stands as a metonymic symbol in the text that underscores this counter hegemonic attitude of the author, and clearly denotes how much Ab Zayd is doubtful and unconvinced of Lady Liberty and the freedom it claims to represent in America. The provocative clues and the subversive possibilities that the picture offers free Lady Liberty from its supposedly iconographic symbols of American values such as freedom, equality and the pursuit of happiness. What comes to the surface, instead, is an unbridled desire to conquer, dominate and build an empire. This meaning is so much animated by a powerful discursive claim on behalf of the image which reads “America’s Other Face” and which activates the assumption about the visibility of illicit motivations to remap the cultural geography of the world.

Layla Ab Zayd’s critique of the United States in *Amr k , al-wa h al- khar* has much in common with other Moroccan writers such as Abd latif Akb b in his *Tangiers Eyes on America*, Y ss f min al Alami in *Un marocain à New York* [Moroccan in New York], and Sal m Sh hdi’s *Hi ra il ardi al-a l m* [Migration to the Lands of Dreams], at least in their engagement with the intricacies of a counter discourse. Her text is politically-oriented; it condemns the war in Iraq and USA’s policy towards Third World states, views the US as an advanced state with an explicit imperial project engaged in practices of re-colonization, and launches a harsh attack on America’s complicity with the Zionist movement. Also like Y ss f al Alami, Akb b and Sh hdi, she is contemptuous and cynical of the statue of liberty and the freedom it is supposed to promote in United States; yet, she does

¹ Michelle Hartman, “Writing Arabs and Africa(ns) in America: Adonis and Radwa Ashour From Harlem to Lady Liberty,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 3 (2005), 401.

not share, for example al Alami's strategies for undermining its figure.² Rather than eroticizing New York and its statue, or insisting on its femininity, she adopts a gendered reversal strategy. This strategy challenges and brings a corrective to the Orientalized notions of exoticism, passivity and sexual availability which hinder the identity of native women who have been "silenced by an amnesic, neo-colonial historical discourse and a regressive, medievalist patriarchal rhetoric".³

The concern, thus, is not merely a violent call for self-expression or a protest against imperialism, but an explicit claim to destabilize the ubiquitous male dominant ideologies. Once in New York, Ab Zayd does not pay a visit to Lady Liberty, she focuses on different issues particularly on poverty, unemployment, prostitution marginalized groups and economically promising sites of civilization but avoids talking about the Statue: "when we think of America we immediately think of New York, and when we think of New York we imagine Manhattan".⁴ She seems, therefore, to share many affinities with the famous Egyptian writer Radwa Ashour in her travel account *al-Ri la: Ayyam liba mi riyya f Amr k* [*The Journey: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Student in America*]. Ashour marginalizes it, "replacing its importance in her text with other places, people, and issues, [...] she layers her interactions with it with gendered elements, many of which propose the feminine as positive".⁵

Ab Zayd offers an important segment of her narrative to the discussion of Islam and Muslims in the US and attempts to highlight the stereotypical discourses that have produced racially devastating views about Arabs. Quoting Evan Haddad, she brings the most shockingly disturbing prejudices that circulate in the American media. She states that

*Arabs are not like people of Philadelphia, France or even Israel... They believe in a non western religion of war... The Arab in any case feels gratified only in drawing out his sword and does not feel closer to God till he is done with his butcheries... Arabs, especially, those believers, are loathed neighbors... savages, racists because they reject Israel, ruthless, powerless, degenerate, sex maniac.*⁶

² In his travel account, *Un marocain à New York* (2001), Y ss f min al Alami eroticizes New York City and its Statue of Liberty while insisting on its femininity and its sexual vulnerability.

³ Salah Mokhlis, "A History of Hopes Postponed: Women's Identity and the Postcolonial State in *Year of the Elephant: A Moroccan Journey toward Independence*," *Research in African Studies* 34, no. 3 (2003), 169.

⁴ Layl Ab Zayd, *Amr k , al-wa h al- khar* (America: The Other Face) (Casablanca: Najah al Jadida, 1991), 121.

⁵ Hartman, "Writing Arabs and Africa(ns) in America," 404.

⁶ Ab Zayd, *Amr k , al-wa h al- khar*, 67-68.

Though the US did not engage in any prolonged, blood-shed encounters with Muslim states as was the case with Christian Europe,⁷ it is useful to consider, using Edward Said's words, how European bitter legacy of Orientalist thinking is "accommodated, normalized, domesticated and popularized and fed into"⁸ the American stream of perceptions.

What seems to be of paramount significance in this section is not only how Islam and Muslims are conceptualized within an Orientalist discourse of American framework, or the extent to which these stereotypical ideologies are mostly resisted by the author; but also how Ab Zayd is determined to go beyond the histories of conquest and authoritarianism; and travel outside the conventionally chained histories written from the perspective of the culture in power. Ab Zayd uses Evan Haddad as an inter-textual vehicle to interrogate the historical events suppressed by the Eurocentric version of history, but which aided in the discovery of the American continent. She declares that:

During the celebration of Christopher Columbus's fifth hundred birthday in 1955, it was declared that this explorer owned a book by the Moroccan geographer Al-Idr ss in which he states that eight Arabs had already discovered the Eastern coasts of America, and it was this same book that motivated Columbus to start his famous journey. A Spanish translator of Arab descent called Luis Torres assisted Columbus [...].⁹

These authenticated accounts of the Other's narrative, especially Al-sher f Al-Idr ss 's, assuming the arrival of Arabs in America before Columbus's trip, complicate the historical narrative of the discovery and invite Ab Zayd, through an inter-textual play, to interrogate the claims of Eurocentric historians who suppressed the Arabs' intervention in the cultural Renaissance of the West. Hence, the endeavor to create a heterogeneous space establishes a shift in Ab Zayd's narrative that challenges the Eurocentric constructions of the original discovery, and allows the author to redefine Columbus's story, or the western narrative of history, with a postcolonial-inflected consciousness

Moreover, in her attempt to undo the grand narratives of history, Arabs, according to Ab Zayd, were not just mediators or mere translators during the Renaissance, but cultural contributors as well. Al-Idr ss 's book, in this sense, is metaphorically endowed with a liberating force and significant meanings. It is evoked within a self-consciously creative process of revisiting and remodifying historical facts since it unearths the official discourse about the historical claims of

⁷ *Ibidem*, 68-69.

⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978), 259.

⁹ Ab Zayd, *Amr k , al-wa h al- khar*, 72.

discovery on the one hand. On the other hand, it disturbs the Eurocentric vision of history as being entirely shaped up from a Western ideological viewpoint, while inviting the reader at the same time to look at history as a construct of hegemonic formations.

This act of “memory from below”, as Anne Pitcher terms it, is, in fact, another configuration of the discursive subversion and counter-discourse. These are deployed by Ab Zayd’s narrative within a textual logic to dismantle the “organized” amnesia of the west that has suppressed Arabs’ cultural influences on western modernity, to “highlight the defeat of the Orientalist discourse, and foreground the discourse of the Other.”¹⁰ Otherness, which has historically been constructed as peripheral, becomes a force to be reckoned with in this case.

What seems to be so interesting with Ab Zayd’s critique of the United States once more is that she allows the voice of America’s suppressed Otherness to be heard in the course of her narrative. Focusing on Black Americans and invoking the figurative potential of renowned black figures such Martin Luther king and Malcolm X, she provides a complex picture of the American policies of racism at home, and highlights the unjustified isolation and presumed inferiority that American blacks have witnessed in white America. She even seems to identify herself with the black American community in an act of stressing her moroccaness as part of an African identity. She declares “I experience a kind of warmth towards them. Whenever I find myself within an American black community, the barriers get removed, thoughts of being an outsider or in a foreign country draw to a close, and I discover powerful feelings within me as if I were on an Arab land.”¹¹

This empathetically racial affiliation with “blackness” underlines a symbolic gesture that takes up an antiracist position and expresses an explicit solidarity with the oppressed Other. The fact that she feels as an “insider” calls attention to how third world struggles are coupled with the subjugation and repression of African Americans in the US. It also highlights, as Michelle Hartman states, “the affinities

¹⁰ Khalid Bekkaoui, *Signs of Spectacular Resistance: The Spanish Moor and British Orientalism* (Casablanca: Najah al Jadida, 1998), 53. Khalid Bekkaoui’s *Signs of Spectacular Resistance: The Spanish Moor and British Orientalism* deals with the analysis of the representation of the Moors of Spain in Thomas Dekker’s *Lust’s Dominion* (1599), John Dryden’s *The Conquest of Granada* (1670), William Congreve’s *The Mourning Bride* (1697) and Percival Stockdale’s *Ximenes* (1788). It is an important contribution to colonial discourse analysis which attempts to historicize, contextualize and problematize the dichotomy between Self and Other. His major contribution lies in his consistent focus on locating sites of resistance within colonial texts with the aim of both retrieving the native’s point of view and offering new possibilities for a theoretical opening “from which colonial dominance can be contested”.

¹¹ Ab Zayd, *Amr k , al-wa h al- khar*, 77.

that might link aggrieved communities of color in the United States to anti colonialist struggles overseas”.¹² Ab Zayd, in this instance, through a feminist conscious consideration and valorization of blackness, is refuting the ideological beliefs of patriarchal regimes that have negated Otherness; while condemning America for its abusive undertakings during the political upheavals that targeted the eradication of black identity during the 1960s.

Her narrative, accordingly, seems to be turning into an oppositional force that seeks the reconstruction and rearticulation of the long suffered invisibility of America’s others. In her section entitled “Itineraries of Violated Treaties”, Ab Zayd, acting as a passionate condemner of racial injustice, evokes other similarly racialized, subalterned and disempowered groups. She reveals the hidden transcripts of an imperial culture filtered through notions of racial and cultural superiority. With the aim of uncovering the agendas of hegemony and defanging the codes of power, she foregrounds the American Indian natives who have traditionally been besieged, alienated, victimized, depersonalized and objectified by imperial attitudes and conspiracies.

From the very beginning of this section, the author seems to be determined to denounce the material disparities, social inequities, exploitation and economic marginalization that American Indians have endured for long because of the white man’s expansionist fervour. The first straight encounter with the Indians, as she declares, is in the Red Lake Reservation. She expresses a deep regret and disappointment at the exclusion of people who make up the “Other” America on the basis of race and ethnicity. Her dissatisfaction with the inaccurate and inhuman conduct of civilization towards its disempowered Indians is allegorically projected on the landscape; “everything has become dishonourably dull, dusty desert, ugly bridges, even autumn colours have lost their beauty”.¹³ It is at this particular moment that the author undergoes a psychological frustration as she experiences, through a close contact with the “natives”, the real disastrous and upsetting effects of imperial expansionism. Her tragic moment, suffused with emotional compassion but produced primarily by an overt expression of hostility, would result in a counter discourse that defends the Eastern religious and cultural values and condemns the western notion of expansion based on the eradication of its Others. She declares that she often asks people she meets

how the Anglo-Americans could live with this entire calamity in their minds [...], a white American said: “wouldn’t it be true to say that Arabs themselves had invaded a

¹² Hartman, “Writing Arabs and Africa(ns) in America,” 399.

¹³ Ab Zayd, *Amr k , al-wa h al- khar*, 92.

Demythologizing the American Dream

lot of nations?” I said: “yes, but they got married and mixed with each other, they co-existed covalently under Islam; they did not exterminate them in the name of barbarism.”¹⁴

According to Touria Khannous, “Colonialism has intensified racial divisions not only between the French and Moroccans, but also between Arabs and Berbers”¹⁵ and Abouzeid in this instance seems also to be turning “at the divisions in Morocco between Berbers/Arabs, and the “divide and rule” colonial policy which fostered such Divisions”.¹⁶ However, as she may appear to be projecting an orientalist vision over the space and its people by invoking both Marrakech and Imilishil, Ab Zayd is divergently trying to define the self through the empowering return to her locality, which allows her to engage in a constructive way with Otherness. This seems to be instrumental for her own agency and for the empowerment of her Moroccan Muslim identity as well. What becomes apparent in this section is that the use of memory is not meant for a reflective and nostalgic recollection that fixes the past in romanticized and idealized descriptions. There is a conscious struggle within her to define a mode of agency capable of reacting against the historical and political subjugations of ethnic minorities both in America and in Morocco, bearing in mind that she is herself born from a Berber father. As Fayad Mona states, “the need to retrieve memory, generally, in many Arab women’s writing, becomes a counterpart for the re-reading of history. With this comes the impetus not only to record their own past, but that of their community”¹⁷ in order to highlight the strategies of exclusion they are confronted with.

Ab Zayd’s travel-inspired narrative has grown not only out of the need to travel and study American international relations but also out of a desire to explore the cultural formations of the “other”. If Metropolitan anxieties, fear, unconscious frustration and uncertainties enunciate the European female narratives about the encounter with distant lands, Ab Zayd seems from the very beginning to be assured of and self-confident about an unusual alien space:

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 94.

¹⁵ Touria Khannous, “Islam, Gender, and Identity in Leila Abouzeid’s *The Last Chapter: A Postcolonial Critique*,” *College Literature* 37, no. 1 (2010), 180.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ Mona Fayad, “Reinscribing Identity: Nation and Community in Arab Women’s Writing,” *College Literature* 22, no. 1 (1995), 151.

*There is a world in front of me that I feel like exploring, and because this was my major concern I have no preset psychological fear or anxiety about understanding or mixing up with people.*¹⁸

This self-determination impulsively convinces the reader about the author's conscious ability to assert authority over the Minnesotan space, and to voice out her subversive postcolonial attitude which resists the western totalizing hegemonic discourses. She brings figuratively powerful rhetorical devices, reminiscent of a rich Arab literary tradition, to reduce America into a kind of "laurustinus, the evergreen shrub with attractive flowers but with intensely distasteful roots".¹⁹ This simile gives an already insightful inspiration into the intricacies of a counter discourse at work in Ab Zayd's narrative.

In fact, Ab Zayd's journey itself to the US might be initially regarded as encompassing this reactionary discourse against the whole patriarchal societies. The fact that she travels by herself becomes an already subversive act of resistance to the hegemonic constructs that have confined women to interior spaces. This view seems to be evident if one considers how women are traditionally "relegated to a subsidiary position, as dependent variables, who only move as part of family units", as Rogaia Mustapha Abusharaf assumes. Hence, her travel inspired-narrative to America should also be understood in this light as counter acting all oppressive systems at different levels; from within and from without. Unquestionably, her critique of America structures the major sections of her work, but the act of traveling itself acquires much more relevance as well. As a female traveler, she could be viewed as undertaking a daring trip that would symbolically allow her to break up from the "male protection and patronage [as] essential guarantors of a woman's respectability"²⁰ and at the same time to reject the rhetoric that makes women the ahistorical "pure signifiers of interiority". As Eva Hunter states, Abouzeid "registers her immersion in negotiating the experience of being a modern Moroccan woman".²¹ In so doing, she joins other feminists, such as the Egyptian Nawal Saadaoui and the Moroccan Fatima Mernissi, who have focused in their writings on the protest against gendered social and psychological experiences of women.

¹⁸ Ab Zayd, *Amr k , al-wa h al- khar*, 36.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 35.

²⁰ Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, "Migration with a Feminine Face: Breaking the Cultural Mold," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (2001), 61.

²¹ Eva Hunter, "Feminism, Islam and the Modern Moroccan Woman in the Works of Leila Abouzeid," *African Studies* 65, no. 2 (2006), 139.

Adopting the discursive strategies of colonial discourse and with a politically-inflicted desire to authorize her authority over the place, Ab Zayd's first confrontation with Minnesota is expressed through a visual possession of the landscape, depicting it in what Mary Louise Pratt terms "the monarch-of-all-I-survey". She fictionalizes her moments of discovery and reproduces the scenes she is depicting as a complex painting. Using the language of travel-inspired narratives, she states: "I got the impression of somebody waking up in a place not hers; it was suffused with serenity, breathtaking views of big buildings and trees, squealers' leaps in private gardens and in the main streets".²² Hence, Minnesota makes her first appearance in statically aestheticized terms; and by representing it as a static landscape, there is an already predicted relationship of mastery.²³ This act, together with the erasure of the residents at least at this particular moment, establishes the author as an authority over the place, reinforcing the city's availability for the Other's scrutinizing gaze which inventories and evaluates at the same time.

Ab Zayd, as a traveller, seems to develop a positive mental picture of the landscape throughout the first chapter of her narrative. She is caught by the exquisiteness and splendour of Minnesotan sceneries; yet, her revelations about the attractiveness of the landscape accentuate a subversively self-conscious counter discourse that creeps around. She appropriates space to "rethink the terrain common to whites and non whites", as Said argues, with the aim of spotlighting the harshness and ruthlessness of the white man and the injustice oppressors inflicted upon the land and its natives:

*Amid this magnificent arrangement of both forests and lakes, the creator has laid the crude beauty of nature around the Great Lake banks, known as "boating areas"... This reminds us of the red Indian boats and their struggle against the forces of Mississippi and the harshness of the white man. Those endless struggles that we all watched on TV in our childhood, and in which we, due to our ignorance, were predisposed to side with the white man.*²⁴

The textual recognition of the Mississippi is significant in the narrative as well. It stands as a metaphorical vehicle through which the landscape is subversively marked out by an oppressive past. In other words, as the river becomes textually recognized as "one of the mysteries of the world" it figuratively spills over with significant meanings since it is primarily used to denounce the

²² Ab Zayd, *Amr k , al-wa h al- khar*, 35.

²³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 204.

²⁴ Ab Zayd, *Amr k , al-wa h al- khar*, 42-43.

harshness of the white men as masters and their repressive policies towards the natives. What she sees in the Mississippi, accordingly, are brutality and violence mobilized by the Whites in the name of expansion, domination and exploitation. Adopting a reversal technique, Ab Zayd seems to consider her journey moving into the heart of savagery, unfairness and violence.

With classical Arabic style and an admirable use of figures of speech, Ab Zayd uses travel writing to her own purposes to denounce the American tyrannical modes of unfairness in their true rapacious aspects, depicting atrocities and violence perpetrated by the American policy towards Third World countries. She recognizes the uncanny strategies that the US mobilizes to manifest its expansionist and imperial ambitions, “its capitalist premises of acquisition of wealth and conspicuous consumption”²⁵ stressing the irrationality of Americanization in its mostly devastating forms. The whole discourse of power turns in Ab Zayd’s narrative into a “shattered mirror”, as she accurately states, and the motifs of civilization become unmistakably shaky: “the road networks, the massive bridges, the mysterious Walt Disney, the enormous and extraordinary buildings, the beauty of nature, order, competency, commitment to work and modesty, they all appear on a shattered mirror”.²⁶ In an act of resistance to the supposedly tempting image of the US, she matches up the whole western cultural, social, institutional progress and modernity to a laurustinus, the evergreen shrub with fanciful flowers grown out of distasteful roots, as the Moroccan saying goes.

In fact, the Minnesotan space seems from the outset split up and in crisis. With a gendered consciousness, she reconsiders the toponymic construction of both Saint Paul and Minneapolis, the two main cities in Minnesota which are often “referred to as the twins”, but the truth for Ab Zayd is that “they are step sisters. Their relationship is built upon stereotypical beliefs and demeaning viewpoints”.²⁷ This politically rhetoricized act of naming and fracturing, which, somehow, deviates from the colonial tropes of naming and controlling, and which is gendered as it appears, implies a renaming gesture that reconfigures Minnesotan space as morbidly fractured; reflecting in indirect forms an identity or a culture that is ostensibly shaped by biased views and prejudices. The dissolution of space into an arena of preconceived assumptions is politically arranged by the author to foreground other signifiers that project the idea of fragmentation into human relations as well.

²⁵ Sura P. Rath, “Post/Past-Orientalism: Orientalism and its Dis/re-orientation,” *Comparative American Studies* 2, no. 3 (2004), 354.

²⁶ Ab Zayd, *Amr k , al-wa h al- khar*, 48.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 38.

Ab Zayd's text remains an interesting work that documents a Moroccan female traveller to America in the 1990s, though it has not received much consideration from literary and cultural critics worldwide. The other question to be explored for further investigation is why Ab Zayd's travel inspired-narrative is not translated into English for the Anglo-American readers, bearing in mind that a great deal of her works which project an "Orientalized" version of Moroccan society and life have been translated and have witnessed a large circulation within the American academia and elsewhere.

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Corporate Responsibility and/or Liability in the Globalization Context

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Abstract

We live in times where we have to learn to come together, to join, although the geographical distances between us are great. We owe it (or is due to) the phenomenon of globalization. Globalization affects our lives and, at the same time, challenges us.

The process of globalization gives a new challenge for the humanity by the emergence of transnational corporations. How do we handle them? Can they operate on the basis of management only in their own interests or do they have social obligations? But can they operate on the basis of a minimum legal (juridical) code or does it require a deliberate assumption of moral responsibility?

It seems that by looking at the specialty literature, we can see that, in the context of globalization, companies should adopt, in addition to those written rules, a minimum standard of non-specific rules (morals) specific to a community at a time. Thus, going beyond legal responsibility to corporate moral responsibility balances the relationship between business and society. Moreover, it helps the business to withstand the market and at the same time to participate in the common good.

Research on this topic has resulted in the development of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. The concept could help corporations to develop a management that can meet both the requirements of the economy and the demands of society. The assertion can be argued by the existence of constituent components of the concept of economic, social and ethical domains.

Keywords: *responsibility, liability, globalization, corporate social responsibility (CSR).*

Introduction

Over the past 50 years, executives have been faced with a fact, which is *responsibility*, towards their own company, but also towards the society that it activates. This problem, of responsibility, became increasingly important and difficult to address in the context of globalization, because once a decision is meant to activate transnational, companies face multiple legislative, cultural plurality, etc. In this context, a new approach to social and legal accountability is needed. And even if the idea was “that the corporation’s sole responsibility was to provide a maximum financial return to shareholders,”¹ in the early 1970’s “these new governmental bodies established that national public policy now officially recognized the environment, employees, and consumers to be significant and legitimate stakeholders of business”.² This fact implies that legal liability and profit-making are no longer the solely corporate goals. Involvement of objectives that go beyond the sphere of economic policies (such as respecting the environment, respecting the employees and the communities in which companies operate) is desirable, and today it is an attempted possibility to reorganize the internal structure of a company based on moral responsibility towards every element that that it comes into contact with – even if it is human or non-human.

This paper proposes a theoretical statement on corporations that are carrying out their transnational activity and they have to assume the respect of both written (legal) and non-written (moral) laws. The need for emphasis on responsibility is given by the process of globalization. Because, through this phenomenon, corporations have the opportunity to work in other societies where, without a minimum moral, chaos would be created and human fundamental rights would be violated (as an appropriate example: the abuses on poor populations through overexploitation, both as a human resource and as a material resource).

Thus, the first part of the paper highlights the fact that in a globalized market economy we are inevitable confronted with the emergence of transnational corporations. In the era of globalization, the existence of these corporations changes the way nations and global order are governed. Changing global governance is manifested through a decentralization of political authorities and

¹ Archie B. Carroll, “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders,” *Business Horizons* (July/ August, 1991), 39-48.

² Carroll, “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility.”

power in favor of non-political and non-state actors such as intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and even transnational corporations.³

The second part of the paper discusses the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. The importance of the concept in this paper is given by the utility it could have for corporations that operate in a globalized economy. For example, the concept can support the development of a corporate governance strategy, a strategy needed in the context of globalization. Because a governance strategy so developed takes into account both the satisfaction of the economic needs and the expectations that society has from a corporation, because “the 21st century will be marked by the necessity for the state and non-state actors, as well as the global actors, to ensure peace, security, prosperity for their nations, for their companies, and for a general state of stability at international level.”⁴

Thus, at least at the theoretical level, the corporation in the era of globalization assumes (or at least should) both written and unwritten laws of the community in which it operates.

The present paper is one of statement and information. With informative purpose, it aims to help raise corporate awareness of responsibility and responsibility towards society and the environment. For a proper understanding of terminology, in this paper the term “Liability” is used in the sense “corporate liability⁵ for its criminal actions or employee failure,”⁶ while “responsibility” has the meaning of moral responsibility of companies.

The corporation in the context of globalization

Globalization is an actual phenomenon that infuses society as a whole at cultural, economic and political levels. But its effects are most powerful at the economic level. As Frankel argues, “there is no question that economic globalization is one of the most powerful forces to have shaped the post-war

³ B. Maragia, “Almost there: Another way of conceptualizing and explaining NGOs’ quest for legitimacy in global politics,” *Non-State Actors and International Law* 2 (2002): 301-332.

⁴ M d lina Virginia Antonescu, “From the International Law of Peace to the Global Law of Peace. The Global Order of Peace,” *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Economics & Administrative Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2018), 49, accessed May 20, 2018, <http://lumenpublishing.com/journals/index.php/lumeneas/article/view/425>.

⁵ Legal Liability - The duty or obligation to satisfactorily fulfill a task, which receives a penalty accordingly for failure.

⁶ corporate liability. BusinessDictionary.com. WebFinance, Inc., accessed October 26, 2017, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/corporate-liability.html>.

world.”⁷ The process of globalization has influenced the economy “through two channels: direct and indirect foreign investment and portfolios flow”.⁸ For the most part, technology transfer and foreign investment have been made via multinational corporations.

Thus, in the context of globalization, we assist at a spectacular development of such companies. As Saheed argues, “the interconnection of sovereign nations through trade and capital flows, harmonization of economic rules, creation of structural support and facilitate interconnection and the development of a global market, which allow flow to foreign investment, both direct and portfolio”⁹ represent key elements determined by globalization, that encourages the presence of huge corporations with subsidiaries in different countries.

We could say that the existence of such companies is beneficial, by infusion of financial capital, new jobs, lower prices etc., but at the same time it can also represent a disadvantage by fierce competition with domestic firms, the exploitation of human capital in poorly developed countries, exploiting the natural resources of a country for the company’s profit etc. Thus, corporate governance “must meet a minimum legal standard regardless of the location where it operates, which requires the need for uniformity and consistency.”¹⁰ Moreover, “in an increasingly globalized, interconnected and competitive world, how environmental, social and corporate governance issues are managed is proof of the quality of corporate governance that is so necessary to successfully compete.”¹¹

This transnational economy, due to the globalization process, changes “the company’s expectations of a company, which has led to a diversification and increase of its responsibilities towards all stakeholders (investors, creditors, management, employees, customers, communities local, society as a whole, etc.)”¹² That is, “globalization is currently causing a radical change in the corporate landscape because, in order to achieve business success, companies need

⁷ Jeffery Frankel, “What do economists mean by globalization?” Paper presented at *Academic Consultants Meeting*, Washington, 2006, accessed October 26, 2017, <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/jfrankel/FRB-Globalzn&InflOct4.pdf>.

⁸ Mirela-Oana Pinte, *Guvernanța corporativă și performanța firmei în contextul globalizării* (Bucharest: ASE, 2015), 8, accessed October 26, 2017, <http://excelenta.ase.ro/Media/Default/Page/pinteamo.pdf>.

⁹ Zakaree S. Saheed, “Impact of Globalization on corporate governance in developing economies: A theoretical approach,” *Journal of Business and Management* 2, no. 1 (2013), 1-10.

¹⁰ Pinte, *Guvernanța corporativă*, 10

¹¹ UN Global Compact Report (2004), accessed October 26, 2017, www.unglobalcompact.org/library.

¹² Pinte, *Guvernanța corporativă*, 12.

to be aware that the social and environmental effects of their activities affects the interested parties and, in particular, stakeholders”.¹³

We see, therefore, how the process of globalization requires an amplification of corporate responsibilities. Because, in addition to complying with a minimum legal standard, corporations are also responsible for the negative effects of their undertaken activities have on society and the environment. The social commitment of companies is increasingly demanded by the company, even in areas that are not directly related to the business or the efficiency of the supply of goods.¹⁴ These developments are reinforced by the globalization process that erodes, primarily at national level, government institutions and processes.¹⁵

The weakening of government institutions and processes at national level is due to the “encouraged risk taking in number of the failed companies, especially where many of them have lacked board oversight and robust risk management, while the remuneration of boards and senior management remains a thorn issue”¹⁶ which represents a deficiency in corporations arrangement.

As is also stated in the paper “Towards a Political Concept of Corporate Responsibility,” the process of economic globalization has provoked various movements of society materialized in the emergence of nongovernmental organizations. And, in this position

*The challenge is to find new forms of democratic will-formation, especially under the conditions of globalization that do not only domesticate economic pressures by democratic control, but furthermore go beyond traditional nation state governance and integrate the new role of business as a legitimate part of these institutions and processes.*¹⁷

Non-governmental organizations can be seen also as a self-defense response to the pressure waves of multinationals. These reactions force multinationals, to a

¹³ *Ibidem*, 13.

¹⁴ Suresh P. Sethi, “Introduction to AMR’s special topic forum on shifting paradigms: Societal expectations and corporate performance,” *Academy of Management Review* 20 (1995): 18-21; Willis Harman and Maya Porter, eds., *The new business of business: Sharing responsibility for a positive global future* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1997).

¹⁵ Inge Kaul, P. Conceição, K. Le Goulven and R. U. Mendoza, eds., *Providing global public goods. Managing globalization* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003); A. G. Scherer and G. Palazzo, “Towards a political conception of corporate responsibility – business and society seen from a habermasian perspective” (Zurich/Lausanne, 2004), accessed September 29, 2017, <http://amr.aom.org/content/32/4/1096.full.pdf+html> .

¹⁶ Saheed, “Impact of Globalization.”

¹⁷ Scherer and Palazzo, “Towards a political conception”.

certain extent, to take greater responsibility for their own actions, “exerting direct pressure on corporations.”¹⁸

These aspects lead to significant changes at the management level. Changing global governance is manifested through a decentralization of political authorities and power in favor of non-political and non-state actors such as NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, and even transnational corporations.¹⁹ Herein we can appreciate that the multinationals, due to their major importance in society (economic development but also influence over the political decision maker), gain a greater responsibility going beyond the legal obligation (liability). Moreover, it was argued that multinationals should align their activities with the local community’s “wider values”²⁰ (or “act consistently with the moral foundations of that society”²¹) and that their responsibilities derive from social expectations “in at a time”.²² Furthermore, corporations carrying out transnational activities should respect the “basic rules of society”²³ in which they operate. However, corporate responsibility is not a new subject; the existence and scope of this issue have been important issues for decades.²⁴

Corporate Social Responsibility

Discussions on the responsibility of large corporations begin with the development of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. This concept has its roots in speeches that refer to social responsibility. Thus, we notice that the definition of corporate social responsibility is approaching on what McGuire (“another major contributor of the definition of social responsibility during the

¹⁸ J. Gabrielle Klein, N. Craig Smith and Andrew John, “Why we boycott: Consumer motivations for boycott participation,” *Journal of Marketing* 68 (2004): 92-109, accessed October 30, 2017, <http://facultyresearch.london.edu/docs/03-702.pdf>.

¹⁹ Maragia, “Almost there.”

²⁰ Diane L. Swanson, “Toward an integrative theory of business and society: A research strategy for corporate social performance,” *Academy of Management Review* 24 (1999): 506-521.

²¹ E. M. Epstein and D. Votaw, eds., *Rationality, legitimacy, and responsibility* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Goodyear Publishing Co, University of California, Berkeley. School of Business Administration, 1978), 218.

²² Archie B. Carroll, “A three-dimensional conceptual model of corporate social performance,” *Academy of Management Review* 4 (1979): 497-505.

²³ Milton Friedman, “The social responsibility of business is to increase its profit,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 13 September, 1970, reprint in *Ethical issues in business: A philosophical approach*, eds. T. Donaldson and P. H. Werhane (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall), 217-223.

²⁴ W. Bill Donham, “The social significance of business,” *Harvard Business Review* 4, no. 4 (1927): 406-419; Raymond C. Baumhart, “How ethical are businessmen?” *Harvard Business Review* 39, no. 4 (1961): 6-31; David A. Whetten, Gordon Rands and Paul Godfrey, “What are the responsibilities of business to society?” in *Handbook of strategy and management*, eds. A. Pettigrew, H. Thomas and R. Whittington (London: Sage, 2002), 373-408.

1960's"²⁵) in *Business and Society* in 1963 defined it, as “the idea of social responsibilities supposes that the corporation has not only economic and legal obligations but also certain responsibilities to society which extended beyond these obligations”²⁶ that is “somewhat more precise than previous ones in that he defined it as extending beyond economic and legal obligations.”²⁷ Also, the fact that Corporate Social Responsibility has its roots in the concept of Social Responsibility can also be seen in the “definition of Davis and Blomstrom: social responsibility refers to a person’s obligation to consider the effects of his decisions and actions on the whole social system. Business people apply social responsibility when considering the needs and interests of those who may be affected by their business. By doing so they look beyond the economic and technical limits of their firm”,²⁸ thus implying ethics, if not even morality, in the managerial process. Even in business policy, which deals in particular with economic issues, the ethical responsibilities of companies have been recognized,²⁹ although these obligations are marginalized in the strategy *manuals* that are used at large-scale today.³⁰

Even if evidence of social responsibility for business man could be also found in Bowen’s³¹ writings, it is argued that only in the 2000’s the situation becomes clear, with explicit aims and with a changed organizational culture and based on an active management about the general and social good.³² The ambiguity of the concept also results from what Votaw wrote about 50 years ago:

The term [social responsibility] is a brilliant one; it means something, but not always the same thing, to everybody. To some it conveys the idea of legal responsibility or liability; to others, it means socially responsible behavior in an ethical sense; to still others, the meaning transmitted is that of “responsible for,” in a causal mode; many simply equate it with a charitable contribution; some take it to mean socially conscious; many of those who embrace it most fervently see it as a mere synonym for

²⁵ Archie B. Carroll, “Corporate Social Responsibility: Evolution of a Definitional Construct,” *Business & Society* 38, no. 3 (Sage Publications, 1999): 268-295.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ E. P. Learned, C. R. Christensen, K. R. Andrews and W. D. Guth, *Business policy: Text and cases* (Homewood, Ill.: R. D. Irwin, 1965); Scherer and Palazzo, “Towards a political conception.”

³⁰ D. R. Gilbert, “Corporate strategy and ethics, as corporate strategy comes of age,” in *The Blackwell handbook of strategic management*, eds. M. A. Hitt, E. Freeman and J. S. Harrison (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2001), 564-582; Scott J. Reynolds, “A single framework for strategic and ethical behavior in the international context,” *Business Ethics Quarterly* 13 (2003): 361-379; Scherer and Palazzo, “Towards a political conception.”

³¹ See Howard R. Bowen, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, 2013).

³² Antonia Gawel, *Corporate Social Responsibility: Standards and Objectives Driving Corporate Initiatives* (Ottawa: Pollution Probe, 2006), 10.

«legitimacy,» in the context of “belonging” or being proper or valid; a few see it as a sort of fiduciary duty imposing higher standards of behavior on businessmen than on citizens at large.³³

Even today, the concept does not enjoy a well-defined framework, yet. Although “over the years, many have tried to define it, some definitions have remained vague and ambiguous.”³⁴ But it is becoming increasingly clear that the main objective of the concept is to establish an appropriate relationship between business and society in such a way that fundamental human rights are not violated, nor do they go beyond philanthropy. The term “philanthropy is used as a form of public relations or advertising, promoting a company’s image or brand through cause-related marketing or other high-profile sponsorships”.³⁵ Because, let’s not forget that the main purpose of businesses is to obtain material goods (both for the company and for the citizens). However, as Kant states, “man and generally any rational being exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will, but in all his actions, whether they concern himself or other rational beings, must be always regarded at the same time as an end.”³⁶ As such, obtaining material goods (whether for companies or for citizens) must be in accordance with respect for man, and even for all living beings. And how else would it be possible if not by adopting a minimum morale in the business environment.

We could say that the involvement of ethics in the business environment could balance the aforementioned relationship (business-society environment). In this respect, we see that ethics is an important component in the structure of the CSR concept. This is quite well-highlighted in Carroll’s writings.

Archie B. Carroll is one of the most reputable scientists in the field of CSR. His efforts culminated with the exposition of a definition and graphic representation of the components of the definition, represented in a “CSR Pyramid”.³⁷ Since 1991, Carroll says: “Corporate Social Responsibility companies

³³ Dow Votaw, “Genius Became Rare: A Comment on the Doctrine of Social Responsibility,” *California Management Review* 15, no. 2 (1972): 25-31 quoted in Carroll, “Corporate Social Responsibility,” 268.

³⁴ Joel Makower, *Beyond the Bottom Line* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

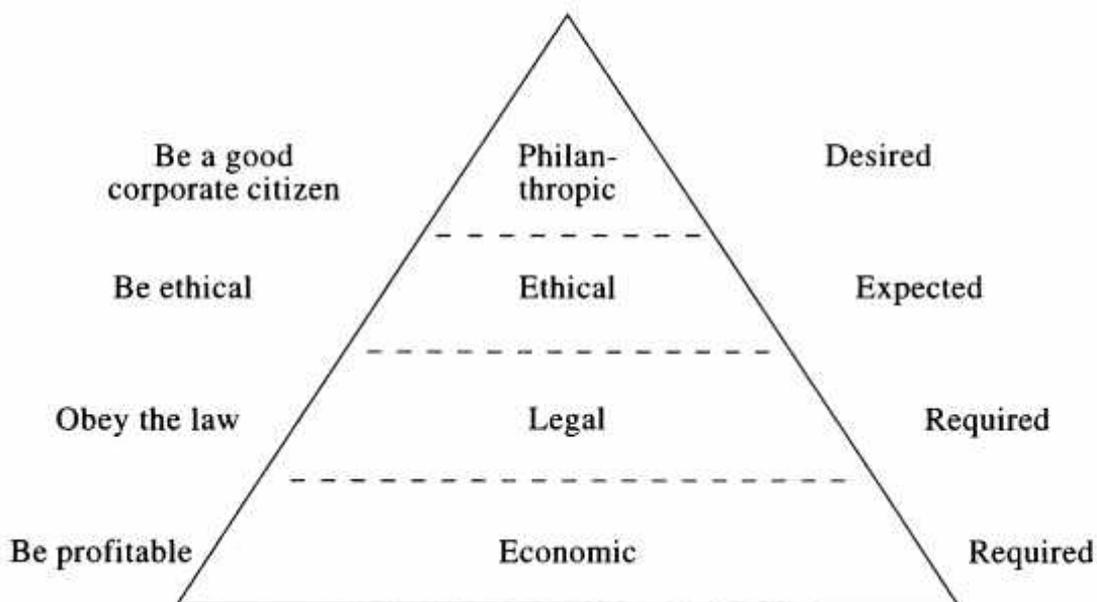
³⁵ M. E. Porter and M. R. Kramer, “The Competitive Advantage of Corporate Philanthropy,” *Harvard Business Review* (December 2002), <https://hbr.org/2002/12/the-competitive-advantage-of-corporate-philanthropy>.

³⁶ Immanuel Kant, “Fundamental principles of the Metaphysics of Morals,” in *Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics* (London: Kongmans, Green and Co., 1889), 46.

³⁷ Carroll, “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility.”

should strive to make profit, respect the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen,”³⁸ thus structuring the definition into four constituent elements (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Carroll's (1991) Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility



Source: Carroll, “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility”.

Although these four categories pyramidal model established by Carroll have been used by many theories³⁹ and empirical research proving a high degree of usefulness, it has not been uncriticized. As consequences, Carroll himself returns to his own study and adds to the specialty literature another work, elaborated in collaboration with Schwartz,⁴⁰ designed to bring about improvements in the field. The main criticisms of the CSR pyramidal model are: “The pyramid suggests a

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

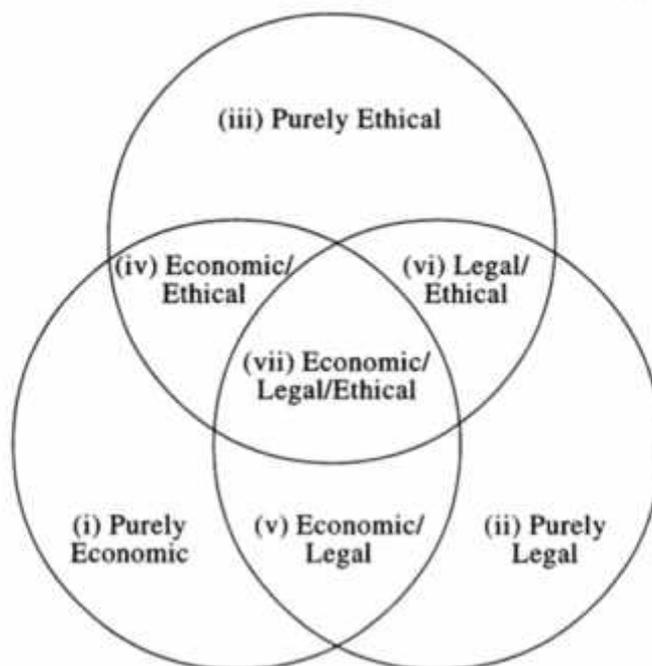
³⁹ The four categories are used by: Steven L. Wartick and Philip L. Cochran, “The Evolution of the Corporate Social Performance Model,” *Academy of Management Review* 10, no. 4 (1985): 758-769; Diane L. Swanson, “Addressing a Theoretical Problem by Reorienting the Corporate Social Performance Model,” *Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 1 (1995): 43-64; Diane L. Swanson, “Toward an Integrative Theory of Business and Society: A Research Strategy for Corporate Social Performance,” *Academy of Management review* 24, no. 3 (1999): 506-521.

⁴⁰ Mark S. Schwartz and Archie B. Carroll, “Corporate Social Responsibility: A Three-Domain Approach,” *Business Ethics Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (2003): 503-530.

hierarchy of the domains”, respectively, that “a pyramidal framework cannot fully cover the *overlapping* of the domains”.⁴¹

Thus, from the pyramidal model of CSR, they have switched to another, namely, the Three-Dimensional Model of CSR. If the first involves the pyramidal exposure of four areas (economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic), the CSR three-tier model uses a Venn chart to expose the domains.

Figure 2:
The Three-Domain Model of Corporate Social Responsibility



Source: Schwartz and Carroll, “Corporate Social Responsibility”

The three-pronged CSR model eliminates the philanthropic field from its structure, stating that this category “can be included in the area of ethical and / or economic responsibility, reflecting the possible different motivations of such activities”⁴² (philanthropic activities may be motivated to improve the image of the firm and thus to attract more profits, or philanthropic activities may have purely ethical motivation).

⁴¹ Schwartz and Carroll, “Corporate Social Responsibility.”

⁴² *Ibidem.*

We can think that the two CSR models can be a basis for developing and adopting a strategy for the development of transnational companies, strategies that meet both economic and social expectations. Moreover, these strategies come with responsibilities, given that “responsibilities are linked to six major social issues: consumerism, environment, discrimination, product safety, occupational safety, and shareholders,”⁴³ and we can conclude that in the context of globalization, corporations tend to assume greater responsibility.

The existence of the RCS concept as proof of the accountability and responsibility of corporations in the context of globalization

Amplifying corporate responsibility is due to “no convincing arguments for submitting economic activities to higher ethical standards than those of the political system itself”⁴⁴ which also implies the social activities. And, in the globalization era, the ability of the national regulatory state in the economic activities is decreasing,⁴⁵ while corporations have new roles.⁴⁶

Moreover, “business firms are not so much private institutions that operate under the rules of a particular legal system... multinational corporations today are able to choose among various legal systems, applying economic criteria to their choice of which set of labor, social, and environmental regulations under which they will operate”.⁴⁷ This option is justified economically but not socially. Then, “what about those cases of human rights violations, environmental pollution, or other ethically questionable activities that are not covered by local laws and/or not enforced by state agencies?”⁴⁸ In such a reality, a corporation that operates transnationally should adhere to normative standards that go beyond legal.

⁴³ Vincent Lefebvre and Miruna Radu Lefebvre, “Integrating Corporate Social Responsibility at the Start-up level: Constraint or Catalyst for Opportunity Identification?” *International Business Research* 5, no. 7 (2012), <https://hal-audencia.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00836856/document>.

⁴⁴ Scherer and Palazzo, “Towards a political conception.”

⁴⁵ Susan Strange, *The retreat of the state: The diffusion of power in the world economy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Jürgen Habermas, *The postnational constellation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).

⁴⁶ Andreas G. Scherer and Mark Smid, “The downward spiral and the U.S. Model Principles. Why MNEs should take responsibility for the improvement of world-wide social and environmental conditions,” *Management International Review* 40 (2000): 351-371; I. Marion Young, “Responsibility and global labor justice,” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 12 (2004): 365-388.

⁴⁷ Scherer and Palazzo, “Towards a political conception.”

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

Thus, we can say that CSR is helping companies to adapt a strategy that strikes a balance between the economy and society, or a strategy that will allow them to take on more responsibility.

It is also obvious (at least if we look at the constituent elements of the CSR concept - economic, legal and ethical) that, in the age of globalization, corporations, theoretically, are increasingly responsible for their own actions. However, if the reason for such a responsibility is of an economic nature (for a better image or to withstand market competition) or purely moral assumption (companies want to participate in the common good) is not clear enough and probably not even we will succeed to establish it.

We can, however, accept that today the interest of corporations has exceeded the boundaries of profit, and that it seeks to adapt to the economic environment but also to existing resources, to attaining legal and political objectives, but at the same time also to social integration on the issues of culture and moral values.

Respecting the moral values of a society, at a certain time, is a great challenge. The challenge is given by the attempt to provide a “universal, disinterested and impartial ethical view,”⁴⁹ “a view that is morally binding even though our world is characterized by a pluralism of cultures, rules, and values”.⁵⁰

Today, business ethics is based on a philosophical basis of considerable value.

*In search of ethical principles, philosophers have considered virtues that should guide actions (Aristotle), have attempted to identify universal duties as the preconditions of social life (Kant), have reasoned about the consequences of moral behavior (Bentham, Mill), and have discussed the conditions of a social contract to which all members of society might subscribe (Hobbes, Rawls, Rousseau).*⁵¹

And yet it is not possible to establish universally valid business conduct rules.

All these concerns about the role of corporations in societies show us that, in the era of globalization, legal liability is not sufficient (given the conditions of legislative, cultural, etc.) and that the passage of the threshold to moral responsibility is desirable and even attempted (regardless of motivation); proving the preoccupations regarding the research of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility.

⁴⁹ Thomas Donaldson and Thomas W. Dunfee, *Ties that bind: A social contracts approach to business ethics* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 14.

⁵⁰ Scherer and Palazzo, “Towards a political conception.”

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

Conclusions

Contemporary world is facing a phenomenon called globalization that influences our lives and forces us to manage it. The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility, as a measure for managing globalization, is developed to balance the relationship between the economy and society. We can see that the globalization process gives the economy new responsibilities. In the era of globalization, businesses have not only economic obligations (profit and supply of material goods), and cannot be limited to legal liability. Therefore it is a need for moral responsibility in a world characterized by plurality but still a world conveying together.

Today, the obligation to respond to the law goes beyond the responsibility for the good of the other. The evidence of this state of affairs is the existence of concerns about Corporate Social Responsibility. Through its constitutive components (economic, legal, ethical) it shows that a corporation that works transnationally has the obligation to respond to the law, but also to society for its actions.

We could, therefore, argue that, in the context of globalization of corporations, it assumes, at least theoretically, compliance with legislation (liability) but also respecting a minimum moral code (accountability).

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English language students' beliefs about language learning. The case of "Aleksander Moisiu" University

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Abstract

Students' beliefs about language learning are an important component which will definitely have an impact in their future as teachers. The beliefs students hold and the way they are formed have been at the center of many studies. This article, however, reports the findings of a quantitative study related to English language students' beliefs about English language learning. The students surveyed had just finished the third semester of their school practice and the instrument used to collect the data was Horwitz's Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory – (BALLI, 1987). It included 35 items which covered a wide range of categories such as: language aptitude, nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, difficulty of the language and last but not the least Motivation. Apart from the beliefs, through the questionnaire we attempted to investigate if students had had other teaching experiences apart from their school practice and if there were teachers among their family members. At the end we tried to find out if these two variables had any effect on students' beliefs about English language learning. Recommendations for further research and implications of the findings are also part of the article.

Keywords: *beliefs about language learning, English language, BALLI 1987.*

Introduction

In-service or pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning have attracted the attention of many scholars and researchers for at least 30 years. A considerable number of studies have been undertaken all over the world with the aim to find out what the teachers and students' beliefs were and what their influence was in the teaching and learning process. As a matter of fact, it has been found that foreign language teachers come to class with certain ideas or beliefs of their own about language learning and the latter can influence their expectations

and actions in class. According to Elaine Horwitz,¹ pre-service second language teachers enter teacher education programs with preexisting ideas about language and language learning, just like second language learners. Furthermore, various studies have also considered the possible effects of teacher beliefs on their instructional practices, the development of teacher beliefs during foreign language education programs, etc.

In spite of the similarities in terms of University curriculum of foreign language teaching (in our case English language), textbooks, syllabi etc., pre-service teachers use different teaching techniques, strategies, styles in different stages of their teaching practice. That makes the difference from one to another. One of the main reasons is related to pre-service teachers' beliefs which are expressed in approaches chosen, type of instruction given, activities selected, decision-making, interactions with students, format of test design etc. Based on the great impact, it has been given a considerable importance in many countries. Unfortunately, we cannot affirm the same about the Albanian context where studies of this kind are quite rare for not saying inexistent. This fact attracted my attention and led me to investigate the English language students' beliefs in "Aleksander Moisiu" University.

In our university, among other subjects, English language students should follow three semesters of school practice. The first semester is called observation or passive practice and students are supposed to attend English classes in a ninth grade school, but are not expected to participate in teaching. The other two semesters are active practice and students became active in the teaching process. The BALLI 1987 questionnaire was administered to students, who had just finished their third semester of school practice and had a clear idea of the lesson stages, teacher-students interaction, discipline problems, lesson plans etc.

Literature review

Being spread all over the world, English language learning had been the object of many beliefs and assumptions among English language learners and these beliefs almost certainly affect the whole process. In the context of second language acquisition, Richards and Schmit² would define learner beliefs as opinions learners have about various aspects of language, learning and teaching.

¹ E. K. Horwitz, "Using student beliefs about language learning and teaching in the foreign language methods course," *Foreign Language Annals* 18/4 (1985): 333-340.

² J. C. Richard and R. Schmidt, eds., *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rd ed.) (London: Longman, 2002).

Another researcher, Dona Kagan would see teachers' beliefs as "often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms and the academic material to be taught."³ A more general view is provided by Borg⁴ who is of the opinion that a belief is a proposition, which is consciously or unconsciously held and accepted true by the individual holding it and which serves as a guide to thought and behavior. From the definitions above, it is clear that we will find it hard to agree on a common statement about students' beliefs. However, despite this fact, what it is generally accepted, is that teachers' beliefs are established long before they start their profession.⁵ Furthermore, Jutarat Vibulphol⁶ believes that the development process of pre-service teachers' beliefs about language learning starts from the period when they were language learners themselves and continuous till the time when they were in teacher education programs. Another point of view is provided by Frank Pajares⁷ when he argues that teachers' beliefs about teaching are formed early in life through their experience as learners and these early beliefs exert an influence on teachers throughout their professional lives.

Concerning the importance of research in this direction, Elaine Horwitz⁸ found out that understanding learners' beliefs is important since it helps teachers to become familiar with learners' approaches to language learning and learners' use of learning strategies based on which they can plan a more appropriate language instruction. Pajares⁹ is more specific when he mentions that teachers' beliefs and attitudes affect their instructional decisions, especially in terms of defining tasks (including interpreting, planning and making general decisions), which in turn influences their classroom practices. In the same line, we can cite Karen Johnson¹⁰ who argues that teachers' beliefs influence their judgment and perception, the classroom activities they use, and it can contribute to the improvement of teaching

³ D. M. Kagan, "Implications of research on teacher belief," *Educational Psychologist* 27, no. 1 (1992), 65.

⁴ S. Borg, "Studying teacher cognition in second language grammar teaching," *System* 27 (1999): 19-31.

⁵ Karen E. Johnson, "The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of pre-service English as a second language teachers," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 10, no. 4 (1994), 439-452.

⁶ J. Vibulphol, "Beliefs about language learning and teaching approaches of pre-service EFL teachers in Thailand" (PhD diss, Oklahoma State University, 2004).

⁷ M. F. Pajares, "Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct," *Review of Educational Research* 62 (1992): 307-332.

⁸ E. K. Horwitz, "Cultural and situational influences on foreign language learners' beliefs about language learning: a review of BALLI studies," *System* 27 (1999): 557-576.

⁹ Pajares, "Teachers' beliefs and educational research."

¹⁰ Johnson, "The emerging beliefs".

practices and teacher education programs. Apparently, the belief system serves as a base for the activities and practices used in class.

Pajares¹¹ provided a categorization of teachers' belief system into core and peripheral beliefs. According to him, core beliefs were stable and exerted a more powerful influence on behavior than peripheral beliefs. As it was expected, even Peacock's¹² study on teacher beliefs (especially core beliefs) revealed that they tended to be resistant to change. The researcher surveyed a group of second language teachers beliefs about language learning such as: beliefs about the importance of learning a lot of vocabulary and grammar rules; and the belief that people who speak more than one language are very intelligent etc. In the same vein is even Williams and Burden¹³ study which asserted that teachers' deep-rooted beliefs about language learning would infuse into their classroom performances more than a particular methodology they have learnt during their teacher education programs. Cumming¹⁴ reinforces this idea by indicating that the kinds of practical knowledge which the teachers use in teaching appear to exist largely in very personalized terms, based on unique experiences, individual conceptions, and their interactions with local contexts. Its personal significance differentiates it from prescribed models of educational theory. Wong¹⁵ is more specific in his study which attests to the stability of teacher cognition. In particular, beliefs about language aptitude, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, the benefits of practice, and an immersion approach to language learning appeared to remain stable.

Concerning the sources of teachers' beliefs, Lortie¹⁶ has identified two of them: teachers' learning experiences as students and teacher education programs. There are many studies that support the view that apart from formal schooling experience, teachers' learning experiences as students have an influential role on their construction of beliefs. Among them we can mention Milner¹⁷ who argues that teachers' beliefs and practices are explicitly linked to their interactions and

¹¹ Pajares, "Teachers' beliefs and educational research."

¹² M. Peacock, "Pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs about second language learning: A longitudinal study," *System* 29 (2001): 177-195.

¹³ M. Williams and R. Burden, *Psychology for Language Teachers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁴ A. Cumming, "Student teachers' conceptions of curriculum: Towards an understanding of language teacher development," *TESL Canada Journal* 7, no. 1 (1989): 33-51.

¹⁵ B. Wong and C. S. Chai, "Asian personal epistemologies and beyond: Overview and some reflections," *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 19, no. 1 (2010): 1-6.

¹⁶ D. Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A sociological study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

¹⁷ R. H. Milner, "Stability and change in US prospective teachers' beliefs and decisions about diversity and learning to teach," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 21 (2005): 767-786.

experiences with diverse individuals and contexts. Other studies like Johnson,¹⁸ indicated how pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs are based on prior experience and the way such experience relates to classroom practice. Johnson¹⁹ study revealed that pre-service teachers' instructional decisions during practicum were based on images of teachers, materials, activities and classroom organization generated by their own second language learning experience. Numrich²⁰ goes further by stating that teachers decided to promote or to avoid specific instructional strategies on the basis of their positive or negative experiences of these respective strategies as learners.

Other studies have emphasized the impact of language teacher education programs on pre-service teachers' beliefs and practices.²¹ Almarza's study²² showed that during teaching practice, student teachers drew on different sources of knowledge, which had its origin in the teacher education programme. However studies have confirmed the view that students' beliefs change with the passing of time. In this respect, Cole and Knowles²³ discovered that most pre-service teachers start their practicum with hopes, images, and expectations and during their teaching practice these images are shattered as they are exposed to school and classroom realities that do not match their expectation and previous experiences.

On the other hand, Mattheoudakis²⁴ conducted a study aiming at discovering pre-service English teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching in Greece during a three year teacher education program. The results indicated that through the practicum, the pre-service teachers realized that the classroom reality helped them test their knowledge and become more aware of their personal beliefs about learning and teaching. Furthermore, the study revealed that some of the EFL pre-service teachers' beliefs changed significantly after the three-year program in SLA and methodology in the Greek university, where the research occurred. Even Schick and Boothe²⁵ study on the beliefs of teachers in a graduate level of English

¹⁸ Johnson, "The emerging beliefs."

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ C. Numrich, "On becoming a language teacher: Insights from diary studies," *TESOL Quarterly* 30 (1996): 131-53.

²¹ M. Mattheoudakis, "Tracking changes in pre-service EFL teacher beliefs in Greece: A longitudinal study," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 23 (2007): 1272-1288.

²² G. Almarza, "Student foreign language teachers' knowledge growth," in *Teacher Learning in Language Teaching*, eds. D. Freeman and J. Richards (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 50-78.

²³ A. L. Cole and J. G. Knowles, "Teacher development partnership research: A focus on methods and issues," *American Educational Research Journal* 30 (1993): 473-495.

²⁴ Mattheoudakis, "Tracking changes in pre-service EFL teacher beliefs in Greece."

²⁵ J. Schick and D. Boothe, "Survey of teachers' attitudes toward diversity: A pilot Study," ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED381515 (1995).

as a Second Language and culture class found signs of positive change between the administration of their pre-test and post-test questionnaire at the beginning and end of the courses. The view is supported by MacDonald, et al.²⁶ who found changes in pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs about English language learning during teacher education second language acquisition courses as opposed to no significant changes for the control group who did not take an second language acquisition course.

Eisenstein-Ebsworth and Schweers²⁷ see teachers' views shaped by students' wants, syllabus expectations, and prior experiences. According to them, this knowledge may change over time as teachers interact with students and get feedback from them. However, some researchers proposed that some beliefs are beneficial to learners while others argue that some beliefs can lead to negative effects on language learning. For example, Mantle-Bromley²⁸ suggested that learners who have positive attitudes and realistic language-related beliefs are more likely to behave in a more productive way in learning than those who have negative attitudes. In the same line, Mori²⁹ claimed that positive beliefs can compensate for learners' limited abilities. Bialystok³⁰ stated that as students advanced to a higher-level, formal practice with rules and forms was less and less effective. Whereas, Oxford and Nyiko³¹ found that foreign language students who had studied the target language for a minimum of four or five years employed communication oriented strategies significantly more often than less experienced students.

The Study

SUBJECTS

The study was conducted at "Aleksander Moisiu" University, Durrës. The subjects of the study consisted of 30 students of the third year in the English

²⁶ M. MacDonald, R. Badger and G. White, "Changing values: What use are theories of language learning and teaching," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 17 (2001): 949-963.

²⁷ M. E. Eisenstein-Ebsworth and C. W. Schweers, "What researchers say and practitioners do: Perspectives on conscious grammar instruction in the ESL classroom," *Applied Language Learning* 8, no. 2 (1997): 237-260.

²⁸ C. Mantle-Bromley, "Positive attitudes and realistic beliefs: Links to proficiency," *The Modern Language Journal* 79, no. 3 (1995): 372-386.

²⁹ Y. Mori, "Epistemological beliefs and language learning beliefs: What do 283 language learners believe about their learning?" *Language Learning* 49, no. 3 (1999): 377-415.

³⁰ E. Bialystok, "The role of linguistic knowledge in second language use," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 4 (1981): 31-45.

³¹ R. L. Oxford and M. Nyikos, "Variables affecting choice of language learning strategies by university students," *The Modern Language Journal* 73 (1989): 291-300.

English language students' beliefs about language learning

language branch. More specifically, the sample of the study consisted of students who were chosen randomly. Their participation in the survey was anonymous and voluntary. Of the subject, 5 were male and 25 were female students. The study was conducted at the end of the third semester of school practice, in May 2018. It was noticed that the subjects demonstrated a positive attitude towards the school practice, which was also evident in the fact that none of them refused to take part in the study.

INSTRUMENTS

The instrument used in this case was Horwitz's Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory – (BALLI, 1987). It included 35 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, and was designed to assess language learners' opinions on five major dimensions that are as follows: (1) beliefs about the difficulty of language learning, which belong to the general difficulty of learning a foreign language and the specific difficulty of a target language; (2) beliefs about foreign language aptitude, which has to do with the existence of language learning aptitude; (3) beliefs about the nature of language learning, which concern a range of issues relating to language learning process; (4) beliefs about learning and communication strategies, which are related to learners' actual language learning practices; and (5) learner motivations and expectations, which deal with interest and opportunities learners associate with the learning of a foreign language.

However, the first part of the questionnaire contained background information about the students involved in the study such as: their gender, years of learning English, other teaching experiences apart from their school practice and if there were teachers among their family members. We used quantitative methods to analyze the data.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

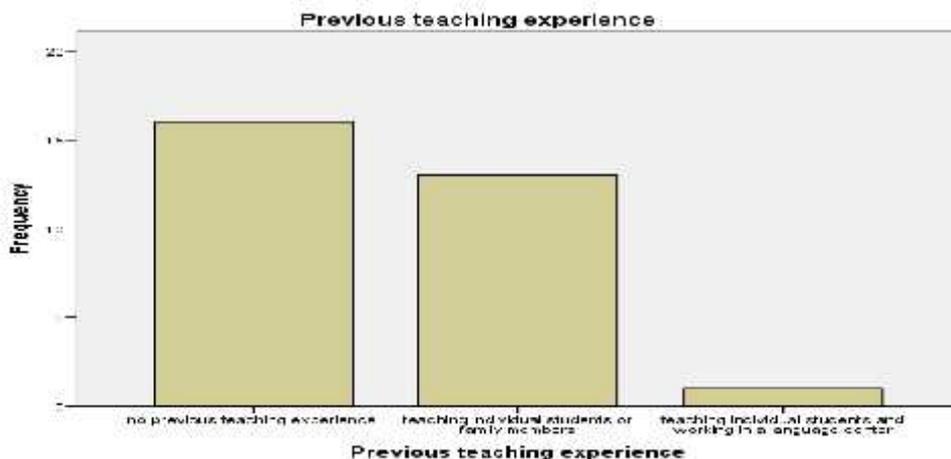
The research questions that we aimed at answering in our study are as follows:

1. Did students have teaching experiences prior to teaching practice?
2. Do the students have a family member or a relative that is a teacher?
3. What are English language students' beliefs about English language learning?

DATA ANALYSIS

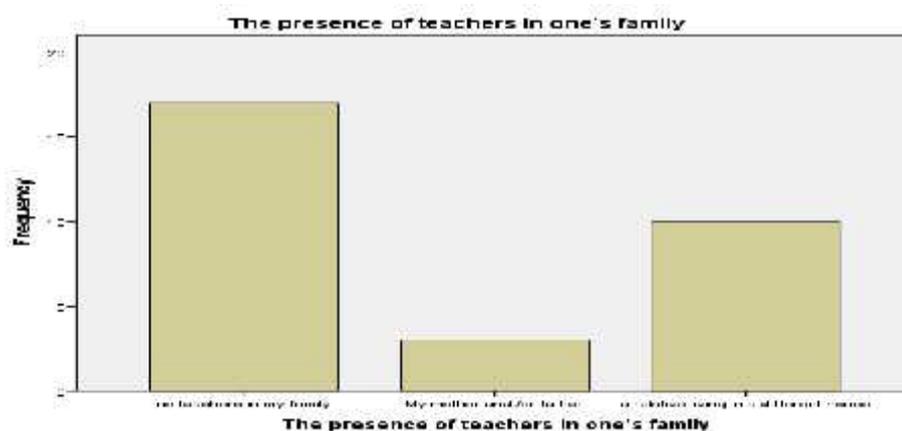
First of all, we intended to find out if the students surveyed had other teaching experiences prior to teaching practice which is obligatory for students of English language branch. The survey showed that their answers varied from: no

previous teaching experience (53%), teaching individual students or family members (43%) and teaching individual students and working in a language center (3% = 1 student). As we can see nearly half of the third year students surveyed had had previous contact with English language teaching. The findings are presented in graphic no.1.



Graphic. no. 1

We also tried to find out if a family member or a relative of the students was a teacher with the intention to find out any connection between this variable and their beliefs about language learning. Based on the finding their answers varied from: no teachers in my family (56%), mother or father teachers (10%) and students who had a relative who lived in a different house (that sometimes included a sister or brother) (34%). From the results we can say that at least 44% of the students surveyed reported the presence of a teacher among the family members or relatives. The findings are presented in graphic no. 2.



Graphic. no. 2

English language students' beliefs about language learning

For each dimension of the questionnaire we will present the overall frequency of each item included there as well as their respective means and standard deviation. Table no. 1 contains 10 items (1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 11, 16, 19, 31, 34) which belong to the dimension of Language Aptitude. As we can see from the mean scores, students seem to strongly agree or agree with the first five items in the table as well as with the last one. Whereas concerning the item “*People who are good at maths or science are not good at learning foreign languages.*” and “*Women are better than men at learning languages*” they tend to disagree or strongly disagree, despite the fact that most of the students surveyed are female.

Item description	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	70.0%	26.7%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.33	.547
Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	63.3%	33.3%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.40	.563
I believe I will learn to speak English very well.	93.3%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.07	.254
It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	36.7%	50.0%	6.7%	6.7%	0.0%	1.83	.834
Albanians are good at learning foreign languages.	56.7%	30.0%	13.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.57	.728
People who are good at maths or science are not good at learning foreign languages.	10.0%	13.3%	16.7%	36.7%	23.3%	3.50	1.280
I have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	30.0%	46.7%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.34	.734
Women are better than men at learning languages	10.0%	16.7%	20.0%	36.7%	16.7%	3.33	1.241
People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	43.3%	23.3%	23.3%	3.3%	3.3%	4.0	1.94
Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.80	.761

Table no.1

Table no.2 presents descriptive statistics for the second dimension, namely “The Language Difficulty”. It consists of five items (3, 4, 15, 26, 35). Based on the mean score, we can say that the majority of the students agree or strongly agree with the first item on the table, more specifically: “*Some languages are easier than others*” (M = 1.67) and concerning the third one: “*If someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?*” (M = 1.97) the majority believes that a period of 1-2 years is more than sufficient. Whereas concerning two other items: “*It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language*” (M= 3.27) and “*It is easier to read and write English than to*

“speak and understand it” (M = 3.03) students tend to disagree or to be undecided. The findings are presented in table no. 2.

Item description	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Some languages are easier than others.	30	1.67	.758
English language I am trying to learn is:	30	2.65	.850
If someone spent one hour a day learning English, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?	30	1.97	1.189
It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.	30	3.27	1.015
It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	30	3.03	1.245
Valid N (listwise)	30		

Table no. 2.

Table no. 3 contains 6 other items (8, 12, 17, 24, 28, 29) which belong to the dimension of The Nature of Language Learning. All the students (100%) agree or strongly agree that “*It is best to learn English in an English speaking country.*” Most of them (76%) agree that “*The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning new words*”. Whereas concerning the 4th item “*The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning grammar*” we notice that only 50% agree and 30% are undecided or neutral. We also see that for the last item on the table “*Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects*” most of the students (70%) agree. The findings are presented in table no. 3.

Item description	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree	Mean	STD
1. It is necessary to learn about English speaking cultures to speak English	20.7%	48.3%	24.1%	6.9%	0.0%	2.17	.848
2. It is best to learn English in an English speaking country.	89.7%	10.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.10	.310
3. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning new words.	36.7%	40.0%	16.7%	6.7%	0.0%	1.93	.907
4. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning grammar.	10.0%	40.0%	30.0%	16.7%	3.3%	2.63	.999
5. The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my own language.	16.7%	46.7%	33.3%	3.3%	0.0%	2.07	.907
6. Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects.	30.0%	40.0%	23.3%	6.7%	0.0%	2.23	.774

Table no. 3

Table no. 4 contains 8 other items (7, 9, 13, 14, 18, 21, 23, 27) which belong to the dimension of Learning and Communication Strategies. The majority of the students surveyed (93%) agree or strongly agree that it is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation. Concerning the following item, “*You shouldn’t say anything in English until you can say it correctly*” we notice that

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they tend to disagree (60%). More than 90% of the students also agree with item 3, 4, 5 respectively:

“I enjoy practicing English with the native English speakers I meet”, “It’s OK to guess if you don’t know a word in English”, “It is important to repeat and practice a lot. Another interesting finding is related to item 6 “I feel shy speaking English with English natives”. We notice that more than 70% of students disagree. As was expected, the majority of them (93%) agreed that it is important to practice with audio material. The findings are presented in table no. 4.

Item description	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree	Mean	STD
1. It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation	46.7%	46.7%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.60	.621
2. You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly	3.3%	16.7%	20.0%	46.7%	13.3%	3.50	1.042
3. I enjoy practicing English with the native English speakers I meet	66.7%	30.0%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.37	.556
4. It's OK to guess if you don't know a word in English	23.3%	70.0%	3.3%	0.0%	3.3%	1.37	.556
5. It is important to repeat and practice a lot	76.7%	20.0%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	1.27	.521
6. I feel shy speaking English with English natives	3.3%	6.7%	16.7%	43.3%	30.0%	3.90	1.029
7. If beginning students are allowed to make mistakes in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on	26.7%	10.0%	30.0%	26.7%	6.7%	2.77	1.305
8. It's important to practice with audio-material.	43.3%	46.7%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.62	.622

Table no. 4

Table no. 5 contains only 5 items (20, 25, 30, 32, 33) which belong to the dimension of Motivation. As it is expected 100% of the students agree that people in Albania feel that is important to speak English. All of the students agreed that they wanted to learn to speak English. Furthermore, we see that 90% of them expressed the desire to make friends with English people. What is interesting about this dimension is the high percentage of students who agree with all statements.

Item description	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree	Mean	STD
1. People in my country feel that it is important to speak English	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.50	.509
2. I would like to learn English so that I can get to know native English speakers better.	23.3%	43.3%	20.0%	13.3%	0.0%	2.23	.971
3. If I learn to speak English very well, I will have better job opportunities.	46.7%	46.7%	3.3%	3.3%	0.0%	1.63	.718
4. I want to learn to speak English very well.	86.7%	13.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.13	.346
5. I want to make friends with English people	70.0%	20.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.40	.675

Table no. 5

CONCLUSIONS

After carefully analyzing the questionnaires administered to the students of the third year of the English language program at “Aleksander Moisiu” University, Durres with the SPSS program, we reached the following conclusions:

1. 53% of the surveyed had no previous teaching experience and 43% admitted teaching individual students or family members, As we can see nearly half of the third year students surveyed had had previous contact with English language teaching.

2. 56% of the students had no teachers in their families, 10% admitted that their mother or /and father was a teachers and 34% said that a relative who lived in a different house (that sometimes included a sister or brother was a teacher. Thus, 44% of the students surveyed reported the presence of a teacher among the family members or relatives.

3. Concerning the dimension Language Aptitude it results that students agree with statement 1, 2, 5, 6, 10, 34, respectively *“It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language”*, *“Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages”*, *“I believe I will learn to speak English very well”*, *“Albanians are good at learning foreign languages”*, *“It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one”* and *“Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language”* but disagree with statement 11 and 19 respectively *“People who are good at maths or science are not good at learning foreign languages”* and *“Women are better than men at learning languages”*.

4. Concerning the dimension Language Difficulty it results that most of the students agree with statement 3 *“Some languages are easier than others”*, but disagree with statement 26 and 35 respectively *“It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language”*, *“It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it”*.

5. In relation to the dimension Nature of Language Learning. In general we notice a positive attitude of students concerning the statements included in this category. However, we should mention that the students, with no exception, agree or strongly agree that *“It is best to learn English in an English speaking country.”* Most of them (76%) agree that *“The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning new words”*. Whereas concerning the statement *“The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning grammar”* we notice that only 50% agree and 30% are undecided or neutral. We also see that for the last item on the table *“Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects”* most of the students (70%) agree.

6. Concerning the dimension Learning and Communication Strategies we notice that most of the students agree or strongly agree with statements 7, 13, 14, 18 and 27, respectively “*It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation*”, “*I enjoy practicing English with the native English speakers I meet*”, “*It’s OK to guess if you don’t know a word in English*”, “*It is important to repeat and practice a lot*” and “*It’s important to practice with audio-material*”. But they disagree with statement 9 and 21 respectively “*You shouldn’t say anything in English until you can say it correctly*” and “*I feel shy speaking English with English natives*”.

7. The last dimension is that of Motivation. What is interesting about this dimension is the high percentage of students who agree with all statements included there.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

One of the main limitations of this study is related to the fact that in Albania there are not many studies related to students (in the quality of pre-service teachers) perception about language learning.

Secondly, a larger sample would have provided more specific results. But since we had only one group of English third year students this academic year it was difficult to get a larger sample to be considered representative.

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Academician Ion of Gheorghe Sbiera in the Century of the Revival of the National Conscience of Romanians from Bukovina

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Abstract

The study highlights the fundamental contribution of the cultural activity of the academician Ioan of Gheorghe Sbiera , to the establishment of the cultural and national unity of the Romanians in Bukovina in the second half of the 19th century. The Bucovinean scholar was a brilliant philologist, literary historian, editor, memorialist, folklorist and, last but not least, historian. He is awarded the title of the first professor of the Romanian Language and Literature Department at the University of Cern u i, from which he taught the first course in Romanian, although he was forbidden by the foreign authorities. As a founding member of the Romanian Academy, it is worthwhile to be considered the first philologist to present the first full and homogeneous version of the Latin alphabet of the Romanian language. His entire activity brings a valuable contribution to the history of the Romanians in Bukovina, definitively putting his mark on the evolution of the stages preceding the Union in 1918.

Keywords: *I. G. Sbiera, Bucovina, academician, alphabet, literature, unity, awakening, teacher, language, culture, national, society, struggle, librarian.*

In a Bukovina¹ under an austere regime, with schools in which German language was mainly used, a golden generation was required that would built a common goal, and would fulfill with astonishing consistency the deploying role of the Romanian national culture. The brothers Hurmuzachi, Eusebie Mandicevschi, Ciprian Porumbescu, Constantin Morariu, Silvestru Morariu Andrievici, Eusebi Popovici, Vladimir Repta, Tudor Flondor and many others are all of the generous Romanian intellectuals who played a decisive role in the revival of national consciousness in Bucovina.

¹ Mihai Iacobescu, *Din Istoria Bucovinei: vol. I (1774-1862) – De la administra ia militar la autonomia provincial* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1993), 550.

An important personality that has made its mark in the second half of the 19th century is the academician Ion of Gheorghe Sbiera, scholar, university professor, literary historian, memorialist, folklorist, philologist, and last but not least an advocate of Romanian language education in a foreign-controlled province.

Ion G. Sbiera was born in Horodnicul de Jos of Bucovina, on November 1, 1836, in a family of ten children. He was the eighth child of George and Ana. Like any child of his age, he teaches prayers in the house, with rigor and piety, in the evening and in the morning. Because in his village there was no school, he received the first notions of writing and calculating, for one year (1843-1844), together with his brother Nicolae, from Vasile Ruz, an ambulant teacher,² as were many teachers in that time. Because they were fond of learning and learned easily, Gheorghe Sbiera decides to send their children further to the trivial school in R d u i (1845-1848), where they will learn to write and speak in German, at first, from memory without understanding. Teachers did not know Romanian,⁴ which made it difficult for young students to develop naturally. Later, the Bucovinean scholar would make a speech, as a professor at the Cernauti University, in which he strongly expressed his opposition to the use of a foreign language in the schools with Romanian pupils and moreover, stating the academician, that represents “an energetic and serious attack on their nationality”.⁵

He finishes the last class of primary education at the four-grade Gymnasium in Cern u i (1849), where he will also attend the eight-grade Gymnasium, Ober-Gymnasium (1849-1857), as a scholar⁶ of the Orthodox Religious Fund, receiving every year 80 florins per year. Here he will meet Aron Pumnul, a native scholar from Transylvania, the teacher who will make his mark on the formation and ascension of the future academician, as he himself writes in his memoirs, “His

² I. G. Sbiera, *Familia Sbiera dup tradi iune i istorie i Amintiri din via a autorului* (Cern u i: Tipografia universitar î.r.a. lui R. Eckhardt, 1899), 91.

³ Ion Nistor, *Un capitol din viea a cultural a Românilor din Bucovina (1774-1857). Discurs rostit la 21 maiu (3 iunie) 1916 în edin solemn* (Bucharest: Libr riile Socec & Comp. C Sfetea i Pavel Suru, 1916), 23.

⁴ Alis Niculic , “Ion G. Sbiera i mi carea na ional a românilor din Bucovina,” *Analele Bucovinei* XXIV, 2(49) (Editura Academiei Române, 2017): 361-368.

⁵ I. G. Sbiera, “Condi iunile necesare pentru esisten a, conservarea i prosperarea graiului național,” *Almanachulu Societ ei Academice Socialu-Literare “România Jun ”* vol. I (1883), 137-158.

⁶ Alis Niculic , *Ion G. Sbiera. Via a i opera* (Suceava: Biblioteca Bucovinei “I.G. Sbiera”, 2005), 36.

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cultural influence on me was determinant and decisive”⁷ because “he made me take the path and the direction in which I have moved all my life.”⁸

He studied Law in Vienna (abs 1857), also attending the courses of the Faculty of Philosophy (1857-1861). In the spring of 1861, in the Austrian Empire parliamentary⁹ elections took place, so Bucovina was also in the run-up to the elections, the first from gaining the provincial autonomy of the Duchy. I. G. Sbiera does not remain indifferent, so he initiates, together with Leon Popescu and Artemie Berariu, the drafting of an appeal, on 2nd of March 1861, to mobilize the Romanians to choose the appropriate representatives to support their cause. In this respect, there were presented seven criteria¹⁰ for the selection of potential future leaders: to be authentic Romanians and Christians; to love their country, religion and family; to be brave, strong with moral integrity; to be free men with no preconceived ideas; to be good orators and wise men; to be educated, to know the history of Romanians and, last but not least, to have the experience of the accomplished things. Although it did not have the expected results, the passionate student attracted the sympathy of the young Romanian intellectuals from Bukovina.

After completing his higher education (July 1861), I. G. Sbiera returns to his native village. Dressed in the traditional garments that he made in Vienna according to the traditional model from Bukovina, I. G. Sbiera, a graduate lawyer, introduced himself to the governor of the country to embrace the political activity [*Ibidem*]. The request seemed to be welcomed. However, it did not materialize by assuming any public position in the government, since the Hurmuzachi brothers, Alecu and Gheorghe, Romanians who had put their soul in the national movement back then, convinced I.G. Sbiera to take up the post as a substitute teacher at the Romanian language and literature Department of the Cern u i gymnasium, which had been entrusted to Aron Pumnul,¹¹ now seriously ill. The young jurist gave up his political career in favor of the didactic one, being a professor at the Cernauti Gymnasium for 10 years (1861-1871). Pioneer and advocate of replacing the German language entirely with his beloved language, Ion Sbiera manages to turn

⁷ Sbiera, *Familia Sbiera dup tradi iune*, 106.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ Nicolae Tcaciuc Albu, *Via a i opera lui Ion Sbiera* (Cern u i: Editura Liceului „Aron Pumnul”, 1936), 8.

¹⁰ Sbiera, *Familia Sbiera dup tradi iune*, 137-138.

¹¹ Constantin Loghin, *Istoria literaturii române din Bucovina, 1775-1918 (în leg tur cu evolu ia cultural i politic)* (Cern u i: Alexandru cel Bun, 1996), 87. Ilie Rad, *Aron Pumnul (1818-1866)* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2002), 113.

the Romanian language¹² from a teaching object into the teaching language for students studying in the Cern u i Gymnasium. He used German language „only to explain the grammar rules for the non-Romanians”¹³ and for the classroom inspections. Ion G. Sbiera writes in the memorial work, *The Sbiera Family...*, the reaction of the present students at the first course in Romanian:

*They all were staring at me... Many of them had groaned their heads in their hands, they had their elbows on the bar, and listened with amazing attention and sacramental silence.*¹⁴

Ion Sbiera teaches the students of the graduating high school classes, the first elements of knowledge of Romanian history and culture, lectures that materialized and later published under the title *Historical Literary Studies*.¹⁵ The young substitute teacher is named¹⁶ member (6/19 March 1867) in the commission¹⁷ for real Romanian scholastic books, a position that broadens his sphere of involvement in the constant action of forming a generation of Romanians in Romanian language, and supports the introduction of books translated into the mother tongue language, in real schools with teaching in Romanian.

I. G. Sbiera initiates events that eventually proved to be of a national character, by which the young teacher from gymnasium was aiming for the awakening of noble feelings in the soul of his young pupils: the love for their country, for their fellow men, for the ancient traditions and at the same time to help them build a personal but also a common ideal. They support the completion of the knowledge of the Gimnazian students, and they have the role of strengthening and preserving the Romanian tradition, received as an invaluable inheritance from our forefathers. Thus, on May 1st, he organizes trips and outdoor

¹² Pavel ugui, “Prefa ,” in *Pove ti i poezii populare române ti*, I. G. Sbiera (Bucharest: Minerva, 1971), XI.

¹³ *Ibidem*, 168.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 169.

¹⁵ “Studii istorice literare. Încrestinarea Romînilor,” in *Foaia So iet ii pentru literatura i cultura romîn în Bucovina* (Cern u i, Cu tiparul lui Rudolf Ehardt, year III, no. 1 (January 1867), 10-15; “Studii istorice literare. R stîmpul I. Dela încoloniarea Daciei cu Roman i pîn la retragerea legiunilor romane dintr-însa, adec dela 106-274 d. Cr.,” in *Foaia So iet ii pentru literatura i cultura romîn în Bucovina*, year III, no. 2 (1st February 1867), 25-31; “Studii istorice literare. Ræstîmpul al II (Dela retragerea legiunilor romane din Dacia tr ian i fundarea Daciei aureliane pîna la a ezarea Bulgarilor de-a dreapta Dun rii, adec dela 274-680 d. Cr.,” in *Foaia So iet ii pentru literatura i cultura romîn în Bucovina*, year III, no. 5 and 6 (1st June 1867), 105-114; “Studii istorice literare. R stîmpul al II (274-680 d. Cr.). Partea literar ,” in *Foaia So iet ii pentru literatura i cultura romîn în Bucovina*, year II, no. 7 and 8 (July and August 1867), 153-161.

¹⁶ *Foaia So iet ii pentru literatura i cultura romîn în Bucovina* (1867): 91-94.

¹⁷ *Albina* (1866), 3.

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celebrations. They're called Maiale. The young people hold speeches, sing and recite patriotic poems, organize hora, even the Union Hora, thus consolidating their belonging to the same country, to the same ideal, namely, the national unity.

Enterprising spirit with complex concerns, the erudite scholar I. G. Sbiera, along with other Bukovina people, builds a mission and fulfills it successfully, which is to unite and strengthen intelligentsia from Cern u i, which was in formation, as a cultural and national entity. Thus, in 1862, when the Romanian intellectuals in Bukovina decided to organize a cultural society, Sbiera elaborated, in Romanian, a draft statute in order to establish the much desired *Romanian Reunion of Reading* in Cern u i.¹⁸ In the first governing committee of the Reunion, the medical officer Mihai Zotta will be present and will be the president; Alexandru Hurmuzachi, vice president, and Professor I. G. Sbiera, the "soul"¹⁹ of the Society, will be the secretary.

With the establishment of the *Reunion*, under the direction of Alecu Hurmuzachi and I. G. Sbiera, a reading room and a library are organized, naturally, with Romanian books and publications. An oasis of animation and perpetuation of the Romanian language. In just three years, that is, in 1865, the *Reunion* became *the Society for Romanian Literature and Culture in Bukovina*, grouping around it the intellectuals of Bucovina,²⁰ which will open a significant number of branches in all the towns and bigger villages of the province. The Society supports the development of national culture, grants prizes and scholarships, supports the research and promotion of different branches of science and art, increases the knowledge of national history through the free courses²¹ held within it. Gheorghe Hurmuzachi, elected president of the Society, said:

*It has not yet been three years, and now you have already witnessed the beginning of the linguistic progress in Bukovina, the magical power of the awakening of the national sense through the cultivation and embracement of our dear language.*²²

¹⁸ Constantin Loghin, *Societatea pentru cultur i literatur rom n din Bucovina. 1862-1932. Schi istoric cu prilejul jubileului de 70 de ani* (Cern u i: Tipografia Mitropolitului Silvestru, 1932), 1.

¹⁹ Constantin Loghin, *Societatea Pentru Cultur i Literatur rom n n Bucovina (1862-1942). La 80 de ani. Istoric i realiz ri* (Cern u i: Mitropolitul Silvestru, 1943), 7; Sbiera, *Familia Sbiera dup tradi iune*, 174.

²⁰ Niculic , *Ion G. Sbiera*, 41.

²¹ *Albina*, year II, no. 31, Viena, 17/29 (March 1868), 1-2.

²² *aptezeci de ani dela nfiin area „Societ ii pentru cultura i literatura rom n n Bucovina” (1862-1932). Conferin e inute n cadrul s rb rilor jubiliare* (1932), 17.

Professor Univ. PhD in Historical Sciences Mihai Iacobescu, in a reference paper of Bukovina, notes:

*Society becomes a true major government, an unofficial party that initiates and coordinates the activity and the struggle for the cultural-political and national emancipation of the Bukovinian Romanians.*²³

So *the Society* becomes the core nucleus of the Romanians in Bukovina. An event of particular importance in the life of *the Society* is the printing of *the Paper of Society of Romanian Literature and Culture in Bukovina*²⁴ magazine in Bukovina (March 1, 1865 - December 31, 1869), whose first editor was Ambrosie Dimitrovi .²⁵ Shortly in July 1866, Dimitroviță died, and I. G. Sbiera became editor in charge (1866-1869) of the publication. Its pages have collected signatures from writers from all over Romania, being a means of propagating the values with a nationalist character. Two other publications will be published in the following years by the *the Society*, with a remarkable role in the national revival of the Romanians, were the *Aurora Român* ²⁶ and the *Calendar*.²⁷ The first will appear from 1st August 1881 until 15th December 1882 and in January and February of 1884. *The Calendar* is made by three intellectuals of the time, each of whom occupies, in turn, the function of secretary²⁸ within *the Society*: the priest Professor Mihai Miron C linescu (1874-1881),²⁹ writer Ion I. Bumbac (1882-1883)³⁰ and priest Professor Calistrat Coca (1884-1885).³¹

The members of *the Society* were those who brought the first theater group³² in Romania to the capital of Bukovina, which constituted a re-launch³³ of the Romanians' national movement. This merit was given to the brothers Alecu and Gheorghe Hurmuzachi. Thus, in January 1864, the boyar Alexandru Costin,

²³ Iacobescu, *Din Istoria Bucovinei*, 471.

²⁴ Loghin, *Societatea Pentru Cultur* (1943), 16-18.

²⁵ Ion Nistor, *Istoria Bucovinei*, ed. Stelian Neagoe (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1991), 158.

²⁶ I. G. Sbiera, *Mi c ri literare la românii din Bucovina. Discurs* (Tip ritur separate din "Familia", Oradea-Mare, cu tiparul lui Otto Hügel, 1890), 19; D. Mur ra u, *Istoria literaturii române*, ed. a III-a (Bucharest: Cartea Româneasc , 1943), 227; Vasile I. Schipor, *Bucovina istoric . Studii i documente* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2007), 230.

²⁷ Sbiera, *Mi c ri literare la românii din Bucovina*, 19-20; Vasile I. Schipor, *Calendare i almanahuri române ti din Bucovina (1811-1918). Contribu ia lor la prop irea cultural-na ional a românilor bucovineni* (Ia i: Editura Univ. "Al. I. Cuza", 2016), 240]

²⁸ Schipor, *Calendare i almanahuri române ti din Bucovina*, 230.

²⁹ Emil Satco, *Enciclopedia Bucovinei*, vol. I. (Ia i, Ed. Princeps Edit., 2004), 196-197.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 167.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 244-245.

³² Alis Niculic , *Din istoria vie ii culturale a Bucovinei. Teatrul i Muzica (1775-1940)* (Bucharest: Casa Editorial Floare Albastr , 2009), 69.

³³ *Foaea So iet ii pentru literatura i cultura român în Bucovina* (1865), 59-70.

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advised by his brother, Emanuel, who was in Romania and had the opportunity to get acquainted with the activity of the dramatic artists, hired the theater group *Fani Tardini*,³⁴ who held the first performance in the capital of Bukovina, on 1st/13th March 1864, at Hotel Moldova.³⁵ On the stage was played drama with songs in four acts by *Radu Colomfirescu*, then a show by I. Dumitrescu. The room was not large enough. People from all social categories had come: pupils, students, peasants, teachers, writers, poets, priests, politicians, and so on. The first Romanian accents that electrified the room, as Ion G. Sbiera said in his memoirs, were the lyrics: “Today, Romanian brothers, we also see ourselves masters, / on our household, which was mainly deserted”. The impact was unexpected. I. G. Sbiera surprises the auditor’s reaction in his autobiographical work:

*The audience, abducted by an undescribable animation, burst into applause, cries of bravo and long live, that the walls were shaking, and I thought that the room would collapse because of so much noise!*³⁶

It was the first occasion that the Romanians, shoulder to shoulder, this time, forming an enthusiastic public, to actually celebrate Romanian language. In the first season (1/13 March - 15/27 May, 1864) of the theater group in Cernăuți, there were 33 performances, of which twenty-six were Romanian national compositions with Romanian national character, and seven were translations from the French.

On April 1st, 1866, the *Romanian Literary Society* was established in Bucharest, with the purpose of producing a unitary grammar for the Romanians, the dictionary and the glossary of the Romanian language, since in the second half of the 19th century, the fundamental problem of Romanian intellectuals was language³⁷ - a tool of struggle for national unity, a means of continuity of Romanianism, mediating the recognition of the Romanian people. The Bucharest authorities designate Alecu Hurmuzachi and Ambrosie Dimitrovi as members of the intellectuals of Bukovina. The first was recognized as the editor of *Bucovina, a Romanian magazine for politics, religion and literature* (October 1848-September 1850), and A. Dimitrovi, also editor at *The Society Paper...* Last, being ill, is forced to renounce the honor of designation. Instead, I. G. Sbiera is recommended, supported by Alecu Hurmuzachi. Thus, by the Decree of June 11, 1866, issued by Carol I, he becomes a full member. Next year (1867) *The Romanian literary society* transforms into *the Romanian Academic Society*, so I. G. Sbiera, a

³⁴ Sbiera, *Familia Sbiera după tradițiune* Sbiera, 188.

³⁵ *Ibidem*; Nistor, *Istoria Bucovinei*, 165.

³⁶ Sbiera, *Familia Sbiera după tradițiune*, 188.

³⁷ *Studii. Revistă de istorie* (1956), 21-22.

professor of Romanian language and literature, known as the ardent successor of Aron Pumnul, becomes a founding member of it. At the meeting on 8/20 August 1867, I. G. Sbiera is elected secretary of the Academic Society. In the first debates on the fundamental problem of the unification of spellings used in cultural centers across the Romanian space, two different concepts were highlighted. Etymological and phonetic principle.³⁸ The latter is supported by I. G. Sbiera with Alexandru Hurmuzachi, joined by Vasile Alecsandri, Titu Maiorescu, Mihail Kogalniceanu. The proposal to set up a commission whose task is to draw up a

*spelling project based on the etymological principle, looking for a conciliation as much as possible the phonetic language with it*³⁹

comes from the Bukovina scholar. Thus, the proposal being accepted, seven members are elected, including the professor. It is approved the design of a spelling based on the etymological principle, and not on the phonetic way proposed by I. G. Sbiera. However, although his proposal is rejected, he exposes his gift as a philologist, elaborating two studies⁴⁰ on the spelling of the Romanian language, according to its evolution and to the phonetic principle, published in the *Society Paper for Romanian Culture and Literature*, whose editor he was.

I. G. Sbiera has been highlighted since the first session dedicated to debates on the unification of Romanian spellings, which gives him a distinct place in Romanian culture. He is the first philologist who, in the first session, strongly opposes to etymology. Also, the first presentation of the first complete and homogeneous version of the Latin alphabet of the Romanian language highlights the teacher's early preoccupations for the research of Romanian language and literature.

The year 1870 was to bring an important event for all Romanians. 400 years since the Sanctification of the Putna Monastery, which was an opportunity for young students in Vienna to organize a real celebration at Putna, a cradle of cultural and national unity. But the outbreak of the Franco-German War, the bank failures, the harsh conditions imposed by the authorities, tightened by the intimidation measures on the part of the austere regime, made the much-desired manifestation by all those with a Romanian soul to take place a year later. Romanian intellectuals, including the Hurmuzachi brothers - leaders of the national movement in Bukovina, are reserved to participate in large-scale events,

³⁸ Pavel ũgui, *Contribu ũii la o istorie a mi c rii cultural- tiin ifice din inuturile bucovinene* (Craiova: Tipografia Universit ũii, 1977), 1-2.

³⁹ Niculic , *Ion G. Sbiera*, 43.

⁴⁰ *Foaia So iet ũii pentru literatura ũi cultura romũn ũn Bucovina* (1867): 281-292.

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from the feeling that they can be cataloged at any time by the Austrian regime, genuine Romanian national gatherings (as they became) and the repercussions would be appropriate, as they occupied political positions and their position could be compromised. Academician I. G. Sbiera, a delegate of the Romanian Academic Society, participates on 15/27 August 1871 at the Celebration of Putna Monastery, whose prior was Arkadie Ciupercovici, and gives grateful speech⁴¹ in front of the patriots gathered at the grave of Stephen the Great, united at this time of celebration. I. G. Sbiera was surrounded by the young students of the Viennese University, members of the “Romania Juna” Society, to whom he calls “our hope, our future”,⁴² Romanian intellectuals in the struggle for national unity, leaders of the Romanian literary and cultural movement. Surrounded by so many Romanians and not only, the Bukovinean scholar, finds it appropriate to underline the mission of the Romanian Academic Society, which is the “unity of the Romanian language.”⁴³

I. G. Sbiera occupies the position of *custodian of the Country Library*⁴⁴ in 1871, when he resigned from the position of a substitute professor at the Romanian language and literature department at the Cern u i Gymnasium, as a result of a bitter attack⁴⁵ of D. Petrino against Pumn u’s ideas. The activity of the scholar is under the sign of the introduction and generalization of the national character of the Country Library. At first, he manages to have a dialogue by mail with the official authorities only in the Romanian language, which has highlighted the perpetuation of the dominant feature of the new custodian, that he always allowed the use of the Romanian language. The Session of the Country Committee calls for the use of the German language, but I. G. Sbiera does not give up and, as E. P unel notes in an article,⁴⁶ the scholar makes a compromise: he writes his letters in the vocabulary sheet system, i.e. he uses the left side for the text written in German, and the right side for the written text in the native language.

Romanians from Bukovina, felt the need to establish a center of culture and higher education, which will materialize in the appearance of the university in Cern u i. Dr. Carol de Stremayer, delegate of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and

⁴¹ Sbiera, *Familia Sbiera dup tradi iune*, 258-259.

⁴² *Ibidem*, 259.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ *Boabe de grâu*, year IV, no. 4 (April 1933), 225-239.

⁴⁵ D. Petrino, *Puține cuvinte despre coruperea limbei române în Bucovina* (Cern u i: Tiparul lui Bucoviecki i Comp., 1869), 26.

⁴⁶ *Boabe de grâu*, 230.

Education, responsible for the settlement of the University of Cernăuți, arrived in Cernăuți, proposes to the scholar of Bukovina on 11 May 1875 to occupy the post of substitute at the Romanian language and literature department, as he himself I. G. Sbiera, writes

*by virtue of the very great resolution of the Empire of August 8, 1875, and on the basis of my literary work until that time I have been commissioned to fill my teaching.*⁴⁷

However, the surprise was when, from the letter issued by the local government of Bukovina, on September 27, 1875, he learned that he would be paid only with 1,440 fl. per year, in the conditions in which, as custodian of the Library received a salary of 1640 fl. per year.

On Aug. 26, 1875, the law⁴⁸ by which the Library of the Country, under the direction of the Francisco-Josefine University, was given the status of a university library, was passed. I. G. Sbiera was to be the last head⁴⁹ of the Country Library and to become the first teacher of Romanian language and literature at the University of Cernăuți. At the same time, until 1881 when he was appointed university professor, he accepted to be a custodian at the university library to supplement his income. As a matter of particular courage, he violates official decisions on the use of German language for teaching courses, and, in front of the audience, speaks Romanian, to the delight of the Romanians present. Sbiera will give the first course in Romanian, entitled *Old Education and New Education* on October 18, 1875, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Cernăuți University and also the inauguration of the Romanian Language and Literature Department:

*We have gathered aicia not to inaugurate this centre of science and culture that has been created ... but we have gathered [...] to inaugurate the Department for Romanian language and literature.*⁵⁰

After 6 years, in 1881, Sbiera will become a titular teacher, and in 1886 he will also bring his Ph.D. in philosophy. Ever since the first year of university professor activity, he has encouraged and supported Romanian students to undertake the establishment of cultural societies, the centers of Romanianism. This is how the *Arboroasa Society*, abolished following the well-known lawsuit filed by the Austrian authorities, was formed, the members of the society committee being

⁴⁷ Sbiera, *Familia Sbiera după tradițiune*, 298.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 299.

⁴⁹ The first head of the Country Library was Eusebie Popovici, a professor at the Faculty of Theology.

⁵⁰ I. G. Sbiera, *Educațiunea veche și educațiunea nouă*. Discurs rostit în 18 Octombrie 1875 la inaugurarea catedrei pentru limba și literatură românească la universitatea Francisco-Iosefin din Cernăuți (1875), 3.

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accused of high treason. However, I. G. Sbiera insisted on the establishment of a national cultural society, and so appeared the *Junimea* (1878), who had an important role in the orientation and formation of young students, being one of the most well-known and active student societies. With the same enthusiasm, he supports editing of the literary magazine of students, *Încercări literare* (13 February 1892 - 12 January 1893).

On December 14, 1898, the erudite scholar will be distinguished by the King of Romania, Carol I, with the Order of the *Crown of Romania*, as *Commander*, in recognition of the entire activity of the academician and university professor. In 1906, Sbiera retired after 31 years of activity at the University of Cernăuți, and the Romanian language and literature department will be taken over by philologist Sextil Puscariu, who will play a decisive role in the Unification of Bucovina and Romania in 1918.

A founder of a generation of intellectuals who inspired his love for the language and the country, I. G. Sbiera dies on October 22, 1916, in Cernăuți, two years before the much-desired Union took place, leaving dowry to Bucovina, valuable works which complete the reference bibliography of the Bukovina space. Ion of Gheorghe Sbiera, a distinguished personality of Bukovina, brings a fundamental contribution both from the cultural point of view and from the point of view of the evolution of the intellectual Romanians from the entire Bukovina area, being permanently involved in the activities preceding the Union of 1918. Being a teacher at the gymnasium in Cernăuți, he materializes the ideal of forming a generation of Romanians in Romanian language, young intellectuals who are constantly participating in the creation of a collective ideal. Moreover, together with other leading intellectuals of Bukovina, he initiates the establishment of Romanian culture centre, such as the Romanian Meeting for Reading in Cernăuți, which later became the Romanian Society for Culture and Literature in Bukovina. The press body of this society, the *Romanian Society for Romanian Literature and Culture Paper* in Bukovina becomes a tool of struggle for the revival of national consciousness, I. G. Sbiera being directly involved in its position as editor. The Bukovinean scholar occupies a distinct place in the Romanian culture, being the first philologist to present, for the first time, the first complete version of the Latin alphabet of the Romanian language within the Romanian Academy, whose founding member is. Academician I. G. Sbiera, remains in the history of Bukovina as a great literary historian, philologist, folklorist, memorialist, editor, researcher of Romanian history, titles highlighted throughout his activity.

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Propaedeutics to a Philosophical Approach to Consciousness

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Abstract

The phenomenal consciousness, or the subjective experience of our inner world is a very surprising topic, «the last surviving mystery» able to ignite a long line of philosophical and also scientific controversy. Despite all of the comprehensive efforts, the ideal of clarity remains far beyond our expectations. Should we abandon the studies of consciousness as being too futile or counterproductive? Or should we continue to struggle for dismantling the articulations of «the hard problem of consciousness», and setting more sophisticated questions even if there are no guarantees for adequate answers. The following enterprise is just an attempt to persuade the reader about how the problem of conscious experience remains an important issue not only for the philosophy of mind, but also for the commonsense thought too. This special topic deserves our whole attention, because it is able to generate a shift in our perspectives about us and our place into the external world.

Keywords: *philosophy of mind, consciousness, matter, subjectivity, experience.*

When you are engaged in the study of such a complex subject as the one of consciousness, what surprises you the most is the overwhelming multitude of theoretical constructions, detailed analyses, fruitful debates, extensive explanations and perspectives, schools of philosophical or psychological thought, and empirical programs.¹ You discover that there is not only a canonical explanatory scenario, on the contrary, there is an abundance of narrative constructions that strive to clarify one of the most familiar and also mysterious phenomenon of the human nature. Regarding this complex subjective experience, the philosophical research field is constrained to exist between the unsettling hermetism of subjectivity (*first-person*

¹ Consciousness is the object of an extensive multidisciplinary research program called “consciousness studies”, an academic field that includes, besides philosophy, important contributions from disciplines as linguistics, neuroscience, psychology, artificial intelligence.

perspective) and the supposed and most required ideal of scientific objectivity (*third-person perspective*). When it comes to epistemological efforts, *thought that thinks itself* – as an established Aristotelian formula defines the self-reflective mind – risks to shuttle indecisively between the land of incurable optimism and that of demoralizing pessimism or, worst, risks to be trapped into superstition and magic. “The phenomenon of consciousness does not have clear-cut boundaries, and its complex structure does not admit any easy formulations.”² Treating different phenomena as an unique reality, describing them with the same concept, or using different concepts for the same referent could make a hermeneutic enterprise quite problematic.

The academic community focused on the features of consciousness has already produced a fascinating and overwhelming bibliographic universe,³ where all kinds of “-isms” come together: the traditional Cartesian dualism,⁴ interactionism, physicalism, materialism, naturalism, functionalism, internalism and externalism, behaviorism, epiphenomenalism, reductionism, monism, eliminativism, mysterianism, and so on. Trying to investigate consciousness, the student faces a lot of problems, also he risks to become the voluntary prisoner of a provocative and unresolved set of interrogations: *what is consciousness?*, *what does “conscious” mean?*, *what does consciousness do?*, *what is the role of consciousness or, in other words, what functions does it perform?*, *where is the locus of consciousness?*, *is there a nature of consciousness, or a reality of consciousness?*, *is conscious experience entirely determined by the states of the brain?*, *can a computer be endowed with the remarkable privilege of*

² Ned Block, Owen Flanagan and Guven Guzeldere, *The Nature of Consciousness. Philosophical Debates* (MIT Press, 1997), 1.

³ A wide range of publications could shed light on the problematic topic of consciousness: William James’s monumental paper, “Does Consciousness Exist?” (first published in *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, 1), Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (1991), Collin McGinn, *The Problem of Consciousness* (1991), John R. Searle, *Consciousness and Language* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), John R. Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness* (A New York Review Book, 1997), David J. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind. In Search of a Theory of Conscious Experience* (Oxford University Press, 1997), Ned Block, *Consciousness, Function and Representation* (The MIT Press, 2007), Owen Flanagan, *The Conscious Mind. In Search of a Fundamental Theory* (Oxford University Press, 1996), Block, Flanagan and Guzeldere, *The Nature of Consciousness*, etc.

⁴ Through his fundamental work *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Rene Descartes (1596-1650) launched in the philosophical circuit his dualist view, based on the sharp distinction (also interaction) between two substances: “res extensa”, or *the body (matter)*, and “res cogitans” or *mind (spirit)*.

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consciousness? and many other valuable challenges.⁵ You get into the distinguished company of people with an indescribable brilliant intelligence: William James, John R. Searle, David J. Chalmers, Thomas Nagel, Ned Block, Michael Tye, Igor Aleksander, Andy Clark, Antonio Damasio, Tim Crane, Daniel C. Dennett, Robert Kirk, Collin McGinn, Michael S. Gazzaniga, Jaegwon Kim, Robert Pepperell, to name just a few of them. Studies and research on consciousness unfold themselves in front of you like an endless stream of pages, and you find yourself full of anxieties and hopes just like Captain Ahab in search of his pray Moby Dick. The published texts embrace decades, far beyond any unclear boundaries of philosophy, sending our cognitive efforts into endless spaces of inter and multidisciplinary approaches. Beyond *the common-sense notion of consciousness*, the glossary of mental states contains an extremely generous terminology: *self-consciousness*, *phenomenal consciousness*, *perceptual consciousness*, *intentional consciousness*, *affective consciousness*, *access consciousness*, *background consciousness*, *actual consciousness*, and so on. This is the reason why a critical understanding of this luxuriant conceptual architecture is not always easily done. On the contrary, you often find that the comprehensive tools and techniques you possess encounter significant obstacles and difficulties.

The commonsense view on consciousness

What is it like to be a conscious human being?⁶ At first glance, finding an answer to this question seems to be an easy, familiar and perfectly comprehensible task, even a remarkable and revealing enterprise, since there is a convenient “self-understanding” of the concept, or a widespread underlying insight into its deepest significance. Nevertheless, the issue becomes obviously problematic if we assume that all of us are experiencing the same categories of mental states, and we have access to someone else’s mind. “Each of us is self-conscious. What is the nature of that curious access you have to the contents of your own mind, but to no other?”

⁵ In the introductory pages to *The Nature of Consciousness. Philosophical Debates* (The MIT Press, 1997), Guven Guzeldere synthesizes questions about consciousness to “the four W-questions”: *What* are the media and mechanisms of consciousness? *Where* is, if anywhere, the locus of consciousness? *Who* can be said to be a conscious being? and *Why* is there consciousness at all?. To this, the author also adds the “how-to-question”: How does consciousness arise in, or emerge from its underlying substance, structure, and mechanism, in the way it does? (“Introduction. The Many Faces of Consciousness, A Field Guide,” 31).

⁶ In his paper “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”, Thomas Nagel gives to the consciousness *the subjective character of experience*, saying that “an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is like to *be* that organism – something it is like *for* the organism.” Thomas Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” in *Philosophy of Mind. Classical and Contemporary Reading*, ed. David J. Chalmers (Oxford University Press, 2002), 219-220.

How is it you are able to tell, without looking at your behavior, what you feel, think, and desire? We take it for granted, this capacity for *introspection*, but it is a most extraordinary and enigmatic talent to have.”⁷ Speaking in general terms, to be conscious means to be aware, to experience a mental state of alertness or attentiveness, an amount of different and relevant sensations, feelings, amazing passions, and surprising moods, much different from the “inexistence” or unconsciousness of sleeping, coma, or drug-induced states. To be conscious means to be able to have access and to investigate your mental phenomena, to have the feeling of your own identity, to understand your place, and eventually your purpose into the wide picture of the external world. We can call this *phenomenal consciousness*, and, as Ned Block admit it, “phenomenal consciousness is experience.”⁸ Let me illustrate this with an example. When I am writing these lines, I am experiencing the elements of the environment in a purely subjective manner, and simultaneously I integrate the aspects of the surroundings into an intelligible pattern: I am aware that I am at my writing table, sitting in front of my computer screen, touching the black keys with controllable movements, while the loudspeakers offer me a pleasant soundtrack. From time to time I sip the dark liquid out of the coffee cup, feeling the strong taste of a bitter-sweet essence. From outside, the noise of the urban bustle comes to my ears: the tumultuousness of the street, the horns and engines of the vehicles, the intermingling voices, the laughter of unknown children, the tweets of birds. I am aware of this absorbing fabric of sensory impressions conveyed through rods and cones, hair cells, bulbs, fibers and transmitted to my brain via nerve channels. I experience physical stimuli and I integrate them almost instantly in well-known patterns. I am aware of the present, and of the succession of inexorable moments, a complex fabric of the events I live in. If I let my thoughts go away, I could experience the vivid echoes of the past, over which even I can no longer have control and moreover, I can alter it with “false memories”. Finally, I am aware of my plans and my expectations about the future. All of these features are descriptions of our subjective experiences, of our conscious mental states, which could be labelled *phenomenal consciousness*. I am phenomenally conscious when I have a great amount of personal experiences that makes me who I am: perceiving things in a particular way, feeling pleasure and pain different from anyone else, being able to feel a rich kaleidoscope of emotions, further, having the opportunity to switch off the attention from the outside world,

⁷ Paul M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness. A Contemporary Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (third edition) (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press, 2013), 7.

⁸ Ned Block, “Concepts of Consciousness,” in *Philosophy of Mind. Classical and Contemporary Reading*, ed. David J. Chalmers (Oxford University Press, New York, 2002), 206.

and plunge into a personal collection of thoughts, memories or imagination scenarios. As John Searls put it, “by *consciousness*, I simply mean those subjective states of sentience or awareness that begin when one awakes in the morning from a dreamless sleep and continue throughout the day until one goes to sleep at night, or falls into a coma, or dies, or otherwise becomes, as one would say, unconscious.”⁹ But all of these ingredients of conscious experience seem to deliver the comprehensive effort to a problematic and hermetical subjectivity. Being absolutely subjective, this kind of consciousness is extremely difficult to explain in a rigorous scientific language.

If we keep our discourse into a linguistic account, also tributary to the common sense, we find that there are many expressions that imply the controversial phenomenon of consciousness: “I am aware that I should study thoroughly and avoid delays”, “I am aware of the discomfort or pain experienced by a food abuse episode”, “I am aware of the disappointment that I may feel if I do not fulfill my needs as I wish”. We also talk about “unconscious” people, about the characters of the public space that suffer from a chronic lack of moral awareness. Neither medical language is lacking in expressions that evoke more or less directly the phenomenon of consciousness: “X has lost consciousness (he became unconscious)”, “Y regained consciousness at the end of a traumatic event, painful (he became conscious)”, “Z suffers from a lack of attention (attention is an intrinsic part of the consciousness)”, etc. All this leads us to believe that we are dealing with a phenomenon extremely difficult to describe, if we miss a unifying principle. Even if I could explain to someone else the contents of my mental states, “what it is like to be me”, my own subjective world still remains sealed, private, and intrinsic, out of any objective description's attempt made by an outside observer.

Consciousness – a problematic subject of philosophical and scientific investigations

Regarding all these meanings of consciousness given by the commonsense thought, philosophy is not pleased at all with its noncritical assumptions and conjectures. On the contrary, philosophical reflection aims to be more compelling, it intends to dig under the surface of commonplaces, far beyond the twisted paths of the ordinary knowledge. But no theoretical or empirical construction is immune to the real danger of ambiguity. It is true that the philosophical enterprises about consciousness exploit new and prolific aspects as the availability of our own

⁹ John R. Searle, *Consciousness and Language* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 7.

internal contents, the condition of possibility for an accurate description of these mental states. But it is also true that the real issues remain unexploited. In their attempt to perform a serious exploration of the issues of consciousness, philosophers join their efforts with cognitive psychologists, neurobiologists, computer scientists who aim to reveal the mechanisms, processes, and functions that take place in our brains when we are subjects of a conscious experience. In other words, due to their research in neuroscience, scientists try to identify and describe neural mechanisms and processes, or “the neural correlate of consciousness”.¹⁰ From a neurobiological perspective, with the help of extensive laboratory research,¹¹ consciousness tends to turn into a consequence or a by-product of the brain processes, a fundamental property of networked entities. Can we really explain this connection, or the link between neurophysiological processes and our subjective experience, finally reaching the ability to resolve the hard problem of consciousness? Should we abandon the phenomenon of conscious experience? These are not at all trivial questions. On contrary, they are fundamental and ambitious philosophical questions that claim different strategies for resolving the issue, if there are any satisfactory strategies available.

We need to analyze the consequences of this neurobiological reductive explanation, if we accept that “above all, consciousness is a biological phenomenon. We should think of consciousness as part of our ordinary biological history, along with digestion, growth, mitosis and meiosis.”¹² It is a fact that a vast network of neurons performs a polyphonic overture, exchanging rapid and spectacular electrical pulses, transferring chemical substances or neurotransmitters. It is also a fact that all of these processes taking place into our brains build the physiological basis of consciousness. But what about the experiences that accompany the entire cognitive and behavioral functions of the brain? The way in which matter generates the spirit, or the way brain operations and processes convert themselves into subjective experiences could be, for philosophy of mind, the ultimate challenge. Further, describing or reporting the experience we have when we perceive and think is a difficult challenge that David J. Chalmers has placed it under the generic title of *the hard problem of consciousness*:

¹⁰ Christof Koch, in “The Movie in Your Head,” an article published in *Scientific American MIND* 16, no. 3 (2005), 58-63, evokes *the neural correlates of consciousness (NCCs)* as being the neural basis of our subjective experience, or “the set of firings among neurons that correlates with each bit of awareness that experience.”

¹¹ Through brain-scanning techniques such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), electroencephalography (EEG), microelectrodes recordings etc., we can actually watch the brain doing its marvellous work.

¹² Searle, *Consciousness and Language*, 7.

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*when we see, for example, we experience visual sensations: the felt quality of redness, the experience of dark and light, the quality of depth in a visual field. Other experiences go along with perception in different modalities: the sound of a clarinet, the smell of mothballs. Then there are bodily sensations, from pains to orgasms; mental images that are conjured up internally; the felt quality of emotion, and the experience of a stream of conscious thoughts. What unites all of these states is that there is something it's like to be in them. All of them are states of experience.*¹³

Even if we admit the ineffable character of consciousness, its mystery, or its absolute subjectivity, this is a clear trademark for the fact that consciousness exists. It is difficult and adventurous to deny that scanning the vast brain territory, with the help of specific technologies and tools, allows a significant advancement in the understanding of conscious phenomena. As it is just as difficult and adventurous to reduce conscious states *only* to the processes that take place in the brain. Beyond all unanswered questions, subtle distinctions and undesirable confusions, remains our philosophical interest towards a problem that generates new and prolific investigations.

*Human consciousness is just about the last surviving mystery. A mystery is a phenomenon that people don't know how to think about — yet. (...) With consciousness, however, we are still in a terrible muddle. Consciousness stands alone today as a topic that often leaves even the most sophisticated thinkers tongue-tied and confused. And, as with all the earlier mysteries, there are many who insist — and hope — that there will never be a demystification of consciousness.*¹⁴

There are many attempts to demystify the consciousness, and by doing that one could open Pandora's box.¹⁵ There are also a lot of confusion in this effort of demystification. Some researchers prefer to take not the conscious experience for granted, claiming that trying to explain the subjective experience is nothing more than a counterproductive endeavor, automatically condemned to failure, obscurity, or equivocation. Other more radical views deny the phenomenon of conscious experience, for the reason that it is not externally observable and verifiable.

Experience is the most central and manifest aspect of our mental lives, and indeed is perhaps the key explanandum in the science of the mind. Because of this status as an explanandum, experience cannot be discarded like the vital spirit when a new theory comes along. Rather, it is the central fact that any theory of consciousness must

¹³ David J. Chalmers's, "The Hard Problem of Consciousness," in *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, eds. Max Velmans and Susan Schneider (Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 226.

¹⁴ Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (New York, Boston London: Back Bay Books, Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 21-22.

¹⁵ Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 21.

*explain. A theory that denies the phenomenon solves the problem by ducking the question.*¹⁶

Building an explanatory bridge between our visible material substance (*the body*) and the “hidden dark side” of the *mind* still sounds like a chimerical ideal. Even if there are many notorious philosophical and scientific attempts to testify the existence of conscious states, the challenge still remains in front of us. I am convinced that the purpose of explaining consciousness is an honorable and provocative one, but “the explanatory gap” seems at this moment impossible to overcome. Further, no matter how bold are the explanatory scenarios to understand the puzzling relationship between conscious experience and physical processes of the brain, the hard problem of consciousness cannot be avoided.¹⁷ That is why, the consciousness appears to stand at the crossroads of all problematic thoughts, in a territory that does not belong exclusively to either absolute subjectivity or to that of radical objectivity. It seems to us that consciousness is a forever trapped between a difficult-to-explain subjectivity of our inner worlds (*the mind*) and the steady terrain of objectivity. Is our inner world, that of our thoughts, less real than the outside world? Or, maybe are we just dealing here with conceptual subtlety? If being conscious is just a sort of private experience, how can a person guarantee the existence of his own consciousness? How can we legitimate what we feel, what we experience only through a mediated description or through the report of our language? If everything happens exclusively within us when we say that we are conscious, then we have to deal with the inexplicable rupture between these private experiences and the public sphere, between what we experience and what others could know about the contents of our inner world.

In everyday life, we have the privilege of experiencing conscious states, even if we are not preoccupied with asking relevant questions about how these experiences emerge. Beyond the conveniences of ordinary life, philosophers try to understand and describe the qualities of this mysterious mental phenomena in an intelligible and persuasive way. It is quite comfortable to assume that we have conscious experiences when we perceive things from the world around us, when we scan the environment with the complicity of the mechanisms of a complex sensory device, or, as neuroscience invite us to accept, when we decode stimuli

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 231.

¹⁷ See, for example, the attempt to explain conscious or subjective experiences through the mathematical based language of the quantum mechanics. Despite the classical physical theory, there is enough place for the conscious events in quantum mechanics, which is bringing a “nonlocal, nonreductionistic, nondeterministic, conception of nature.” (Springer Verlag, Berlin Heidelberg, 2009), 40.

and interpret them with specialized brain areas. We are in a conscious state when we perceive, think, feel, suffer, imagine, design aspirations, assume projects and expectations about our destiny and our peers' future. But it is not at all an easy quest to articulate all of these features into a convincing, consistent, and coherent view. A torrent of ambitious and stimulating ideas and facts, not any of them very accessible, where you could easily drown without a guideline.

*Despite much progress consciousness remains as elusive as ever. Some difficulties have been resolved, but new ones have emerged. (...) Science gradually dispelled the need for vital essences to explain life, but consciousness remained unexplained.*¹⁸

Philosophy of mind undoubtedly contains an immense and outstanding repertoire of ideas, where wonderful thinkers are concerned with building up compelling edifices about complex problems, they are struggling to explain sometimes the unexplainable, to solve riddles and to unfold trickery. The problem of consciousness is one of these riddles. To get acquainted with this overwhelming tapestry of fascinating ideas requires courage, analytical ambition, and a great power of synthesis. You meet supporters, but also skeptics, detractors of the conscious mind, strong academic voices that deny the existence of the mental states. They disdain or minimize concerns in the sphere of interiority, for the sake of the argument, or because they consider it just a frivolous topic. Such extreme, and skeptical positioning requires a serious effort of argumentation, also a witty effort of deconstruction or contra-argumentation. But there are also voices that, on the contrary, pay the proper tribute to the consciousness, considering that things must be nuanced lucidly, it must be distinguished between the commonsense concepts and the profound meanings.

Conclusion

One conclusion we can draw from a brief analysis of these investigations, studies, and empirical researches on the controversial topic of consciousness is that there is a chronic lack of consensus. It seems like philosophers persist to discuss their topics within the limits of their own discourse, giving different meanings to consciousness, and hence they generate both anxiety and inspiration in the observer's mind. Although we encounter ambiguity, fuzziness, all of these views are not necessarily shortcomings, weak theoretical enterprises, but rather a challenge that keeps our intellectual interest alive. The conceptual ambiguity may

¹⁸ Chris Frith and Geraint Rees, "A Brief History of the Scientific Approach to the Study of Consciousness," in *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*, eds. Max Velmans and Susan Schneider (Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 17.

eventually damp our necessity to find new and surprising explanations, or it may amplify our comprehensive endeavor, inviting us to travel beyond explored territories. Uncertainty, doubt, and the relativism of ideas – these are the ultimate elements you are dealing with when you intend to map a fascinating territory. Questioning the puzzle of consciousness, you are like Oedipus confronting the Sphinx: you anticipate with perplexity and vivid curiosity the unending stream of interrogations.

Perhaps sometimes we forget to give appropriate attention to the complex mechanisms by which we surmise the phenomenal qualities of the surrounding world. Perhaps we are not wondering in the philosophical way every time we grasp intentional objects and integrate them into a pre-existing cognitive pattern. As the ancient philosopher Protagoras once admitted, the painting of the outer world seems to be inevitably measured with the standard of humanity that we embody as we contemplate this world. Whatever, we are designing our inner world in the outer world. Even if we project at the level of the objects around us the phenomenal features or particularities that are *de facto* intrinsic to us and thus commit what the philosophers call *categorical error*, yet such an illicit assignment is what makes the external world a miraculous space. Although consciousness is identified by some authors with indispensable introspection, by others with the utmost speculative futility, I am convinced that each of us is capable of a prolific self-reflective enterprise. At the end of this propaedeutic exercise, I dare to think that only education and a serious research allows us to enjoy the benefits of self-reflexivity, to look at us with lucidity, to analyze ourselves *ira et studio*, and to give a fresh and coherent view on the conscious experience. And when we transform ourselves into the subject of many perplexities and interrogations, then we are able to experience the pure state of consciousness. Otherwise, the remarkable privilege of this human quality risks to remain nothing more than a foreign, and alienated cognitive project. Perhaps, after all, there is no single meaning of the consciousness, but a lot of questionable meanings of this term. Perhaps everything is unusual and transient in this *terra incognita* of what we call subjective experience of our quotidian saga. One fact is unquestionable, that is our deepest nature and our refinement to feel, to perceive, to judge, to think, to design and anticipate our future, and most of all, to dream.

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ESSAYS

PRESENTATIONS

REVIEWS

Memoir

Review

Gheorghe HOBINCU

Memorii (I: Frumoasele zile din Aranjuez, 2017; II: Omul sub vremuri, 2018), Editorial El Genio Maligno, Granada) Lavinia Seiciuc (ed.)

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Commenced in the last years of the Romanian communism, when the political regime would severely censor any attempt at freedom of speech, and finished four years after the fall of the communist dictatorship, Dr. Gheorghe Hobincu’s manuscript of memoirs accurately and truthfully illustrates the itinerary of a life so deeply affected by the historical events of his times. The author, a narrator whose talent can easily be compared to that of our greatest writers, leaves behind an emotional journey through the various stages of his accomplishment as a human being. Right from the very first lines, he personalizes his expressive style of humorous exposure that accompanies the manuscript, even when the tragic events do not leave the lecturer doubting the authenticity and the drama.

The first years of his life, the traditional and archaic environment of the Romanian village that was typical for the interwar period, the family construct that integrates the later axiological values, all are aspects he achieves in the first volume that are necessary in order to comprehend the subsequent evolution of a personality characterized by principialism and free thinking.

The objective and relevant narration of private life events, but masterly correlated with the general aspects of the Romanian totalitarian times, starting with the interwar period, continuing during World War II and finalizing in the early period of the communist regime, gives the reader the opportunity of a virtual personal experience.

From this perspective, we can appreciate the contribution of the author – along with other writers who have leaned towards the problem of oppressive systems in prison literature – to the exposure of certain events that mainly confirm

history, but which sometimes are meant to correct or to change the perceptual paradigm related to the interwar period, and more specifically to the period of the Romanian Legionary Movement. This aspect becomes relevant when, in a superficial manner, some authors attributed a fascistoid character to Romanian Legionary Movement without performing a proper analysis of the stages that led to the leaning of this organization towards the Nazi ideology during the totalitarian Antonescu regime.

Without consistent references to the aspects of the right-wing ideology, the author outlines involuntarily, during the story of the student period, the portrait of the young man attracted by its high axiological values. At this point, the reader can also discriminate between adherence and opposition within the same ideological beliefs, which strongly support the moral attitude of the author. Firmness in defending the high human values, sometimes at the expense of political inclinations, places Dr. Gheorghe Hobincu at the level of a higher stage of ethics. We will find this aspect later, in the second volume, in the narration of the events from the communist prisons, despite the physical and psychological deprivations to which he was subjected.

The manuscript, as we have already mentioned above, possesses a rich informational content that refers to historical moments, geographical indications (in particular, those referring to the East Front events), valuable personalities of the scientific or artistic domains, syntagms in foreign languages, the accuracy and precision of which is evidenced by the critical apparatus, later attached by philologist Lavinia Seiciuc. Right from the beginning of the reading, the reader will be tempted to follow the additional clarifications and explanations in the footnotes, as they contain information about less accessible geographical places or personalities of various fields who have made valuable contributions to science or arts, and, as authentic characters in the manuscript, are exposed to the public from a less known perspective.

Equally useful for a coherent reading of the manuscript is the study of the *Editorial Note*,¹ written by the same editor, in which scientific explanations are addressed in terms of phonetics and spelling, interventions on the text during drafting, morphology problems and lexical aspects, as well as issues concerning the syntactic and discursive level. In this study, the reader will find the interest in elements of a writing that, although sometimes *deviating from the orthographic norms* of the literary language, or rendering *lexemes spelled out according to*

¹ Lavinia Seiciuc, "Not asupra ediției," in *Frumoasele zile din Aranjuez, Memorii I*, Gheorghe Hobincu, ed. Lavinia Seiciuc (Granada: El Genio Maligno Press, 2017), 9.

*obsolete pronouncements*², evoke a period of the linguistic past, and thereby adds more authenticity the accounts of those times.

The *Biographical Note*³ of the second tome summarizes family data and provides explanations and complements to the information in the manuscript, with those of the later period, which was not included in the memoirs of Dr. Hobincu. These are remarkable for the reader who completed the lecture and would like, as it always happen with captivating works, to find out what happens after the end of the book.

We also need to mention the *Introductory Study*⁴ in the first volume, written by historian Radu Florian Bruja, which gives the reader the perspective of correlating the stories in the manuscript with the socio-political events of the time, thoroughly selected and analyzed. We cannot help noticing the researcher's interest in the content of the manuscript; since, at the first glance, we find in his study an analysis of each stage of the story. Paraphrasing, giving personal impressions, highlighting paragraphs or chapters that produced an empathic effect, numerous explanations not just about the historical or geopolitical realm, offer the readers the circumstances for a coherent reading.

For a more complex edification of the reader on Dr. Gheorghe Hobincu's existential picture, we find in the final pages of the volumes certain pictures of the members of the Hobincu family that are representative for the period, as well as scans of relevant documents concerning the author's professional evolution and his years of imprisonment. The chronological table of the family and the genealogy tree effectively summarize the information so extensively exposed in the pages of the manuscript.

Gheorghe Hobincu's book of *Memoirs* is the result of an impressive effort both on the part of the author and that of the editor. It is an exciting reading and a valuable testimony about the sinister realities of the Romanian communist era.

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² *Ibidem*, 11.

³ Lavinia Seiciuc, "Not biografic," in *Omul sub vremuri, Memorii II*, Gheorghe Hobincu, ed. Lavinia Seiciuc (Granada: El Genio Maligno Press, 2018), 259.

⁴ Radu Florian Bruja, "Studiu introductiv," in *Frumoasele zile din Aranjuez*, 19.

An Immersed World

Review

Tudor DINU

The Phanariot people. Faces from churches of Wallachia and Moldavia

Bucharest: Humanitas, 2018

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Abstract

“The Phanariot people. Faces from churches of Wallachia and Moldavia” by Tudor Dinu represents a fascinating visual history of the people from Romanian principalities in the 17th century and during the first two decades of the 19th century, identified in his travels, on the wonderful church frescoes and contextualized in the richness of the historical civilization, in the social and political movement of those phanariotic times.

Keywords: *votive painting, frescoes, faces, apparel, ornament, church, phanariot era.*

*How many of us have the capacity and opportunity to fully imagine the true life of an era that lasted more than a century, and who leaved us with a persistent inheritance, even if still partially ignored?*¹ is the author’s question.

About the author:

Tudor Valeriu Augustin Dinu is Professor at the University of Bucharest - the Classical Philology Department where he teaches Greek language, literature and civilization. Throughout his professional activity, he held lectures and conferences on topics that revolve around the Greek spirit, as a visiting professor at the universities of Athens, Berlin, Hamburg, Lund, Kiev, Brno, Sofia, Plovdiv, as well as at numerous Greek scientific societies.

¹ Tudor Dinu, *The Phanariot people. Faces from churches of Wallachia and Moldavia* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2018), 9.

In recent years, he has participated in the most important international congresses of Modern Greek Studies in Granada - Spain 2010, Nicosia - Cyprus 2012, Tbilisi - Georgia 2012, Athens - Greece 2012, Paris - France 2013, Thessaloniki - Greece 2014, Bucharest - Romania 2015, Veliko Tarnovo - Bulgaria 2016, Athens - Greece 2017, Chios - Greece 2017.

His researches in philology, history, ancient Greek, Byzantine and post-Byzantine Greek civilization, as well as in the Hellenism in the Romanian principalities, were materialized in valuable works published in Romania and after that translated in countries such as Greece, Cyprus, France, Czech Republic, Latvia, Ukraine, Georgia. He also published translations from ancient authors as Aristofan, Plutarch, Iamblichos, Seneca, Plinius Maior, and modernists like Iannis Ritsos, Nikos Engonopoulos, Andeas Empirikos, Christos Iannaras, etc.

He is the founder and editor-in-chief of the first Romanian-Journal in Modern Greek Studies *Neograeca Bucharestesia*, and in 2014 he was elected Secretary-General of the European Society of Modern Greek Studies. All these impressive activities echoed until the famous Phanar, and on the Flower Sunday of 2018, one week before Easter, the Bucharest Professor made us proud with his enlightenment by His Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who awarded him the Byzantine title *Archon Hypomnematografos*.

About the album:

The Phanariot people. Faces from churches of Wallachia and Moldavia is the recent book of Tudor Dinu, and represents the materialization of an ambitious and complex project alike, meant to delight in its complexity and beauty, and dedicated to the distinguished Ms Ekaterini Sophianou, Archonistis of the Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa.

Looking for the lost image of the Phanariot people, the author has travelled all over the South of Romania, crossing the Banat, Oltenia, Muntenia and the whole Moldavia in order to identify all those churches which, depending on the area, more or less in despite the vicissitudes of history, still keep on their walls the faces of the aforesaid founders.

This volume saw the light of the print in June 2018, and was released at the Humanitas Bookstore. This event was attended by His Excellency Vasilis Papadopoulos, Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to Bucharest, historian Georgeta Filitti, philologist and anthropologist Cristina Bogdan and Radu Gârmecea, editor-in-chief of the Publishing House Humanitas.

In the dynamic interventions of these personalities, we are made a foray into those Phanariot times, the hardships and censorship of the political and social regimes, a constant struggle, about people either privileged or not, but united by faith in God.

The author's speech on the event was as impressive as it was touching, shattered around with the characteristic humour gained from contact with all sorts of characters worthy of mention in the summary of his intellectual adventure. This book is a proof of an extensive documentation of the murals, taken from the 238 listed churches. He succeeded to see his dream come true, discovering, touching, admiring and photographing about 135 votive paintings of that time, comprising a thousand of our fellow men represented in situations where they wanted to remain in the memory of posterity, displaying the most beautiful colourfully clothes, gowns, jewellery, weapons, ornaments or haircuts.

The need for such a work is very welcome. In the author's opinion, nowadays society, perpetually and everywhere bombarded with the most diverse images, it was to be expected that the interest in our premodern history would registered a regress.

Thus, at the same Humanitas Publishing House, where he published before *Mihai Viteazul, the Hero of the Greek epic (2008)*, *Dimitrie Cantemir and Nicolae Mavrocordat - political and literary rivalries at the beginning of the 18th century (2011)*, *Phanariot Bucharest. Churches, Ceremonies, Wars (2015)*, *Phanariot Bucharest. Administration, Crafts, Trade (2017)* and who have enjoyed a genuine success abroad, appears in the Romanian language the impressive publication under the title *The Phanariot People. Faces from the churches of Wallachia and Moldova*, being part of the *History* collection, namely *The Cultural and Social History*, according to the highest quality standards, containing 255 pages.

The book is structured in numerous chapters, distinct in the presentation, but interdependent and complementary in content; it abounds in images of extraordinary beauty and clarity, collected by the author in the photographic activity segment of his research.

The book begins with the placement of these frescoes in the historical context and by revealing the desire of those people to leave a testified evidence of their passage and sense of their life.

In addition to notes and bibliography, the album also contains an indispensable glossary so mandatory for the reflection of the Phanariot society, as well as a repertoire of studied edifices. Here, therefore, amazingly concentrated in

one man work, artistic, historical, literary, linguistic, anthropological and technical skills, ordered and executor alike, only adds to our admiration.

All this work sums up more than a book. It is an *immersed world*, as the author beautifully calls it, an extremely successful presentation of those times, in line with the exactness of events, the language used, the description of the social hierarchy, the occupations of each social class and which the author attempts to mirror it by posting these paintings: from the descendants of the great rulers, followed by the great rulers and the boyars, the customs officers, the artisans, the merchants and the painters of the churches, the metropolitan bishops, the deacons, the protopopes, the abbot and the monks of the holy monasteries, the shepherds, the free tenants, a huge painting rendered in an exceptional local colour.

A dowry chest of an undeniable value in the national patrimony; a detailed description of gesticulation, physiognomy, clothing, tailoring, floral symbolism, or geometric inspiration, all that colourness meant to revive a stashed and dusty world, and in whose pleasant mirage you are overwhelmed by the opulence displayed, caught by the curiosity of a personage of those time.

The Philology Department Professor has done a sensational work that is recommended to both readers concerned with this type of literature and to those who are curious to rediscover a controversial world.

The historical past of a nation must be protected and passed on to the future generations in as good as possible conditions, healthy and enriched. For this important reason are often invoked solutions to educate the population in the spirit of love and caring towards the past and implicitly to historical monuments, in the proposed laws on the protection of them, and the creation of a professional accreditation system that only qualified persons should be allow to study and present the past events;² a filter from which the author of the study in question fulfils in its entirety.

In conclusion, in order to continue in the spirit of these certitudes, we should consider the auspicious words of His Holiness Patriarch Ecumenical Bartholomew, very welcomed:

You are an Orthodox Romanian who is honoured by the Ecumenical Patriarchate because you are the bearer of this ecumenical spirit without ethnic barriers (...) The Church needs people with gifts like yours, with intelligence and godliness, inclined to

² M. Shanks and C. Tilley, *Re-Constructing archaeology. Theorie and practice*, Second Edition, (London-New York: Routledge, 1992), 65.

*science, diligently, with the contemporary spirit that characterizes you, but also with interest for patriotic traditions.*³

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