

### THE SENTIMENTAL AESTHETICS OF G.M.CANTACUZINO

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#### Summary

*There are personalities which have such magnetism that every word surrounds you with perfume, color and light. The architect G. M. Cantacuzino was blessed with such a charismatic power. Reading his books, looking his drawings or paintings, means to enter in a special realm, beyond time and space. His language has rhythm and creates sounds that you can hear indeed. His paintings and drawings bring our soul into a dreaming and peaceful state. Entering in this atmosphere, you will be able to see through his eyes all the treasures of the worlds that he describes or draw, you will hear through his ears all the enchanting sounds of the nature and human beings.*

*G. M. gives to the Romanian architecture such explanations that you can understand all the complicated processes passed in the historical evolution. He feels those times, in a very dramatic way, because that period was full of dilemmas for the Romanian architecture and he feels all the problems like a sensible but objective annalist. We can say that he had an innate personality to analyze, to go and find all the roots of every artistic or stylistic hypostasis from the human history.*

*His entire creation gave him the right to talk, not as a dry and theoretical critic, but as a creator of exception.*

Keywords: G. M. Cantacuzino, Romanian architecture, tradition, modern architecture, sentimental aesthetics, stylistic hypostasis.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 2. ABOUT THE ROMANIAN SOUL AND ARCHITECTURE

Being in other big countries, or in other magnificent build or natural landscape, he turns back with his mind and soul, again and again, to the Romanian soul and architecture: "At the first sight it seems to be confused and not very clear. The Romanian landscape...is like a target... different arrows from different directions come over it. If we compose the different spiritual forces which worked over the collective Romanian soul, only two big resultant remain: one aim to north-west and one to south-east."

One of the explanations that G. M. Cantacuzino gives to the influences, over the Romanian soul, comes from the geographical position of our country: its important position, into a big commercial roads intersection, where the big roads from Europe to Asian steppes cross with the big roads from North Sea to Black Sea. He perceives that "the gothic constructivity meet the Byzantine one on the land of Moldova" and in Walachia where the Byzantine style came directly over the Danube River "they build in the purely Byzantine style".

Through the depth of his soul he was sensible and attentive how the Romanian people crystallize a strong personality and high culture. He underlines clearly the subtle particularities that give specificity and charm to the Romanian architecture: "It is interesting to observe our soul autonomy or, better, the moral resulted from these researches. We should perceive also that this autonomy don't give us isolation, neither stylistic obedience...The essence stay in the realm of mysteries and any psychological alchemy cannot decompose or penetrate."

These last words remind us Lucian Blaga poem "I don't crash the wonder corolla of the world" - the poet don't want to destroy the mystery of Creation through a dry and rational research, he want only to enjoy through intuition and contemplation. In the same way, G. M. decipher the mysteries of Romanian



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architecture without destroying its subtle aura that the time weaves and he succeed to transmits the sincere joy of his contemplations.

As an authentic and passionate researcher, guided by a special common sense and discrimination, he observes that: “We adapted to the historical storms. Like the small trees which grow to the sea side, taking strange form in order to resist to the devastating winds, in the same way our art took the subtle way, appropriating such hermetic and meditative character, only sketching in the natural harmony the line of spiritual tendencies, of reserved emotions and of some smoothed emotions.”

## 3. THE SENTIMENTAL AESTETICS OF G.M.CANTACUZINO

Related to the most disputed subject of “traditionalism versus modernism” in the Romanian architecture, he succeed to choose the middle wise way: “First of all, it is about knowing which is our attitude facing the new currents...The modernism and the Romanian style seems to be like two antagonist forces, which cannot give any common resultant. But, if we analyze further this problem, if instead using the acceptable and larger words *tendency* or *current*, I believe that the image of our future clarifies itself...Each (style) represent a tendency susceptible of a long improvement or adjustment. Each one represents experiences that wait to be ratified by their utilization, means by the time.”

Living in that époque which was an important stylistic crossroad for the Romanian architecture, G. M. don't reject modernism, but explain about this phenomenon in a very clear manner: “In any case, we don't talk about the architectural application of some aesthetics. It is not a fashion, but it is about social imperatives. So, the problem is not *Romanian architecture versus modern architecture*, neither *national art versus international art*. First of all, the problem is to know which our attitude could be in front of these new premises, and how these problems will be solved by the Romanian soul, how will assimilate the new experiences.”

In a very wise way G. M. Cantacuzino pay attention to the dangers of applying the international style in art, using injudicious ways: “The pretext of internationalism for setting the art on the pure abstract and intellectual plan, cutting any root with the local sentimentalism, this is a very futile and dangerous game...You are not Romanian beginning today, but you are the product of this very past, doesn't matter what your future desires could be.”

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analyze, to go and find all the roots of every artistic or stylistic hypostasis from the human history. And he explains himself very clear: "I don't sustain only the retrospective attitudes, but I think that the images, containing the works of the past, are favorable places giving for the thoughts a security feeling for dreaming the future."

Trying to surpass his époque architectural dilemma, he had a vision of future obstacles on the road of the imitations of the past: "To provide for an autochthon style with the satisfaction of using and adapting the past elements, more or less successful for covering the present needs, this can lead to a deadlock, because this can lead to early to the exhaustion of some evolutes forms from the past and to the condemnation of any future evolution."

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

He understood through his own experiences the difficulty to resist, as an architect, in front of the modern stylistic avalanche, to the technical progress, to the new construction materials, or in front of the urban vanguard. His architectural creation gave him the maturity to talk, not as a dry and theoretical critic, but as a creator.

G. M. Cantacuzino looks with objectivity to the effects of the Romanian modern architecture of his time over the Romanian people. He understood the confusion feeling created in the minds of urban inhabitants, because of the new architecture which grew suddenly beside the old buildings: "Romanians remain puzzled in front of this strange, but quite attractive mirage and the specific nostalgia of his soul, of a patriarchal life."

This patriarchal trait of the Romanian soul has deep roots in our history and imprinted in a visible way the Romanian past architecture. The specific, traditional architectural and decorative elements come again and again in the present architecture, and because of that G. M. say: "Our aesthetics comes from an honorable sentimental attitude... We sincerely seek a one's own, properly décor."

Finally, G. M. Cantacuzino understood that there is any dilemma between the traditional and the modern Romanian architecture, but only appearances. He had a vision of the future cities: "Loosing many historical monuments from our cities, it was a request for the new monuments to remind the past to which we are so deep related... But beyond banality, our cities will take something from the dignity of ancient citadels, and we will certainly be more in harmony with the past, than remaining into a retrospective attitude".

The innate qualities of Romanian people, as a strong desire for culture and civilization, are the arguments for a future salvation of Romanian architecture:



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“Opening our spirit and curiosity to these common problems for all the peoples of the world, we will enter in the big constructive cycle of the modern life, giving to our inherent qualities the possibility to be developed on a large scale... We cannot unconsidered now, as we did not in the past, the big idealistic currents which excite the world.”

The clear soul autonomy of the Romanian people is underline in the books of G. M. Cantacuzino and that quality created such important chef d’oeuvre in our architecture. His resolution was: “Our problem is not to reduce the general currents to a local aesthetics, but to turn to the best account our old local tradition, bringing it to a general importance, at the big human level of imperishable works”.

The Romanian soul dilemma remains a psychological one, or a sentimental one: “Only when we will have a completely awareness of our possibilities, we will create a superior art, where the fantasia will find a wonderful world of creative possibilities, free of any conditionings”.

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