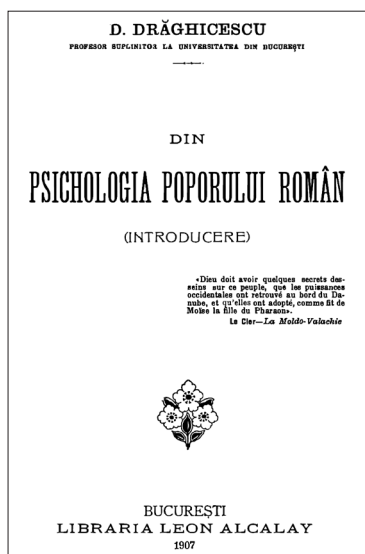


Dumitru Drăghicescu's Perspective on the Romanians' Image in the Early Twentieth Century

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Introduction

THE SPIRITUAL and psychological profile of the Romanian people, defined by some researchers as “the soul of the Romanian people,” has long been a topic of interest for Romanian psychologists, philosophers, historians, philologists, ethnologists and writers. Research carried out by way of focal or interdisciplinary approaches has shaped different opinions—sometimes convergent, at other times divergent—which have materialized in studies that are particularly useful to those interested in this field and have, at the same time, also contributed to the affirmation of modern Romanian culture.

The first scholar to focus on this topic in the Romanian space was Dimitrie Cantemir, prince of Moldavia, in a work with the title *Descriptio Moldaviae* or *Descriptio antiqui et hodierni status Moldaviae*, written in the first part of the eighteenth century.¹ Although it is devised as a geographi-

cal monograph, the author highlights the psychological and character traits of the Romanians living in Moldavia. In the seventeenth chapter, “On the Moldavians’ Bad Habits,” Dimitrie Cantemir presents us with a picture of the Moldavians’ character traits (which could be extended to the Romanians in all the territories they inhabited), while also emphasizing the difficulty of being objective in this endeavor:

the love we have for our homeland urges us on the one hand to praise the nation to which we were born and to portray the inhabitants of the country from which we are descended, but on the other hand, the love of truth prevents us from praising that which should justly be condemned. (Cantemir 2001, 175)

He also expresses his belief that “it will be more useful to them” if he presents “clearly the flaws that disfigure them, than if we deceive them with gentle flattery and skillful excuses” (ibid.). In the spirit of what was stated above, the author tries to be as objective as possible, to respect the truth and rely on empirical evidence, which is why the moral portrait of the Romanians is presented as an alternation of positive and negative traits. The overall picture is nonetheless dominated by serious flaws the author detects in the Moldavians’ nature. The critical frankness with which he points out some “bad habits” that Romanians should not be proud of has generated many controversies. At the very beginning of the seventeenth chapter, he confesses that “we cannot easily find anything to praise in the Moldavians’ habits, apart from their true faith and hospitality” (ibid.). Thus, we learn that “good habits are rare among them” and “they lack a properly good education.” Moldavians “do not know the proper measure of anything.” Instead, they are smug and impulsive, they lack tenacity and culture, but are cheerful, full of jest and merry. They are hardly enamored with learning, “which they almost all loathe,” and even “the names of beautiful crafts and sciences are unknown to them.” For Moldavians, “studying is the business of priests.” Cantemir considers hospitality the quality worthy of the highest praise, because although Moldavians are very poor, they will offer food and accommodation to a guest and “shelter him and his horse without payment for three days” (ibid., 175–180). All in all, the image Cantemir paints to illustrate the character traits of the Moldavians is dominated by shadows and negative touches, as he critically expresses his dissatisfaction with the “spirit and vagaries of the Moldavians.”

Nearly two hundred years later, in 1907, D. Drăghicescu was the first Romanian to write on the psychology of the Romanian people, in a scientific work titled *Din psihologia poporului român* (On the psychology of the Romanian people), strongly anchored in and influenced by the European spirit of the time.

Constantin Rădulescu-Motru wrote *Psihologia poporului român* (The psychology of the Romanian people) based on his theory related to energetic personalism. Other authors have approached different aspects of this topic, some only tangentially, as part of their broader research concerns.² The most recent such work belongs to Daniel David, *Psihologia poporului român* (The psychology of the Romanian people), based on research conducted between 2005 and 2015. The author outlines the psychological profile of the Romanians from a cognitive-experimental perspective, and the reader can easily see that David's approach often departs from the clichés we have become accustomed to over time.

The Project for a Psychology of the Romanian People in a European Context at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

DUMITRU DRĂGHICESCU (1875–1945) was a Romanian diplomat, philosopher, politician and sociologist, an outstanding personality of Romanian culture, much less known than we think he deserves to be. He graduated from the Faculty of Law in Bucharest, but also attended the philosophy courses taught by Titu Maiorescu, Constantin Dumitrescu-Iași, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, etc. After passing the undergraduate exam, Drăghicescu pursued doctoral studies in Paris, where he had the privilege of attending the courses of professors of undeniable scientific standing, such as Émile Durkheim, Gabriel Tarde, Henri Bergson, and Théodule Ribot. He was the first Romanian to defend a doctorate in sociology at the Sorbonne (1904), under the supervision of Durkheim (with the thesis entitled *Du rôle de l'individu dans le déterminisme social*). After returning to Romania, he published his seminal work *On the Psychology of the Romanian People* (1907). Drăghicescu was also involved in the work carried out by a group of countrymen (Nicolae Lupu, Simion Mândrescu, G. G. Mironescu and others) at the Congress of the Nationalities (Rome, 9–12 April 1918) for the recognition of the Romanians' rights to have a national state within their ethnic borders.³ He was also the first plenipotentiary ambassador of Romania to Mexico between 1934 and 1936 (Beu 2010, 255–266).

Dumitru Drăghicescu was certainly connected to his nation's political realities and problems, but he was also attached to European values. The studies he carried out in Paris, his integration in the circles of the Parisian intelligentsia and his prodigious scientific activity materialized in the works he published abroad (mostly in French), in his relationships with renowned scientific personalities and with countrymen who shared the same ideals, showing that Drăghicescu was strongly anchored in the European spirit of his time. Unfortunately, the

life of Drăghicescu ended sadly. He committed suicide on 14 September 1945, and the reasons that led to this decision are rather unclear. His liberal political beliefs, his view of the communists, and perhaps his anticipation of what was about to happen may have contributed to his suicidal gesture.

The present study aims to bring back to attention the personality of Dumitru Drăghicescu, who was totally ignored during the communist period, and to highlight his contribution as the first author to approach the psychology of the Romanian people in a scientific manner in the study entitled *On the Psychology of the Romanian People*. To that end, we shall be focusing on his approach to the education and morality of Romanians.

The work *On the Psychology of the Romanian People* was written by Drăghicescu in his youth and was completed when he was 31 years old, in a historical context in which European scientists such as Wilhelm Wundt and Gustave Le Bon devoted their creative efforts to researching the psychology of peoples (nations). Drăghicescu's work was therefore attuned to the scientific spirit of the time. Some particularly relevant contributions belonged to authors like Wundt, the founder of psychology as an autonomous science, who published *Völkerpsychologie: Eine Untersuchung der Entwicklungsgesetze von Sprache, Mythos und Sitte* (1900–1920), a work in 10 volumes, or to Gustave Le Bon in France, with his *Les Lois psychologiques de l'évolution des peuples* (1894) and *Psychologie des foules* (1895). David (2015) states that Romanian works on this topic “were synchronous with the European/international scientific paradigms at that time,” but also links their publication to “the context of the preparation, formation and consolidation of the modern Romanian unitary national state” (35).

As regards his manner of outlining the Romanians' psychological and moral profile, Drăghicescu insists on some sociological aspects, evidently influenced by his doctoral field, and focuses more on the negative aspects of the Romanians' character. The re-publication of the book in 1995 brought to the attention of readers the contemporary relevance of the author's observations on the psychology, behavior and mentalities of Romanians, ninety years after the first edition saw the light of print.

Probably influenced by the ideas and concepts that circulated at the time, Drăghicescu starts his examination by highlighting the fact that “it is well known that the character of individuals and peoples resides in the echo their activity leaves in the souls.” The importance of a people's character for its own history was also emphasized by Le Bon (1894), who stated that “the history of a people does not depend on its institutions, but on its character, that is, on its race.” It should be noted that the issue of races was viewed differently at the end of the nineteenth century, compared to the next. To take the example of Le Bon, in his view race is not related to ethnicity, but is characterized by culture and common

traditions, and history is the product of its character. He states that whether they have the same origin or different origins, peoples that have been subject for many centuries to the same beliefs, institutions, and laws form a “historical race.” Thus, he opposes the German theories claiming that races can be differentiated on ethnic grounds.

The general principles by which Drăghicescu is guided in his scientific approach are formulated as follows: fixing, to the extent that this is possible, the origin, lineage and evolution of the ethnic character; establishing the probable connection between the spiritual traits and the historical-social events that perfected them. More precisely, what is at stake is identifying the most important historical events “from which spring the general states of mind of our nation” (Drăghicescu 1907, 6–7). In terms of methodology, Drăghicescu synchronizes his approach with that of contemporary researchers such as Wilhelm Wundt, Alfred Fouillée and Émile Boutmy.

According to Drăghicescu, an essential criterion for the formation of a nation’s character and historical mentality is independent historical development. Therefore, small states and nations with a precarious existence, which do not have independent historical development, do not meet this criterion, which is why their features are influenced by those of larger nations. The author’s belief is that the soul of the Romanian nation was marked in its historical development by various influences, which he presents in a chronological manner, starting from the influence of the Romans and continuing with that of the Slavs, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Turks, Greeks and Russians. But the worst influence of all is the Turkish one. The fall of the Romanian lands under Turkish rule meant “the loss of the Romanians’ admirable qualities, the destruction of the people’s will for independence and trafficking away the voivodeships” (Drăghicescu 1907, 281).

Mircea Vulcănescu also considers that the architecture of the Romanian soul is imperiled by a series of influences that he calls “temptations.” In partly chronological order, the temptations presented by Vulcănescu are: autochthonous, Roman, Byzantine, Slavic, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian-Polish, Balkan (Greek-Bulgarian), and Gypsy (Vulcănescu 1991, 17). These spiritual influences constitute “the present residue of the trials through which the nation has passed,” “the latent result of the experiences of the past” (ibid., 42). Temptations are not dominant characters and do not manifest themselves as full existences, but as

tendencies that are to be overcome and eliminated in order to make yourself whole by the addition of an external reality that subjugates you and in which you recognize a primordial formative identity, a kind of return to the origins. (Ibid., 42–43)

Returning to the formation of the Romanians' character and historical mentality, we may notice how Dumitru Drăghicescu approaches this process according to a paradigm of non-fulfillment. More precisely, the Romanians' map and history are unfinished, unbalanced, devoid of solid bases: "Every Romanian activity bears the seal of the unfinished: history, grammar, language, art, and culture." Romanians are socially uneducated. They are a people that has not completed its education. It should be noted that Drăghicescu wrote this work in 1907, when Romania was not yet within its unitary state borders, an aspect brought to completion in 1918.

Method

IN THE introductory part of the work *On the Psychology of the Romanian People*, Drăghicescu specifies the objectives of his scientific approach: (1) conceptualizing the Romanian soul; (2) identifying the psycho-moral characteristics of the Romanians; (3) understanding and explaining the social and historical causes that contributed to shaping the soul and character of the Romanian people. The development of the soul and character of a people, according to Drăghicescu, is the result of three sets of causes: (1) the blend of races from which it is descended; (2) the socio-geographical context; and (3) the historical-social circumstances that "lend the ethnic soul the present color" (Drăghicescu 1907, 7–8). The author's emphasis is on the genetic background, which David (2015) says has a less important role in shaping the Romanians' psycho-cultural profile than that ascribed to it by Drăghicescu. Mihai Ralea, on the other hand, states that the ethnic aspect should be viewed from a sociological and evolutionary perspective: "the ethnic soul . . . is the result of a culture, a certain social life. Change the culture and mores, and the soul of the people will also slowly change. Not immediately, obviously" (Ralea 1997, 59). Therefore, the ethnic soul evolves over time, and research is concerned with the current soul of a people, examined in the present.

Starting from these objectives, Drăghicescu also defines the research methods that are appropriate to his approach. The delimitation of the subject, "the psychology of the Romanian people," is the first stage of his approach, an especially important stage designed to "protect us from the various objections that have been raised against us." In this sense, realizing that the Romanian soul cannot be captured "in all its details," the aim is to broadly outline the characteristics of "our mental and ethnic character" (Drăghicescu 1907, 2). This objective includes the desire to dwell on the mental and "moral qualities known and acknowledged by all as true and general" (ibid., 3).

As Drăghicescu maintains, the most appropriate method of the proposed research involves collecting the different opinions and knowledge that the people have about themselves, systematically organizing the moral qualities and defects that they attribute to themselves, and then presenting them according to the degree of their generality and importance. Since the general features are about the same in all and recognized by all, the researcher can help outline the idea that the people have of themselves. As for the degree of objectivity, it will be all the higher, the more the opinions already expressed by the people will be taken into account, and “lesser attention will be granted to our personal assessments” (Drăghicescu 1907, 4). Drăghicescu designs a methodical representation of the ethnic soul and insists on the precision needed to outline its features. The researcher has the mission of weighing the different opinions in order to determine the value of each spiritual trait.

In order to reveal the social and historical events, or the significant circumstances that shaped the Romanians’ mentalities and character, he researches the historical sources and “leaves aside the controversies of history,” in an attempt to delineate the moral or spiritual heritage left by the peoples that have contributed to the “unification of our nation” (Drăghicescu 1907, 8–10). In the analysis he carries out, the author’s attention is directed to: the Thracian-Illyrian peoples and, in particular, the Geto-Dacian tribes; the Roman element, to which he assigns an overwhelming role in the formation of the Romanian soul; the Slavic element, which has exerted strong moral, economic, and intellectual influences; and the Greek, French, German and, of course, Turkish influences (*ibid.*, 10–12). In order to achieve the proposed objective, he uses “all methods and all means of observation and information”: history, philology, folklore, surveys and observations of experienced people, biographical analyses, works about the Romanians written by foreign visitors, as well as analytical tools that are specific to social psychology and sociology (*ibid.*, 13).

Deduction and induction are also present in the inventory of methods that Drăghicescu resorts to. He states that the deductive method “is necessary and can be usefully applied,” while induction can serve “as a means of confirming and illustrating deductively learned truths” (Drăghicescu 1907, 14).

These methods, along with others present in Drăghicescu’s study, such as analysis, synthesis, comparison, and so on, support his effort to “shed some light on our good and bad spiritual qualities in order to make them easier to see through the eyes of anyone” and also to reveal the circumstances in which the “bad features arose” (Drăghicescu 1907, 30).

Dumitru Drăghicescu carried out this research within the framework of the European scientific endeavors of his time, but he also understood the need to know ourselves better as a nation, to understand our character, our strengths

and, not least, to develop self-awareness as a people. He was aware of the limitations of his research, which is why he made it clear that it would be neither complete nor perfect. He viewed it as a starting point for other studies that could be developed by subsequent generations.

The Romanians' Characteristics in a Painting with Shadows and Lights

DRĂGHICESCU is a harsh critic of the Romanians' morality, underlining especially characterological deficiencies that are also largely present today—some perhaps even more distinctly than before, while others have acquired new forms.

In the eighteenth century, Cantemir pointed out the Romanians' very low appetite for learning, for literacy. The situation had not changed much by the time Drăghicescu carried out his research, at the beginning of the twentieth century, with all the influences exerted on the Romanians' psychological structure. Neither interest nor access to education had increased much. Thus, about 18–20% of Romanians knew how to read and write at that time, and in the villages the percentage was only 10%. The number of schools barely amounted to a third of what was needed (Drăghicescu 1907, 380, 448). Students learned in the hallways of churches, the teachers being recruited from among the cantors and the chaplains. The means of education were the horologion, church books, and folk tales. Most of the people learned things orally, however. Speaking about the importance of influences, it is interesting to note that the author states that “the mentalities of our neighbors were real academies for us” (*ibid.*, 380).

The explanation given for this state of affairs is as follows: either the villagers could not afford to buy books and clothes, or, if they did, they needed the children to help them with agricultural work, or there simply was no teacher or school in the village. Thus, in rural areas, if the number of those entering the first grade was 50–60, the number of graduates was barely 4 or 5. As for adult schools and popular libraries, these are considered by Drăghicescu “too high aspirations.” The Romanian people continued to lack education and culture. Realizing the importance of education for a people, Drăghicescu stated that his goal was to triple the number of schools and teachers, so as to decrease the percentage of illiteracy below 50%. Unfortunately, the situation is not looking far better even today, since even though the problem of illiteracy has largely been resolved, the high rate of school dropout and the lack of interest in education still prevail. Statistical data show that in 2021 over 15% of students nationwide

dropped out of school, and in rural areas the dropout rate was 25.4%. From this perspective, Romania ranks last in Europe. This feature of the Romanians is related to others arising from it. In Drăghicescu's opinion, the consequence of the lack of access to education is that the Romanians' spirit is impoverished, simply because education has not molded their spiritual fiber. Therefore, the poverty of Romanians precludes them from enjoying a cultural and educated life.

As regards the Romanians' morality, we should pay attention to the religious dimension of their existence, as presented by the author. A characteristic inherited from the Romans is the focus on cult and ritual in religious practice, on external formalism, in which doctrine is relatively unimportant. This perspective has engendered attitudes such as the ridiculing of priests, or the lack of trust in them (Drăghicescu 1907, 362). Religious formalism prevents them, however, from being fanatics, which is why Romanians have been part of "no controversies, no quarrels, no religious persecutions" (*ibid.*, 360–363). Therefore, theirs is a superficial form of Christianity, which masks a form of paganism (*ibid.*, 366). Drăghicescu is harsh on the morality and activism of Romanian believers. Orthodox Christians, compared to Catholics and Protestants, are passive, speculative, and preoccupied with asserting their faith in themselves, not with "applying moral laws in practice" (*ibid.*, 379). This finding is also present in Rădulescu-Motru's approach.

Passivity, defensive and resigned resistance, or the lack of offensive energy are yet other traits identified by Drăghicescu (1907, 448). An example of this is the fight against the Turks, which is waged "with bags of money." The representative rulers are deemed to be Matei Basarab and Constantin Brâncoveanu, who defended their country and "their long reigns with regiments of bags, loaded with sequins" (*ibid.*). In the eighteenth century the oppressed peasants, adopting a defensive attitude, crossed the Danube to the Serbs or to the Bulgarians, or crossed the mountains into Transylvania. This impulse permeated the Romanians' soul and, in some historical circumstances, this contributed to the development of negative, passive and defensive qualities, devoid of uplifting and bold reflexes. Romanians showed caution "beyond limits" in averting dangers, shy modesty and a patience often associated with cowardice. In the travelling accounts of foreigners who visited our country, Romanians are often presented as passive, inactive, apathetic, extremely tolerant, including in relation to oppressors. A suggestive expression used by foreigners before the Romanian uprising of 1989 is "polenta does not explode," indicating the Romanians' lack of action and energy. Deeply entrenched in the backbone of the nation, this attitude becomes "our traditional indolence, or faith in fatality, in fate, in luck, our complete lack of confidence in ourselves" (*ibid.*, 363). Unable to respond with force, Romanians tend to protest verbally, through mockery, sarcasm, complaints, or, dur-

ing the communist period, through the well-known jokes at the expense of the rulers. However, the author makes a geographical distinction, in the sense that resignation is more pronounced in Moldavia, less so in Wallachia and much less in Transylvania. The Romanians in Transylvania have kept their vigorous energy and responded to oppression with violent acts, with brutality (*ibid.*, 457).

Indolence and faith in fatality derive, on the one hand, from the Romanians' specific history, and on the other hand, from influences of the East. These features are found across society. Romanians are described by some visitors of these lands as being lazy, content with little and unaware of the needs of other nations (Charles Pertusier, 1822). The appetite for novelty and change is very low, which is why Romanians are not concerned with new branches of industry, while the trades are left to foreigners (Thomas Thornton, 1807). As a result, labor and initiative fall into disuse, leaving room for indolence and laziness, lack of self-confidence and, at the same time, confidence in fate, in luck. Even folk creations, fairy tales, legends and stories illustrate and are dominated by the idea of luck and fortune telling. Needless to say, self-esteem is almost absent in this context. The whole philosophy of the Romanian peasant is the philosophy of fate and luck, destiny and fortune. All life events are placed in this framework: "the idea of luck rules and chains the mind so much that good luck wishes take the place of the very habit of saying 'good morning' or 'good afternoon'" (Drăghicescu 1907, 478). The author emphasizes again that passive indolence and fatalism are less widespread in Transylvania.

Indolence and lack of foresight and discipline are the dominant notes of the ethnic soul, and these make almost all things "provisional and ephemeral" (Drăghicescu 1907, 489). People are content with appearances, and then "the goal is not to be something, but to appear to be" (*ibid.*, 487). In his turn, Rădulescu-Motru points out that Romanians are undisciplined and do not work methodically, but by leaps and bounds, with long periods of rest (Rădulescu-Motru 1998, 24–25). The activity of Romanian peasants and of Romanians in general is done for the "now," it does not take into account the future, "a somewhat more distant future." This lack of discipline, of foresight, this indolence and sporadic way of working has been transmitted in the mentality of Romanians from one generation to another, over the centuries, generating the incoherence of their practical activities, which is also reflected in their spirituality. Drăghicescu argues that logical reasoning, methodical spirit and clarity are rarely exhibited by Romanians. These inadequacies are reflected in their speeches, plans, and conclusions, which "rest on flimsy arguments and start from childish premises" (Drăghicescu 1907, 500). All these are caused, according to Drăghicescu, by the geographical, social and historical context, marked by influences of the peoples with whom the Romanians have interacted. From the Slavs, for example, they

have inherited such traits as incoherence and weakness of will, the lack of discipline and method in action.

As for the laziness of which the peasants are accused, this is accounted for as a lack of motivation to work because the products, the fruit of their labor, were meant for others, not for themselves. It is interesting and revealing at the same time to compare the situation of the peasants in the Kingdom of Romania with those in Transylvania, who fundamentally changed their attitude towards work within fifty years of being granted land ownership. Therefore, laziness and indolence were simply the consequences of their past economic condition.

Cunning, deceitfulness, and hypocrisy are considered by Drăghicescu to be defining traits of the Dacians and the Romans, traits that have been transmitted to Romanians throughout time. The life of the Romanian peasants was full of suffering, they were subjected to torture that was difficult to imagine, often because they were unable to pay their debts. And then, Drăghicescu says, in order to escape these tortures, they had to hide, deceive, and lie. Such behaviors were passed on to the next generations. The findings of those who visited these lands rested on similar explanations, namely the difficult situation of the Romanians, the abuses committed against them and the rulers' errors, which forced them to resort to "ruses, which in any country would pass for lies and hypocrisy" (Drăghicescu 1907, 510). The harsh historical context in which the Romanians lived on these lands influenced their character traits, for "in order to survive, they had to deceive, hide, lie, and betray" (ibid., 513). Kekaumenos, a Greek writer of the eleventh century, mentioned by Drăghicescu, showed that "the Wallachian people are unfaithful . . . , attempting to deceive everyone . . . they are always ready to make the greatest pledges to their friends, and then break them easily . . . they were never loyal to anyone, not even to the ancient emperors of the Romans" (Drăghicescu 1907, 208).

A character trait of the Romanians, preserved unchanged over the ages, is the desire for freedom, for non-aggression. This spirit of freedom turned in time into a real repulsion towards any form of submission, the Romanians all wanting to be their own masters, "to have no master over them" (Drăghicescu 1907, 514). This mentality generated endless divisions both among the boyars, who laid claims on the throne, and among the peasants, who wanted to enter the boyars' ranks. This desire for freedom is seen by Drăghicescu as a legacy from the Dacians, the Romans, and the Slavs. It has been kept alive by the peasants, even when subjugated, through the ages. Drăghicescu recounts the testimony of Count d'Hauterive, a traveler to these lands, who said that the Moldavians

have not lost their natural instinct of rebellion against any new form of oppression . . . they are always ready to stand against their boyars in court before the judge. . . . I

confess that this living tradition of ancient Roman freedom is something that I did not expect to find here at all, and I really enjoyed finding it 400 leagues from Rome and eighteen centuries after Cicero. (Drăghicescu 1907, 515)

From this spirit of freedom arise some particularities mentioned by the author: the peasants' repulsion to be servants, so much so that they prefer to endure poverty rather than to serve; if they nevertheless accept to be servants in towns, they seem incapable of obeying and carrying out orders.

Intelligence, creativity, and language are presented as a result of the contacts between Romanians and other peoples "in which all the nations of Europe are represented." With this approach, Drăghicescu actually confers upon them a note of universality. Thus, the actions of some oppressors who wanted to weaken the will of the people (Slavs, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Turks, Greeks, Russians, etc.) resulted in the enrichment of the Romanian spirituality. The richness, depth and beauty of folk literature, their expressive vigor and creative imagination demonstrate bright intellectual features, manifested in the interest for the arts, for artistic creations. The Romanians' interest in the arts was also noticed by foreigners who visited these territories and left written accounts. Some of these authors are mentioned by Drăghicescu: Auguste de Gérando, Elias Regnault, Hippolyte Desprez, Antoine François Le Clerc, and Charles Pertusier. Most foreigners were surprised by the liveliness of spirit, the richness of the imagination and the depth of thought, all these being considered by Drăghicescu to be distinctive features among the Romanians (Drăghicescu 1907, 525–530). Wit combined with the practical sense inherited from the Romans shaped the Romanians' sarcastic spirit, their penchant for mockery, a trait considered to be "the smoothest, the most precise and the best defined" (*ibid.*, 532). Humor, irony, and popular satire are means with practical effects designed "to punish bad mores and improve them." As a result, comic literature, anecdotes, jokes and sharp epigrams have flourished. In Drăghicescu's view, the Romanians' satirical spirit and irony can be compared with and considered to come close to English irony and humor.

There are other traits of the Romanians described by D. Drăghicescu, including their welcoming and tolerant nature, their hospitality and goodwill. David (2015) points out, however, that although Drăghicescu and Rădulescu-Motru both supported the existence of these traits, his own research led him to the conclusion that these attributes do not represent psychological realities in a positive sense, but psychological stereotypes. Therefore, Romanians are not very welcoming and tolerant, but would like to believe that they are so.

Conclusions

DUMITRU DRĂGHICESCU's book was received by his contemporaries with harsh and unjustified criticism, which discouraged the author from continuing his endeavor. Onisifor Ghibu (1981, 129–130) states that in his opinion the criticism

was unfair to the first attempt made in a field like this, of almost infinite proportions. No matter how risky some of the author's opinions may have been, it cannot be denied that his pioneering work is worthy of praise and that it should have been continued not only by the author, but also by as many other researchers as possible.

Drăghicescu (1907, X) was aware of the limits of his study and even referred to this aspect in his book: “Many flaws and shortcomings will be found in this work, for it is the work of the times we are living.” He considered his book a starting point for further research in this field, the foundation for others to follow. He believed that he lived in a transitional age characterized by anarchy, complexity, and chaos. His goal at the beginning of the twentieth century was to try to facilitate rational debates among creative personalities, who would rearrange things in new patterns, adapted to the current situation. By and large, he was trying to position himself in-between exaggerated admiration and the sharp criticism levelled against the Romanians by some foreigners. Drăghicescu's approach is to be understood in pedagogical terms as an attempt to identify some characteristic flaws of the Romanians in order for them to be later corrected. The renowned sociologist provided explanations for all the negative traits of the people, making reference to the vicissitudes of their troubled history and to foreign influences (Slavs, Hungarians, Greeks, Turks) from the periods when the Romanians were under occupation. Incidentally, Rădulescu Motru also found external justifications for the Romanians' behavior, which were not related to their nature or their DNA, stating, for example, that the Romanians do “not persevere because the state institutions have forced them to improvise.”

Obviously, there are some exaggerations in Drăghicescu's work, but despite these and the different positions of the critics over time, his study remains a work of reference for those who want to make a foray into the historical and geographical conditions that have influenced the spiritual fiber of the Romanians.



Notes

1. Dimitrie Cantemir compiled the work *Descriptio Moldaviae* between 1714 and 1716, while he was living in Russia. The context in which the work was written was very important for the Romanians' history: in 1714, when the former ruler was elected as honorary member of the Berlin Academy, he was requested to write a work about his country. Drafted in Latin, the work *Descriptio Moldaviae* was translated and printed in German (1769–1771), Russian (1779), and Greek (1819). The work was first translated into Romanian in 1806 probably by Vasile Vârnav (from German) and published in 1825, at Neamț Monastery, under the title *Letter of Moldavia*. Subsequently, the work appeared in Romanian editions with the title *A Description of Moldavia*. The second edition in Romanian appeared in Iași, in 1851, and was edited by Constantin Negruzzi. It should be noted that in the 1909 edition (Bucharest: Leon Alcalay), the author of the foreword, Miron Nicolescu, suggested that the work had been first translated into Romanian in 1718. Characterized by scholars as “the first scientific writing of a Romanian,” *A Description of Moldavia* remains a reference book for the Romanians' history, as it was the first work by a Romanian author to be translated, published, and read in Europe.
2. Examples include: Mihai Ralea, “Fenomenul românesc,” *Viața românească* (Iași) 19, 6–7 (1927): 337–361; Mircea Vulcănescu, “Dimensiunea românească a existenței,” in *Izvoare de filozofie: Culegere de studii și texte*, vol. 2, edited by Const. Floru, Const. Noica, and Mircea Vulcanescu (Bucharest: Editura “Bucovina” I. E. Torouțiu, 1944), 53–97; Ion F. Buricescu, *Sufletul românesc* (Bucharest: Casa Școalelor, 1944), as well as the works of Constantin Noica and Lucian Blaga.
3. To achieve this goal, D. Drăghicescu waged a sustained campaign on several levels. First, in 1918–1919 he published several pamphlets in French, in Paris, through which he made known the policy of denationalization of the tsarist authorities and the Austro-Hungarian Empire towards the peoples they dominated, with references to Transylvania, Bessarabia, Serbia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Secondly, he was actively involved by participating in the Congress of Nationalities, which was held in Rome on 9–12 April 1918.

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Abstract

Dumitru Drăghicescu's Perspective on the Romanians' Image in the Early Twentieth Century

In the early twentieth century, a major direction of psychological research was concerned with the psychology of peoples. This trend did not go unnoticed by Romanian researchers. Dumitru Drăghicescu (1875–1945) was the first Romanian scholar who was influenced by the ideas and concepts circulating at that time and who engaged, together with Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, in complex approaches to the Romanians' psychology. Using the insights of sociology, the field in which he completed his doctoral research, Drăghicescu wrote a study entitled *On the Psychology of the Romanian People* (1907), in which he undertook a characterological analysis that largely focused on the Romanians' negative traits and brought him numerous criticisms. Given the topic it addressed, this work reflected the spirit of the time and was attuned to the prevalent European scientific paradigms. The present study aims to reconsider the personality and work of D. Drăghicescu, a scholar who was totally ignored during the communist period, and to outline his perspective on the education and morality of the Romanian people at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Keywords

people, psychology, education, morality, character