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## **An educational perspective on the philosophy of Petre Paul Negulescu (1872–1951) at the Romania Centennial's (1918–2018)**

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### **Abstract**

A disciple of Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917), Petre Paul Negulescu, along with Constantin Radulescu-Motru (1868–1957) and Ion Petrovici (1882–1972), is regarded as being among the most prolific thinkers in Romanian modern thought and one of the founders of the modern Romanian culture. Historical changes he could never envisage have left their mark upon the perception, reception and interpretation of his work. The paper reviews the key characteristics of Petre Paul Negulescu's work as reflected in his studies on the origin of culture, the philosophy of Renaissance and two magnificent works, *The History of Contemporary Philosophy* and *The Destiny of Humanity*. The aim is to contextualise these works within the field of philosophy in terms of their sources, conceptual approach and hermeneutics. As well as furnishing the Romanian culture with a wealth of original thought, his pertinent analysis of social, economic, cultural and political changes, and his involvement in improving the educational system through his position as Minister of Instruction, have made him worthy of criticism and an outstanding reference point in times of revival.

**Keywords:** Education, philosophy, culture.

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## 1. The complexity of context

It is a well-known maxim that personality is both the result and reflection of its age. The case of Petre Paul Negulescu is no exception, and it would be misleading to suggest that reviewing and reconsidering the work of such a thinker is simply a quantitative form of labour and falls short of research papers that typically employs statistics and offer prognoses. Indeed, the personality and the work of Petre Paul Negulescu emerged from a specific and complex cultural context and he has become a cornerstone within the constellation of thinkers positioned at the interface between old and new contexts. The context itself must therefore be understood by answering the ontological question, 'What was the context that led to the emergence of a pleiad of thinkers such as Titu Maiorescu, Petre Paul Negulescu, Constantin Radulescu-Motru and Ion Petrovici'? An introduction cannot embrace an entire history, but it can helpfully explain several key concepts that facilitate an understanding of the epoch. The transition from medieval to modern world in the principalities (Moldavia, Walachia and Transylvania) that now constitute contemporary Romania was characterised by an interaction between various types of civilisation, cultural models and historical patterns. An example is provided in the treatise on the global anthropological and philosophical aspects of culture by Neagu Djuvara. At the same time, although disagreeing with certain aspects of Djuvara's work, Razvan Theodorescu emphasises the aspects of a transactional mentality specific to this space that determine and sustain the preservation, manifestation, living characteristics and fulfilment of this particular cultural realm. A series of historical events therefore need to be elucidated to facilitate an understanding of the historical course of events. These includes the Phanariote period (1711–1716 and up to 1821), the 1821 revolt of Tudor Vladimirescu, the introduction of the Regulamentul Organic (Organic Regulation) (1831 in Walachia, 1832 in Moldavia), the 1848 Revolution, the Union of Moldavia and Walachia in 1859, the beginning of the monarchy and the Proclamation of the Kingdom of Romania, the independence of Romania from the Ottoman Empire, the Memorandum Movement in Transylvania (1892–1896), The First World War and the fulfilment of the unity dream on the 1 December 1918. Within this context, the question of a new culture has emerged within which the personality of Titu Maiorescu has played a central role. Maiorescu's role has, however, not been universally acknowledged or integrated into the scholarly literature except for that relating to the Romanian culture and civilisation. This is reminiscent of the recent movie *Genius* (2016) which depicts the life of Scribner's editor Maxwell Perkins who was responsible for the discovery of talented authors such as Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and Thomas Wolfe. Maiorescu was, to a certain extent, a character who exhibited a certain finesse in discovering and launching new talents for the projected Romanian culture. His personality was shaped by family tradition and modelled on his father Ioan Maiorescu (1811–1864). If we consider his father to be a reference point and then, add the work of Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917) and his disciples P. P. Negulescu (1872–1951), Constantin Radulescu-Motru (1868–1957) and Ion Petrovici (1882–1972), the activity of the Junimea Society, and the publication *Convorbiri Literare* (Literary Conversations) since 1867, we uncover an influence that spans almost two centuries of history. This is the context and the substantial legacy left on to us.

## 2. Getting acquainted with philosophy: The origins of Petre Paul Negulescu's work

With a propensity for Natural Sciences and Mathematics manifested during his high school studies in his home town of Ploiesti, Negulescu wrote a Manual for Geometry and for Trigonometry and then, pursued his studies at the University of Bucharest in the Faculty of Sciences. His plan was to study mathematics for a year and then, to continue his studies abroad at a polytechnic so that he could pursue an engineering career. However, fate intervened, and he relates his first encounter with Titu Maiorescu and the field of philosophy as follows: 'Of course, it is not my honour that I have only gone by accident to listen to the one who was illustrating, at that time, more bright than any of our higher education. But it was not my fault that I missed, when I came to Bucharest, the notions of the values of our culture. [...] A little while after my enrolment at the faculty of sciences, one of my new friends, who, better informed or more curious than I was, although studying law, was following the course of

the history of contemporary philosophy at the faculty of letters, and took me 1 day to listen to him—“at least once.” I remember very well this word, which was probably opposed to my objection that I did not see what I was looking for at a course of matter that did not interest me. My friend even added, as an excuse for his earnestness and as an excuse for my indifference, the familiar word: a fois n'est step costume. [...] I did not foresee, neither himself, nor myself, that the assertion would become true. “Once”—to use the language I used to have at that time—it was not for me, in the case I am talking about equal with the unit. It was a quantity, still undetermined, of course, in the first moment, but which I felt great; I suspected it was so great it could head to infinity’ (Popescu-Sireteanu, 1973, pp. 141–142). The subject at stake was the classification of sciences according to August Comte, and Negulescu recounts later that: ‘... indeed, the ideas I came across then haunted me for a long time with a strong passion close to obsession’ (Dumitrescu, 1975, p. 10). The course of events then led to him to pursue philosophical studies and he graduated in 1892 with a dissertation entitled ‘The critique of apriorism and empiricism’. This was then published in the same year and honoured with a prize from the Romanian Academy (Negulescu, 1892). After further studies in Leipzig, Berlin and Paris, he initially commenced his academic career at Iasi in 1894 and then, in 1910, was transferred to the Department of History and Encyclopedia of Philosophy at the University of Bucharest, a post that became vacant due to his magister Titu Maiorescu’s retirement in 1909. He also became involved in public service for a short time, taking up a post as Minister of Instruction and various other political engagements before dedicating himself to his academic career and philosophical writings. In 1937, he was honoured by becoming an elected member of the Romanian Academy and his reception discourse approached a perennial theme: ‘The conflict of generations and the factors of progress’. However, World War II and its dramatic implications for the history of Romania meant that it was difficult for Negulescu to keep pace with the unexpected changes that were taking place. Nevertheless, the fact that his underlying work principle was science first and thus, was non-political in nature meant that his work endured but, at the same time, was afforded less prominence because it could not be easily manipulated. His early articles addressed subjects within the field of aesthetics as well as subjects that were common themes in Romanian culture at that time. His works cannot be entirely separated from the age in which they were written and need to be considered in relation to the works of his magister and contemporary colleagues. Before the clear separation of psychology and sociology within the social sciences, problems common to these subjects were discussed and analysed by students, academic scientists and lay people. Within Romania, problems related to the psychology of its people and sociological issues were already being commonly discussed. These emerged very strongly in the field of literature and many aspects of both subjects were first debated within such publications. The publication of *Convorbiri Literare* (Literary Conversations) in Iasi was the most representative example in this respect and the contribution made to this publication by Titu Maiorescu and his disciples has been widely discussed and praised. The political discourses espoused by Titu Maiorescu were also designed to prepare a political class to meet the expectations of the nation regarding the ideals they were striving for. The political class was seen in many ways as responsible for all the goods and the evils that then occurred. It is in this direction that one of Negulescu’s early works, *The Political Parties*, was written. This is not a singular act as another colleague and disciple of Maiorescu, Constantin Radulescu-Motru, and a student of Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig were also searching for a cure to remedy the old dysfunctional patterns and faults of people in their writings and the politicking syndrome was just one target. It was also in Iasi that, during his lectures on modern philosophy, Negulescu became convinced that a true national culture could not be built without the bulwark of firm philosophical thought and this was the seed of his ambitious plan to write a history of philosophy in 10 volumes (Dumitrescu, 1975, p. 13).

### 3. Education and career

Negulescu followed in the footsteps of his magister and became involved in the reformation of the educational system at that time. He did not act on barren land. Following the 1859 union of Moldavia and Wallachia, there were already several reforms in place, the most well-known of which were those

of Mihail Kogalniceanu (1817–1891) and Spiru Haret (1851–1917). Titu Maiorescu had prepared several reports on the state of instruction and presented them on several occasions before the parliament, in addition he held the position of Minister of Instruction as well as that of Prime Minister. Spiru Haret's reform was characterised by both practical and pedagogical aspects. From a practical point of view, he created a form of education for the larger peasant population that would equip them with the right knowledge and means to work the land and earn a living, thus, avoiding the intrusion of land speculators into the management of agriculture. Another key aspect concerned the application of certain theories from mechanics into the social field, which his capital work *Mecanica Sociala* (Social Mechanics) (1910) bears witness to and provides the background to his accomplishments in terms of educational reform. In the long-term, this reform had proven to be efficient, not just from an economic point of view but also in terms of pedagogical outcomes, a legacy that can still be felt today. However, this does not mean that the chain of reforms had come to an end or that Haret's reform was embraced with open arms by everyone, in fact the opposition to this reform was often overwhelming. Maiorescu often referred to these critics and the opponents of progress many times in his reports on the state of education. P. P. Negulescu held the position as Minister of Instruction twice, first between March and December 1921, and then, again between March and June 1926. The two works elaborating on the subject of educational reform by P. P. Negulescu are not mentioned at all in any of the various works on the history of Romanian pedagogy and education, and it is only recently that Professor Gh. Al. Cazan has made reference to the relevance of this aspect of Negulescu's work. Despite this, Professor Al. Cazan does not provide an exhaustive analysis of the educational concerns and offers only a limited consideration of the work of Negulescu (Cazan, 2004). On the other hand, the two key writings on education have not been re-edited since their initial publication in 1922 (the first ed.) and 1927 (the second ed.). The 1922 edition of *Reforma Invatamantului-Proiecte de Legi* (The Reform of Education-Draft Laws) contains the scientific justification (*Expunere de motive/Exposition of reasons*) for the laws drafted for each section of the educational system, together with the draft projects for each section. In the 1927 edition, the text contains only a revision of the scientific part without any other projects, and by that time another level of reform had taken place and a *Code of Education* had been elaborated upon by a group of specialists in law under the supervision of the jurist P. P. Negulescu (1874–1946). The five law drafts were as follows: 1) Law for the organisation of administration and control of education; the discourse read by Mr. P. P. Negulescu in a Senate session on 26 May 1921 when debating the drafts law for the organisation and administration of education; 2) The law of kindergartens regarding medium and primary education, and adult education; 3) The law of secondary education; 4) The law of professional education; 5) The law of higher education (Negulescu, 1922). However, even if P. P. Negulescu had not succeeded in passing his projected reforms this does not mean his ideas would have been omitted from the general context of his work. The 1922 edition contains the following draft projects, and when analysing these two writings there are several aspects which come to the fore. First, there is the psychological point of departure which, for Negulescu, seems to be the work of the French psychologist Charles-Marie Gustave le Bon (1841–1931). Le Bon was a French polymath specialised in the fields of anthropology, psychology, physics, invention and medicine. He is renowned for his remarkable work on crowd psychology. For instance, there is his seminal work *Psychologie des Foules* (1895) (The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind, 1896) and also a *Psychologie de l'éducation* (1902) which Negulescu cited several times in his arguments. Moreover, he chose as a motto one of Gustave Le Bon's assertions: 'Le choix d'un système d'éducation a plus d'importance pour le peuple que celui de son gouvernement' ('The choice of an education system is more important to the people than to their government') (Negulescu, 1922). The second reference is to the work of Stefan Zeletin (1882–1934) which was based on an analysis of the economic situation of Romania and is presented in detail in *Burghezia romana* (The Romanian bourgeoisie) (1925) si *Neoliberalismul* (The Neoliberalism) (1927). However, Zeletin did not overlook the causes and the context of education, especially in terms of its relationship with the economy which he dealt with in *Naționalizarea scoalei* (The nationalization of school) (1926). This evidences the conflicts between the agrarian economy and the industrial economy as it emerged out of the industrial revolution, between the traditional and the modern, and between the legacy of a reality indebted to the historical past and

the desire to proceed rapidly as an advanced nation based on modern foundations. Negulescu was aware of all these contradictions and that they could not be reconciled as quickly as anyone might desire. Despite the reproaches and the frequent claim that he was taking as a reference point the educational system of Germany, the reality was a little different. First, he had already experienced the First World War and the second decade of the 20th century was not economically prosperous (as was clearly evident by 1929) and nor was the following decade. Therefore, as can be observed from studying his other magnum opus *The Destiny of Humanity*, he had in mind the psychological potential a nation is endowed with at a given moment in time, a comparative view of the educational systems of that era, and a thorough insight into the social and economic misfortunes and ravages societies had to cope with at that time. In this context, he was aware of the dangers and perils that would continue to grow if education did not remain ahead of the situation that was developing. Negulescu explains his point of departure thus: 'Naturally, political and economic issues reach great interests, vital interests of the present, while education only prepares the future. We must not forget, however, that today's future will be the present of tomorrow,—and that if the life we live at this moment is, in so many respects, so difficult and unpleasant, it is largely due to the fact that it was not prepared as it should be, when it was not only a more or less distant future' (Negulescu, 1922, pp. I–II). Even if he had not written a philosophy of education the second edition of *Reforma Invatamantului* (Reform of Education) (June 1927) also merits consideration, as here he conducts several discussions on the principles of reform. 'I said at first that the social function of education is 2-fold: first to ensure the continuity of culture, passing from generation to generation the knowledge gained on the world and life, and then contributing to its development, giving to those who pass through it the power to discover things and to increase the hereditary heritage. Unfortunately, from these two different tasks, those who have led education so far have given more importance to the former. For the reasons I have seen, their ideal was that the young they grew up to get to know as much as possible. The concern to make creative powers of themselves is much less or less preoccupied with them' (Negulescu, 1927, p. XXV). This, in fact, has been a perpetual problem not just of one system of education but of all and the challenges facing the changing paradigms of today are proof of his astute diagnosis and the dynamic solutions he proposes for the educational system.

#### **4. Culture, philosophy, humanity**

The body of work discussed in this part of the paper is sufficient for several volumes of commentaries and analysis and hermeneutic science will thrive because of this. Before considering P. Negulescu's panoramic work on philosophy, it is first instructive to consider how he explained the phenomenon of culture. The philosophy of culture has been a central preoccupation not just from an academic point of view but also in terms of practical aspects of the country following the Union of 1918. Works such as those by Negulescu or Tudor Vianu were supported by the activities of various institutions that adopted cultural issues as their main concern, as shown in *Geneza formelor culturii* (The Genesis of Cultural forms) 1984. Regarding the history of philosophy, the starting point is often considered to be the Renaissance. *The Philosophy of Renaissance* garnered a magnificent reception and these two works were subsequently re-edited during the 1980's by the Eminescu Publishing House in Bucharest (1984). But it is the *Istoria filosofiei contemporane* (The History of Contemporary Philosophy) in five volumes and *Destinul umanitatii* (The Destiny of Humanity) that constitute his climax of works. It is a pity that these two sets of works have yet to be appropriately re-edited. Despite reflecting a great vision and accomplishment, there were also several criticisms made, which may be because they serve the cause of philosophy and could not be maneuvered in one direction or another and thus, were therefore destined to become neglected. Indeed, a work of philosophy conducted for the sake of philosophy that is based on scientific principles does not take sides or can be maneuvered according to chance was a rare circumstance given the changeable context in which Negulescu lived. In an introduction to the new edition of *Geneza formelor culturii* (The Genesis of Cultural forms) (1984), the reputed critic Zigu Ornea begins by recognising the injustice to Negulescu and his work and, in a similar way to Radulescu-Motru. He attributed this to historical circumstances,

especially during the 1930s and 1940s, and to several anti-rationalist circles which considered Negulescu's work to be an expression 'almost paradigmatic of the "non-creative ego," the vanguard of encyclopedism and the critical spirit of the 'defunct' era of rationalism.' Ornea, however, affirms that: 'Negulescu is indeed one of the exponents of maiorescianism' (Ornea in Negulescu, 1984, p. 5). 'As it has been seen, Negulescu has examined some issues of physical anthropology with a given, nevertheless always and insistently stated, purpose. That is, to explain the way in which the genesis of cultural acts is made. And how is it considered that the biological factor (heredity, race, effects of racial mediation, racial purity, etc.) can be interpreted as a determinant for the creativity of peoples and individuals in these communities. Negulescu gave all the necessary attention to the relationship of anthropology (ethnology), physical—cultural anthropology' (Ornea in Negulescu, 1984, p. 33). As a philosopher, Negulescu was acutely aware that 'national specificity is not "a metaphysical entity which would overcome the limits of sensorial experience," but a complex of traits common to a people with determined functions in the genesis of spiritual deeds' (Ornea in Negulescu, 1984, p. 40). Negulescu's approach and research was already situated within the tradition of people's psychology (Volkerpsychologie) founded by Lazarus, Steinthal, Foulliee, Muller-Freienfels and, of course, W. Wundt to whom Negulescu's colleague, C. Radulescu-Motru, was a doctoral student. Indeed, several of C. Radulescu-Motru's works do not stray far from the concerns discussed in this area of research. An important conclusion drawn by Ornea was that Negulescu was aware of 'the immutability of the concept he operated with'. Above all else, Negulescu's selection of concepts proved enduring as several of the cultural factors he assumed determined differences at the level of human groups (apart from some nuanced differences evident in those in operation at UNESCO) were subsequently expressed by specialists in ethnology and anthropology (1950, 1951, 1964, 1967, 1978) (Ornea in Negulescu, 1984, p. 33). The first work with which Negulescu begins his great treatise on the history of philosophy is *Filosofia Renasterii* (Philosophy of Renaissance), fortunately re-edited in 1984 by the Eminescu Publishing House in Bucharest. It has been considered Negulescu's best work although his chief notoriety was due to the work mentioned previously and the *Destiny of Humanity* (Theodoreescu in Negulescu, 1986, p. IX). The study of Renaissance is an important step to take and a necessity in when studying the history of philosophy and, to strengthen his argument, Negulescu opines that: 'I said in the introduction of this volume that we could not explain the succession of the many systems that the history of philosophy presents to us, and especially the deeper differences of its great periods without the organic need of the human mind to seek without truth the truth and to fight, vigorously, against the disturbing fear that he has occasionally encountered, not being able to find him. In this fierce struggle against skepticism, it is summed up, I added, the odyssey of philosophical research; it gives the history of philosophy the dramatic appearance that cannot escape a penetrating eye; and its forms, so numerous and sometimes so surprising, are evidence that, in search of truth, the human mind is driven by aspirations that no success, however brilliant, can fully satisfy them, nor 'A deception, however painful, cannot completely suppress it' (Negulescu, 1986, p. 29). The book, dedicated in earnest reminiscence to his magister Maiorescu, reflects not only the depth of his insight before and after the universe of Renaissance, it also provides a special flavour of the finesse of the philosophical language that makes his writings deeply captivating. Following this opus, we then approach the magnificent set of five volumes contained in *Istoria Filosofiei Contemporane* (The History of Contemporary Philosophy). The laborious process involved, along with the organisation of the material, was related to the volume on renaissance as well as to the other set of five volumes from the *Destinul Omenirii* (The Destiny of Humanity). The History of Contemporary Philosophy is a five-volume set amounting to more than 2,500 pages, an output that would be a tremendous undertaking for a team of experts and specialists. The succession of volumes is listed as follows: volume 1, The Kantian Criticism, 538 pages, 1942; volume 2, German Idealism Post-Kantian, 516 pages, 1942; volume 3, The Reaction against Idealism and the return to Kant, 590 pages, 1943; volume 4, The Philosophy of Good Sense, Folk Philosophy, Spiritualism and Positivism, to the first half of 19th century, 602 pages; volume 5, The Second Form of the Scottish School, The Rebirth of Empiricism, Idealist reaction, English Positivism, The Evolution of Empiricism, 675 pages, 1943. In its *Foreword*, the author confesses that it is the accomplishment of a dream that took about 30 years to fulfil

(Negulescu, 1941, vol. 1, p. 3). Mentioning the French title of *The Story of Philosophy. The Lives and Opinions of the Great Philosophers* (1926) he also cites Will Durant, who argues strongly for the use of philosophy. For example, he states that 'THERE IS A PLEASURE in philosophy, and a lure even in the mirages of metaphysics, which every student feels until the coarse necessities of physical existence drag him from the heights of thought into the mart of economic strife and gain' (Durant, 1953, p. 1). Some of the most extensive critiques of this work are concerned with its quantity, historicism and encyclopaedism. However, despite these quantitative forms of critique, none of the critics adopt an analytical and comparative view of the work in relation to similar works in other civilisations or appreciate Negulescu's role as founder from this perspective. In terms of the theory of culture common to the period, culture was favoured over civilisation as it was perceived to be the result of autochthonous efforts while civilisation was the result of external influences over autochthon products. This work by Negulescu, along with his subsequent other works, are the product of this cultural perspective. Despite balance in its treatment of philosophers—Kant is dealt with in a whole volume, Hegel in over 300 pages—the merit of the work lies in its daring practical aspect, the quality of philosophical language and the analytical method employed. An appropriate response to his critics may be taken from the biblical parable of the sinner woman, write a similar work and then, throw stones at the author. Although he did not live to see the entire set of works by Will and Ariel Durant, Negulescu's works are a worthy example of this type of writing. For instance, the title *Destinul Omenirii—The Destiny of Humanity* is a little unnerving, even more given the fact it was written when war was enveloping the world. The fifth volume was published many decades later, and the style and magnitude of the work was in line with the previously mentioned history of philosophy. His realistic analysis and critical approach towards societies and social systems, not to mention political systems, was a warning to his age that is still relevant today. All critics approved of Negulescu's anti-fascist standpoint. From an educational point of view, the inaccuracies between the economic and social systems are the cause of various national and global crises. The individual quest for a solution in such situations, and there solve with which the individual searches in higher education, are discussed in depth when dealing with intellectual unemployment. Negulescu's diagnosis and vision regarding this problem is much more realistic, in depth and extensive than the critique addressed to this aspect of his work by Stefan Zeletin. This is one of the issues societies have not been sufficiently able to deal with when various types of change occur, mainly because of the implementation of new types of technologies. This work therefore exceeds its immediate philosophical or cultural designation. In Negulescu's own words: 'Nothing is more likely to characterise the troubled times we are going through, than what has been called, not without justice, the war of ideologies. The old unity of the soul, which once again ensured the inner peace of the States, and in the difficult circumstances of the war, did not appear to have remained untouched anywhere. The most different, most contradictory ideas, with regard to the forms of life, individual and collective, political and economic, national and social, moral and religious, are hostile and violent, not only in the solitary environments of the people more reflexive, but also in the most enterprising public manifestations'. [...] 'In this dark, cruel little world, in which people with an inexplicable rage seem more willing to strike than to understand and to hurry to destroy rather than to build, those who think they could bring a little light, those who feel obliged to facilitate a more righteous appreciation of things and thus contribute to a relative quench of the spirits, they can not easily decide to interfere. The risk is not to be despised, and the prospect of success remains, in the midst of public grievance, more than problematic' (Negulescu, 1939, vol. 1, p. 5). Thus, it is a work where sociology, anthropology, economics, cultural studies, statistics and many other fields blend in a realistic way in relation to dramatic situations where, at time or another, humanity has slipped. Negulescu offers no solution regarding the destiny of humanity other than pointing to an awareness and a dynamic practice, *hic and nunc*, along with a consideration of how changes in the life of humanity occur. His main concern and deepest thoughts were oriented towards the younger generation: 'I would be especially happy if our youth, which I think, not only with care, but also with the desire to be useful, could come up with a helping hand that they find, find something quicker, an answer, something more thorough. No matter how hurrying it sometimes, she cannot sometimes delay the question before the question, over a possible circumstance, to which

Ausoniu gave the antiquity its classic form: *Quod vitae sectabor iter?*' (Negulescu, 1939, vol. 1, p. 11). Among the many lectures Negulescu gave, several were published many years later, including the following category of lectures that were the first of their type to be included in the curriculum of philosophy schools in Romania: volume I, *The problem of knowledge* (Negulescu, 1969); volume II which publishes the fifth volume of *The Destiny of Humanity* (Negulescu, 1971); volume III, *The History of Modern Philosophy and The Ontological problem* (Negulescu, 1972); and volume IV, *The Cosmological problem* (Negulescu, 1977). These are among the few works that approach his thought from the standpoint of answering the question, '*What is philosophy for Negulescu?*', although a tributary of the socialist period, Petre Dumitrescu, recognises that: '*The author of a wide-ranging work among the intellectuals and especially of the young university students, personality with general democratic convictions—enrolled in the perimeter of bourgeois democracy—P. P. Negulescu was a self-conscious, original and deeply concerned thinker who submitted the results of the sciences to a critical processing process in order to deduce from them new, especially comprehensive ideas*' (Dumitrescu, 1975, p. 164). This is an assertion that shows P. P. Negulescu has passed the test of his age, and indeed of all ages.

## 5. On the hermeneutic nature of Negulescu's work

The way in which Negulescu's work is related to present generations remains an open question. A complete collection of his work has not yet been made available nor has a comprehensive biography. This contrasts with C. Radulescu-Motru, whose life has been magnificently recounted in a biographical work of large amplitude by Professor C. Schifirnet. However, some of the most prolific literary critics, philosophers of culture and philosophy professors have nevertheless passed opinion and judgement upon his work, mainly in volumes that chronologically address various aspects of philosophy and culture. Such is the situation regarding opinions on Negulescu's first set of aesthetic writings which came under the scrutiny of the reputed literary critic Eugen Lovinescu (1881–1943) in his critical work on the posterity of Titu Maiorescu (Lovinescu, 1943) where he recognised the potential of Negulescu: '*He was not a critic, nor would he try to become*' (Lovinescu, 1943, p. 74). Negulescu did not become the literary critic one might have expected given that he emerged under the auspices of Maiorescu and literary criticism was just one of the many activities Maiorescu engaged in. Eugen Lovinescu is therefore essentially correct in stating that Negulescu became a philosopher. For example, the volume *Istoria Gindirii Sociale si Filozofice din Romania* (The history of social thought and philosophy in Romania) that emerged in 1964, where materialism was still a reference point, illustrates his naturalistic approach with its Darwinian origins, his idealist approach to arts and aesthetics as revealed in his writings on these themes (Polemics, 1895), his leading motive '*art for art*', and his stance against fascism (Gogoneata, 1964, pp. 438–439). These were followed by introductory studies to the four volumes edited between 1969 and 1977 which published, for the first time, material from his various lectures and introductory studies to *The Genesis of Cultural forms* in 1984 by Zigu Ornea and *The Philosophy of Renaissance* in 1986 by Razvan Theodorescu. These critics of his studies are dedicated towards integrating Negulescu's work into the large corpus of Romanian philosophical work and cultural production and, judging from their critical apparatus, this is a treasure trove of work and it may be some time before it will be superseded by a critical edition of complete works. These studies investigate and approach all aspects of his work including its origin, the universe of ideas and the editorial apparatus. In the period following 1989, changes in attention towards his work were raised by Professor Gh. Al. Cazan in a set of volumes that addressed the history of Romanian philosophy from ancient times to the present day. This reflects the desire to cover every aspect and it might be that, in this approach, Negulescu's encyclopedic work has served as an example for Professor Cazan, who starts from times immemorial with Zamolxis then travels on to Titu Maiorescu and beyond (Lovinescu, with his critical posterity of Maiorescu, might have been proud) to Negulescu, Radulescu-Motru and Petrovici. He then continued with Mircea Florian and Nae Ionescu and we can only hope that the saga of Romanian philosophy will continue as the author has expressed his intention to carry out similar work on Blaga and others. For instance, Gh. Al. Cazan draws, for the



first time, attention to the relevance of the educational aspects of Negulescu's work, including his discussion on the problem of quantity versus quality. Gh. Al. Cazan underlines firmly his opinion that: 'P. P. Negulescu introduced a new approach in our philosophy of three key problems of the ancient, modern and some of the contemporary philosophies; he seems to have excelled in the lectures on the above problems through the competent, programmatic use of the theories and results of the field of natural sciences, capable of defying or confirming ontological, cosmological and epistemological hypotheses or visions. A sort of scientific goal leads some to see no authentic philosophical value where they are in function as arguments, theories and scientific facts. From the perspective of an alleged metaphysical availability, arising from the seductive narrative about one or other of the phenomena of the natural world or of the historical world, see how they take the arrows directed blindly against the applied philosophies and to the areas using experience and experiment, the laboratory, the verification of theories with appropriate tools, etc' (Cazan, 2004, pp. 202–203). Here we see synthesised many of the criticisms and perils Negulescu was working amongst and had to face. He not only confronted them but has demonstrated their effects upon humanity throughout history and across time. In *Neconvențional, despre filosofia romaneasca* (Unconventional, on the Romanian philosophy) Gheorghe Vladutescu appreciates, amongst all the other writings, *The Philosophy of Reinassance* and is one of the first critics to express his regret that this work was not translated at the time of its publication as it might have stood as a reference point in the international body of work on the subject. On the overall critique of Negulescu's work, Gheorghe Vladutescu has realised an appraisal worthy of the philosophy of symbolic forms (Vladutescu, 2002, pp. 31–39).

## 6. New perspectives

In *O istorie a filosofiei romanesti-in relatia ei cu literatura* (A History of Romanian Philosophy—in its relation to Literature) Ion Ianosi parsimoniously remarks upon Negulescu's firm effort 'to challenge the speculative metaphysics and its irrational orientation from positivist and evolutionist scientific positions that at the time generated little criticism. In the interwar period he was challenged and even mocked for his alleged prolixity'. Although expressing reservations regarding his originality, Ianosi recognises the merits of the 'publishing-strategy which Negulescu followed tenaciously' (Ianosi, 1996, p. 131). More than just a 'maximalist of information' with the cultivation of his readers in mind, Negulescu manifested concerns that were caused by the 'ages' he passed through, hence his expressed '... need to evaluate the contemporary crisis in its psychological, ethical, social and political aspects, the new forms of life and the old directions of human activity, the problem of progress in the light of the new theories and positivist acts, the subjective aspect of progress, the totalitarian jams' (Ianosi, 1996, p. 131). To synthesise the entire context, Gh. Al. Cazan asserts that, 'In his (P. P. Negulescu's) courses, the anti-humanist, antidemocratic theories, the fundamental forms of totalitarianism, the pessimistic visions of the destiny of humanity, the racist conceptions, the mysticism with its different variants, so that they were a strict and necessary contemporaneity, like his Professor Titu Maiorescu, a well-educated education. From his place, P. P. Negulescu was seen as a vigorous, lucid consciousness, worried by the grim prospects due to the rise of irrationalism and totalitarianism, often in conjunction' (Cazan, 2002, p. 204). In an attempt to identify *Cum este posibilă filosofia în estul Europei* Stefan Afloroaie he assigns the triad of Radulescu-Motru, Negulescu and Florian 'to academic and scholastic effects' (Afloroaie, 1997, p. 128). Bradatan recognizes in Negulescu a bearer of the message passed on by Maiorescu, namely that: 'only a solid cultural philosophical prepares the ground on which it is possible to develop a philosophical creation' (Bradatan, 2000, p. 36). This was an aspect also revealed by Angela Botez in *Un secol de Filosofie Romaneasca* (A Century of Romanian Philosophy): 'Energy mutation for Radulescu—Motru, ontological mutation for L. Blaga and D. D. Rosca, a mental mutation for M. Ralea, the cultural creation was imagined by the Romanian thinkers as opening new branches in the directions of the general and periphrastic progress understood as the critical point in which a good quality, the spiritual one, appears in the Universe. The premises that have prepared the leap produced by the occurrence of the human creator in the Universe are of course many and only their inclusion in a holistic-complementary vision can be

significant. This fact is consciously realised by the model P. P. Negulescu proposed for spiritual progress' (Botez, 2005, p. 211). In terms of what the future may hold, we can only hope for the increased dissemination of his work within and beyond our culture as the nature of our destiny and indeed that of humanity may lie in his books.

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