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ANTHROPOLOGY AND AXIOLOGY IN THE
THINKING OF ANTIM IVIREANUL (1650-1716)

Marin Bugiulescu (a)*

(a) PhD. in Orthodox Theology, Member of Dumitru Stăniloae Scientific and Interdisciplinary Research Center, Valahia University, Târgoviște, & PhD. Student at Doctoral School of Philosophy, University of Bucharest, Romania. Email: m_bugiulescu@yahoo.com

Abstract

The present article aims to study aspects of philosophical anthropology and axiology in the work of Antim Ivireanul (from Iviria). The core of antihuman work, specifically the anthropological problem, is developed through the possibility and privilege given to man to have a conscious life. From an epistemological point of view, the chosen theme is part of a problem that philosophical research has addressed very little, subordinating it to the concerns of Christian theology, history and especially Romanian literature. However, Antim's work contains numerous anthropological concepts that define man from the perspective of philosophy, the meaning of life, social culture and everything related to the philosophical study of man. Overcoming the fragmentation of different scientific approaches, such a philosophical perspective presents man in his psycho-physical entirety, as soul and body.

Keywords: philosophical anthropology; axiology, morality; Antim Ivireanul.

1. INTRODUCTION

Any faith has an influence on the culture and its followers, who adhere to its norms and values, constituting a social group. „*Knowing one's own religious values, regardless of their extension in the community space, represents a way of cultural security, a requirement that attracts a good position in the cultural register.*”¹ Man is a free being, who has the immense power to obey God's will or not. He appointed the sentient beings that he created, the possibility to move voluntarily and freely, so that, in this way, they can acquire a good that is truly their own, which they can keep by their own will. This acquired good is strictly linked to grace, to the divine energy that makes it valuable. But not working and not caring about preserving the state of good, is nothing but falling into sin, because evil in itself is a lack of good. Antim Ivireanul capitalized on Romanian traditions by inserting them into the sphere of faith, but also social values. The anthropological and axiological universe of the works of Antim Ivireanul is Christian, Christocentric and soteriological.

¹ Constantin Cucuș, *Educația religioasă*, Polirom, Iași 1998, p. 59.

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2. THE LIFE AND ACTIVITY OF ANTIM IVIREAN

Antim Ivireanul was born in Iviria (today's Georgia), receiving the baptismal name of Andrei. From his youth he was captured by the Turks and taken to Constantinople². Freed from Ottoman tutelage, he lived near the Ecumenical Patriarchate where he learned sculpture, painting, embroidery, Greek, Arabic, and Turkish languages. In 1690, Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688–1714), knowing his good qualities, brought him to Wallachia. Here he learned the printing trade, the Romanian language, was ordained a monk and ordained a priest. In October 1691 he printed the book *Vasile Macedoneanul. Encouraging chapters*, by Hrisant Notaras, in Greek, signed "Antim Hieromonakh"³ – a book with a philosophical, moral and political humanist profile. Later, he became the head of the printing house in Bucharest, where he worked until 1694, printing 3 books. In 1694 he moved to the Snagov monastery, where he stayed until 1701. Here he founded a new printing house, printed 15 books, 5 of which were in Romanian. In 1701 he returned to Bucharest, where until 1705 he printed another 15 books. He was elected bishop of Râmnic (1705–1708), during which he printed 9 books, 3 of which were in Romanian. As metropolitan of Ungrovlahia (1708–1716), he had beautiful qualities as a shepherd, preacher and patriot, becoming the pioneer of humanistic culture that laid the foundations of the Romanian literary language. He established a new printing house in Târgoviște, where he printed 18 books, 11 of which were in Romanian. In 1715 he moved it to Bucharest and established another one at the Antim monastery, his foundation. Antim Ivireanul has the credit of having generalized the printing of books in the Romanian language. In total, 63 books were printed in Wallachia, during his activity, of which 38 were written by him, 21 in Romanian, 4 written by himself. The Christian-political *Didaches and Advices* are worth noting, in which he uses Romanian vocabulary specific to the 18th century.

Antim the Ivirian was an ardent patriot and fighter against Ottoman oppression. He pastored until the death of ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu (1714), then, for a short time, during the time of Ștefan Cantacuzino. After the installation on the royal throne of the first Phanariot lord, Nicolae Mavrocordat (1714), difficult days began for the old metropolitan. Accused of plotting against the new lord, he was arrested and imprisoned, demanding his resignation, for which he was punished, and was to be imprisoned for life at the Saint Catherine monastery in Sinai, but he never got there because the Turks who accompanied him killed Antim and threw his body into the Tundja River near Adrianople (1716). Researching his life and deeds, in 1992, the Romanian Orthodox Church passed him among the saints, with the day of honour - September 27.

3. PHILOSOPHYCAL ASPECTS IN THE THINKING OF ANTIM IVIREANUL

In the 18th century, numerous translations and writings of a philosophical nature appeared in the Romanian space, some of which stand out for their originality and openness to rationalism. Many are translations with a very precise philosophical character, of Platonic or Christian origin. Among them are also some texts from the work of Antim Ivireanul. Philosophical anthropology and axiology have man as a centrality, as a rational being who lives consciously directed towards a goal. Man – by means of reason contemplating reality – finds out the ephemerality of life. The philosophy contained in the works of Antim Ivireanul is a religious one, namely a Christian philosophy that relates human reason to divine revelation. The difference between a revealed work and a religious philosophical one is given by the need

² Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Vol. 2, Ed. II-a, EIBMBOR, București, 1994.

³ *Basil the Macedonian. Exciting chapters*, Bucharest: Tipografia Domnească, 1691, Black print, on two columns, in Greek. Preface: *Of Basil the Macedonian, king of the Greeks, Exhortation Chapters sixty-six, to his son Leo the Wise and also emperor of the Greeks, having this acrostic: Basil in Christ the king of the Greeks to his dear son and co-king Leo. Which by the decision of the most enlightened, the most exalted and the most majestic master and lord of all Ungrovlachia, the Lord Lord Ioan Constantin Basarab Voevod, have now first been translated by paraphrase into the modern Greek language by Hrisant Notara, the Peloponnesian hieromonk and the archimandrite of the most holy and noble tomb, and were printed at the expense and by order of his highness, and with the direction of the aforementioned Hrisant, in the famous city of Ungrovlahia, Bucharest. In the year of salvation 1691 in the month of October, by Antim the Hieromonk. (Translation of the title according to BRV).*

to understand and interpret divine revelation; this finding is also valid for a being or an object, this is where the philosophy based on the reasonings it contains and determines begins. Here we perceive the boundary between revelation and language, but with all this some people empirically arrive at the last form of revelation of divine truths, without needing a discernment of them. In this sense, faith goes beyond the rational and the empirical without the need for rational-philosophical justifications and arguments.

Antim Ivireanul's work opens new directions in Romanian philosophy, thought and culture. Antimian prints fall into two categories: translations and original writings. The language of Antimian prints is mainly Romanian, but also Slavonic, Greek and even Arabic, which shows their spread in the national and international space. Among them, by the content and ideas of philosophical anthropology and canonical axiology, which will be the object of this research, the following can be distinguished:

1. Vasile Macedoneanul, Exhorting Chapters (Bucharest, 1691).
2. John Cariophilus, Manual... (Snagov, 1697).
3. Gh. Maiota, Panegyric speech to... Constantine the Great (Snagov, 1697).
4. Maximus the Peloponnesian, Book or light (Snagov, 1699).
5. The Orthodox Confession and Introductory Exposition on the Virtues... (Snagov, 1699).
6. Tale of mourning, translated into verses from Greek (Snagov, 1696-1699).
7. The flower of gifts (Snagov, 1700).
8. Plutarch Cheroneul, Greek and Roman Parallels (Bucharest, 1704).
9. Maxims of some old philosophers (Târgoviște, 1713).
10. Philosophical Parables (Târgoviște, 1713).
11. Antim Ivireanul, Capete de poruncă (Târgoviște, 1714).
12. Antim Ivireanul, Christian-political advice (Bucharest, 1715).
13. Alexandru Mavrocordat, Holy History, i.e. Jewish (Bucharest, 1716).
14. The Didaches – an original, complex and representative work.

Antim the Ivirian is the promoter of specific anthropology and cosmology. For example, both man and the world have an intrinsic value defined by the term beauty, as an absolute superlative of Beauty and perfection. Humans are distinguished from animals and non-speech by the fact that they possess reason and power of thought.

The *Didaches*, the most complex work of Antim, present many philosophical arguments about the beauty of nature, which man contemplates, which makes him meditate and rejoice for his dignity in the context of creation. For this purpose, Antim induces in his faithfuls tenderness and horror, love and above all humility, but all that only for the purpose of knowledge.

Among the special books printed in the 18th century is the book *Philosophical Parables*, which appeared in Târgoviște in 1713, being a translation made by Antim Ivireanul from the ancient Greek language. The connection between reason, faith and religious ideas represents a moral-social problem approached as such (religious-moral), but also ethical-philosophical. Antim takes the notions of the Greek philosophers who conceived the world in itself as something self-evident, something belonging to the order of logical evidence, and man is considered a religious, rational and social being.

Under the influence of the French humanist spirit, based on oriental sources, at the end of the 17th century the book *Les bons mots et les Maximes des Orientaux* (trad. de leurs ouvrages en arabe, en persan et en turc, avec des remarques par Mons) saw the light of day. (Antoine Galland, Paris, 1694). This work was translated into Italian by Anton Maria Del Chiaro⁴, to be, then, edited in Greek by the preacher

⁴ Born in 1669 in Florence, the famous city of Renaissance arts, Anton Maria del Chiaro was enrolled in the year 1674, around the age of 15, at the college of San Salvatore. Florence becomes a city of scholars and schools, among which the Accademia della Crusca stands out. At the college he learned theological disciplines, many of the graduates of the institution became priests. Anton Maria del Chiaro seriously trained in Latin and Greek, history and philosophy, rhetoric and poetics - disciplines that he would later teach between the years (1684–1689). Brought to Wallachia as secretary of Mr. Constantin Brâncoveanu and guardian of Ștefan Cantacuzino's children, he left important notes about the history of the Wallachia in the work *Revolutions of Wallachia*, but also about church life, local customs, as well as about our culture and civilization.

of the Court, Ioan Avramios, work after which Antim Ivireanul printed in Romanian language, but with Slavonic letters, in Târgoviște, in the year 1713, *Philosophical Parables*, as shown in its preface. The book of Antim Ivireanul is a translation from the Greek language and contains 946 sentences contained both in the Romanian and in the Greek translation printed by Antim also in Târgoviște in the same year, 1713.

The development of maxims or parables within the two types of ethical-philosophical and religious-moral values expresses the relationship with canonical axiology and the activity of everyday people. Philosophy, like religion, captures the practical activity of man, but with influences in the sphere of metaphysics or the supersensible (self-reflections). "The greatest evil is, to be able to do good to man in his being and not to want to." (*Philosophical Parables*, col. 572, p. 138). Good or evil passes through the mind and heart of man, depending on the perception given by thought, the choices and deeds that man performs. Thus, the heart becomes the most important place of spiritual life, certainly the heart from that perspective which sums up the soul of man, as the medium of metaphysical concentration.

"There is no more dangerous disease than lack of mind" (*Pilde filosofești*, col. 42, p. 21). Among the other mistakes, pride and love of pairings are bad things that can be corrected if needed" (*Pilde filosofești*, col. 43, p. 21). The man about whom this work speaks has a well-defined time at his disposal to act and think. Under this sign of the ephemeral, man is obliged to work on his own improvement; by choosing good and avoiding evil, man enters the spirit of wisdom, which helps him overcome the most difficult obstacles.

"The wise man who is silent, says more than the fool who speaks" (*Philosophical Parables*, col. 337, p. 83). "Wisdom is best known when it has folly against it. We are slaves to the secret that has been entrusted to us, and the secret is our slave when we keep it hidden" (*Pilde filosofești*, col. 338, p.83). Wisdom gives man the nobility of a philosopher, which among qualities of this kind is very strong, because it pursues a discernment and offers a balance of thought. Separated from the ascetic struggle, man is also anchored in his natural social framework, that's why philosophical maxims continue to deal with his personal perfection even within the framework of relationships with others. This process, however, presupposes an experience obtained by knowing the springs of life and by using the most diverse methods and means. Life teaches us that we must never lose our patience, wisdom, good temper - strongly recommended. Expressing social relations, but also inherent intrigues, some maxims passed through the filter of experience capture the perennial values of humanity, such as courage, wisdom, friendship. "Three things are known in three events: Valor in war, wisdom in anger, and a friend in time of need." (*Philosophical Parables*, col. 329, p. 81).

Through the axiological exhortations, presented together with the ideas of philosophy, numerous recommendations interpreted differently to apply them to concrete life situations are presented. In simple phrases inspired by philosophical concepts, but also by popular wisdom, Antim Ivireanul exposes the most important norms for a good coexistence. The last poem appeals to man's conscience, to the ephemerality of life, but above all to its meaning. "Consider always where you came from, where you're going, and where you're going to spend forever." (*Philosophical Parables*, col. 946, p. 218).

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Of particular philosophical and cultural importance is the manuscript „*Chipurile Vechiului si Noului Testament*” (Faces of the Old and New Testament), dedicated to the ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu, in which the various themes presented shed light not only on a genealogical part of Jesse's tree, but also on an axiological system applied by the biblical personalities presented as models. Overall, Antim's works contain axiological values that encourage the practice of Christian virtues, having a moralizing character, but also a preparation of man for social life. As addressability, two elements can be distinguished that follow each other and complement each other: one predominantly of a religious nature, being about moral norms, and another of a political nature, being about rules for the ruler how to lead the people.

These axiological perspectives and moral directions are specific to the works *Teaching for the Mystery of Repentance*, *Church Teaching*, *Commandments* and *Christian-Political Advice*. We find the openness to Christian humanism, both within the written and unwritten works from the Monastery of All Saints, where Antim made numerous sculptures in wood and stone, with a lacework that presents vegetable and floral motifs, as a symbol of life and rebirth. Through their content that highlights a cultural thinking of anthropology and axiology, the works of Antim stand at the beginnings of Romanian philosophy, alongside the "Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his son Theodosius" and the writings of celebrated Dimitrie Cantemir. Through the axiological exhortations, presented together with the ideas of philosophy, numerous recommendations interpreted differently to apply them to concrete life situations are presented. There were three main stages in the process of formation of national philosophy and culture, which we can identify by the names of their initiators: Neagoe Basarab, Antim Ivireanul and Dimitrie Cantemir. In their works we find concepts of anthropology and cultural manifestations that also include philosophical aspects that had an essential contribution in the formation of Romanian thought.

Among them, Antim achieved another special fact, namely he contributed to the generalization of the Romanian language, which implies a first step in the manifestation of philosophical thinking in the language of the people, even when we discuss the promotion of the ideas and values of universal philosophy. This effort to orient the Romanian language towards philosophical thinking in order to highlight the specificity of the Romanian soul was intensively supported in the modern period by Constantin Noica and Titu Maiorescu.

4. CONCLUSION

Drawing the conclusion, one may say that through his work Antim Ivireanul proposes to the audience of his time, and to the reader from the society of each time, a way of finding the meaning of life through worship and culture, using both the revealed Christian teaching and the culture and philosophy of the time. Antim the Ivirian formulated axiologically and praxiologically the truth, wisdom, virtues in general – perennial values and norms absolutely necessary for any well-organized society, and especially for the man who needs education and cultural-spiritual progress.

The anthropology and axiology of Antim the Ivirian, has as its centrality the man as a rational being who leads his existence consciously, directed of course towards a final goal. Axis and dimension of the material world and the spiritual world, with elements that come from both, man was created with body and soul, in order to have an existence that begins with the material world, but is fulfilled in the spiritual world. The entire discovery of man is fulfilled in Christ, who includes within himself humanity united with divinity for the purpose of purification. Therefore, the result of his work is also a fulfillment of humanity, which sanctified and discovered its true meaning.

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