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Abstract

The project aims to investigate by means of conceptual and intellectual history some of the various ways in which the significations and the intellectual and political meanings of a problematic cohabitation appear in the Romanian political thought. Namely, the questions raised concern two apparently incompatible concepts, revolution and representation/legitimacy of the political power through the individual expression of citizenship or through the collective expression of the general will. For the 1848 generation, the main difficulty stays in a certain confusion between the heritage of "the ancient" political philosophy, transmitted through an entire generation nourished at the beginning of the century with Aristotle and his classification of political regimes and with a whole range of seventeenth century contractualist philosophers. This background didn't meet a coherent project of rational management of politics and production of the future as the post revolutionary nineteenth century European thought had intended to. In the intellectual and political Romanian debate, the idea of predestination in the "national revolution" encountered a fertile ground and faced apperceptions - methodological or philosophical - and a welcoming "field of experience" with an intellectual background in need of hasted "westernisation". The result was a mixture between several political models, combined with the revolutionary discourse.

Keywords: democracy, political power, Romanian political thought, intellectual history

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1. Introduction

1.1 The importance of the problem

The recent scholarship in the field of the *origins of modern institutions and nation-state* agrees upon placing at the origins of those processes two basic pillars: the Revolution (in its multiple incarnations beginning with the French Revolution and pursuing with the theories on revolution during the whole 19th century) and the model of technical democratisation, by implementing representation techniques as a warranty of keeping the democratic institutions in a certain balance (R. Koselleck, 1990; M. Gauchet, 2005; P. Manent, 2008; P. Rosanvallon, 2011). The European trauma caused by the scar of the French revolution pushes political thinkers as well as political actors towards reformulating the basic principles of organising the state and of conceiving the institutional framework. Benjamin Constant, one of the first political thinkers of the nineteenth century who proposed such a dramatic change in contemplating democracy, was in fact among those who shaped up the political programme of the Modern Europe. He completed and amended the anterior model of the early-modern political thought of the seventeenth century for the communal production, validation and dissemination of knowledge and political power as based on the contract. He also rejected the rousseauist model by arguing that the Model of Ancient Liberty was no longer compatible with the Modern type of society in which democracy as an individual expression has gained its clear place in the political theory. (P. Rosanvallon, 1990, 2000; T. Ball, J. Farr and R. L. Hanson, 1995; M. Gauchet, 1997; Q. Skinner and Bo Strath, 2003; P. Manent, 2007).

1.2 The difficult part of the problem

If the origins of the Romanians and the nature of their political freedom were already a "certainty" for Valachian, Moldavian and Transylvanian intellectuals, especially in the second half of the 18th century, the actual unsolved problem of the political thought in the following century is the meaning of Government, Governance, in their conceptual relationship to Revolution and Representation (J. Bartelson, 1995). The Romanian intellectual elite of the early nineteenth century thinks of modernity not only in terms of institution building, but also in terms of language building (D. Barbu, 2006). Therefore, "representation" would refer not only to the act of being represented -- in the Parliament, in the central administration, in the communes etc. -- but also to the act of representing the institutions by expressing them in a clearer and appropriate way. In fact, this battle with the speech and the process of finding a word-equivalent for the political framework - or simply expressing the idea of "political state" of the Romanian language - is in someway an indicator, for the majority of the intellectual debates of the time, to the direction to follow.

This discourse includes both principles of a democratic potentiality and the roots of its own dissolution. The authors at this time are placed in a double reference to the elements still present of the Enlightenment, inherited from the 1830 generation, on the one hand, and with the general questions of the democratisation process in nineteenth century. This double reference, between Ancient and Modern, creates a paradoxical and problematic coexistence of two opposite political cultures (Zeev Sternhell, 2010).

On the one hand, one can find the democratic universalism of Tocqueville, within the "constraints" of the formative and "strange liberalism" (R. Boesche, 1993) shaped by the author of the *Democracy in America* and rephrased by the *doctrinaires*, like Guizot.

On the other hand, there are the specificities of the "national spirit", put in eighteenth century Vico's perspective (*Nouva Scienzia*, 1725) and used as a guideline by the French symbolist historians like Michelet and Quinet in the 19th century. The fact that those two were a current source of inspiration for the Romanian authors of that time was in fact at the origins of a doctrine which operates with a collective vision of the nationhood, regarded as a spirit in its whole, and not as a distinct society of individuals led to formal

and objective institutions and cautious in keeping alive the fundamental distinction between private and public space.

1.3 The limits of the current approaches in the context of the state of the art in the field.

The classical problem of the origins, formation and functioning of the institutional and conceptual building of the modernisation and democratisation process in the Romanian political thought of the 19th century has been restated recently, through a number of studies that have explored the multiple and intricate communitarian aspects of nineteenth century projects for retracing Statehood and Nation building in the Romanian countries.

In the last 20 years, under the impact of regime changes in post communist Romania, a wide range of authors ((D. Barbu, 2006; T. Nicoară, 2002; I. Stanomir, 2004; A. F. Platon, 2005; C. Preda, 2011) has begun to question the official historiographic *Vulgata*. They have emphasized the historiographical and methodological gap in reading and interpreting the process of modernisation in the early-modern Romania.

A dramatic process of revaluation, started more than twenty years ago, has changed considerably the field of early modern studies and the iconic image of the actors involved especially in the 1848 revolution.

2. Research Objectives

The main objective of this project is to investigate a few key case studies (the 1848 Romanian authors like Nicolae Bălcescu, Simeon Bărnuțiu, C. A. Rosetti, Mihail Kogălniceanu, and others) in order to see some of the various ways in which appear the significations and the intellectual and political meanings of the problematic cohabitation appear in the political discourse between two, apparently, incompatible concepts: revolution and representation/legitimacy of the political power.

The working hypothesis to be tested concerns the 1848 generation, the most responsible for opening the process of modernisation. The main difficulty lays in a certain confusion between the heritage of "the ancient" political philosophy, transmitted through an entire generation "nourished", at the beginning of the century, with Aristotle's texts and his classification of political regimes, and also with a whole range of works belonging to the seventeenth century "contractualist" philosophers. This background didn't meet a coherent project of rational management of politics and production of the future as the post revolutionary nineteenth century thought had intended to promote (R. Koselleck, 1997).

Starting from all this, the project raises several research questions:

Q1. What kind of 1848 Revolution the authors have meant back than? Are we dealing with "the inaugural explosion of the social issue"? (Pierre Manent, 2010). Or it could be another' 48, mostly a process of coordinating the Romanian political thought to the broad European topics that mobilised most of the intellectual energies of that generation?

Q2. Which is the democratic vocation, in the European order, of the generation of 1848 in the Romanian Principalities? Because, apart from the social question and the agrarian problem, this generation shares also another challenging set of problems, generated by what Skinner calls a "Vision of method" -- Ancient or Modern?

Q3. Which direction took the state building discourse: the romantic, symbolist history or the institutionalised political concepts and principles?

2.   Originality and Innovation

The elements of originality and innovation that the implementation of the objectives brought to the field, related to the state of the art in the field and to the previous projects developed by the project leader.

O1. The research project is bringing a new approach of the methodology in the field, namely the intellectual history and the conceptual history as a mean of better describing the complexity and the sinuosity of the questions.

O2. The proposal is a way of rediscovering an important collection of texts, correspondence and newspaper articles published in the time of the 1848 generation from a fresh angle. The 1848-generation was treated, at least during the communist regime, as a platform for an evolutionist vision of a society drawn irresistibly to the communist society. Therefore, the main trend, with very respectable exceptions, was to fill in with ideological criteria the lack of scientific documentation.

O3. The choice of the primary sources as well as the secondary bibliography are the result of a creative approach, due to the challenge of the sources themselves. The majority of the authors in that period are not concerned by publishing treatises and scientific volumes, and the researcher has to create his/her own corpus of primary sources, interrogating and crossing references. That transforms the making off of the basic primary sources in a innovative process by itself.

3.   The Potential Impact of the Project in the Broader Scientific Field

At an international level, the project puts into discussion a direction of studies and brings up a series of less known case studies. At a national level, our project contains a series of elements of novelty: it starts from revisiting, in a new approach, primary texts and from press articles, correspondence and manuscripts and it has a strong interdisciplinary character. Moreover, although it is a historical research, it tries to propose a series of questions and issues in the current public debate as an indicator of the political culture. We will thus try to refute the thesis according to which Eastern Europe had not a "modern era", the thesis of the intellectual and scientific isolation of the Romanian countries and that of a parallel evolution of those regions in respect to the western countries.

Another current issue our project raises is showing in which way nowadays trends and even misunderstandings and ideological deficiencies or gaps within the construction of the present Romanian political regime and of the political actors (especially political parties) are rooted back into the misunderstandings of the Romanian 19th century political thought, misunderstandings regarding the fundamental relationship between the representation as an individual expression of the vote (and not the collective expression of the *volonté générale*) and political regime, political legitimacy etc.

4.   Methodology

The project has an important interdisciplinary character. Our methodological option is the conceptual history, from which we will first trace the adventures of the concept in the Romanian political thought. Our research takes as its starting point the interdependence of modernization and representation as a way of legitimizing political power, as perceived starting from the beginning of the 19th century. This process will be studied from the revolutionary perspective, in a double sense:

(a) The heritage of the French revolution, the "mourning intellectual process" operated afterwards and the "anti-Lumières" (Zeev Sternhell, 2010);

(b) The revolutionary concept and its embodiments in 1848 events; analysed from the perspective of intellectual history at the crossroads of several related disciplines.

Methodologically, we will direct this project on two research guidelines:

One of them will investigate the structures and the means of functioning of the various intellectual discourses implied in those generations of authors. It is in this perspective that we propose to make a *carthographie discursive* of contexts of the democracy, its uses, its intellectual references and meanings attached to them. Alongside this methodological proposal, the project is also integrating the conceptual history developed by Pierre Rosanvallon, whose very thorough analysis and comprehensive syntheses are essential for the French intellectual context in a period of high influence for the Romanian nineteenth century. The project focus in that respect on three stages of the democratic political culture: the society of equals -- individual voters, civic culture based on representation -- the forms of institutionalised democracy and the establishment of popular sovereignty.

The second methodological framework is the history of political thought developed by Quentin Skinner (2002), which also provided valuable direction for analysing the texts and their intellectual, cultural and historical background, because of its fertile potential, especially for the period of interest in the Romanian political thought. Skinner proposes a hermeneutics of political texts, which must always consider the words in themselves, but also the implicit suggestions in the texts. To extrapolate Kosseleck's terminology, we must read not only in the text but also through the text, relying on these two criteria for evaluating the relationship of words to historical time: the field of experience and the expectancy horizon (*horizon d'attente*), the time in question of the author. This type of problematic cohabitation is related also to the problem of political legitimacy in the political culture of the XIX Romanian political model.

In order to round off our methodological references, we try to put at contribution James Farr's methodology (Farr, 1985, 1988), which traces the conceptual history with by explaining the meaning and references of the concept analyzed and by reporting it to similar and related concepts. The contextualization of the concept should be made either in terms of players, either in terms of institutions involved in a period of time or in a certain context.

5.   Describing the Potential Risks and the Approaches for Mitigating these Risks

The main difficulty in confronting the above described topics lays in the multiple ambiguities that dominate the evolution of democracy in the Romanian political thought, alongside with the modernization process in the region. Another difficulty rise of the nature of sources themselves: there is little interest and preoccupation for the gathering of a structured political science approach in the writings of XIX century Romanian authors. At the dawn of the modern Romanian political thinking, an acute problem consists in the means of acquisition and construction of democratic representation, as a road to modernity and democracy, and the Romanian 1848-generation is the first one to be part of the "westernisation" in Romanian political thought. The first choice was France and subsequently, Germany. Therefore, the shaping of some main political concepts follows a dichotomy that was somehow inspired by the French intellectual framework. The Romanian thinkers found themselves in the position of combining and inventing a methodology of their own, by the multiple ways of the acculturation process, starting from the French *acquis* but struggling also with an important backwardness in the separation between Ancient and Modern.

Therefore, the research needs to focus not only on the concept itself, but also on the actual discovering of the mixed sources: literary texts, pamphlets, historical analysis and academic conferences and courses, newspapers etc. In other words, the ambiguities within the concept of democracy and of the democratic political culture, related to the modernization, are the starting point of close-related text analysis read and interpreted in the political, historical and intellectual context.

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