

## THE CULTURAL PROFILE OF '27 GENERATION

**Anca Enache**  
**PhD. Student, „Ovidius” University of Constanța**

*Abstract:*The present work aims to highlight the impact that the '27 Generation had in the interwar period on Romanian culture and society. Starting from the great objectives regarding the Romanian culture and wishing to make it exist on a universal scale, the members of '27 Generation have made their contribution by their creation in different fields of culture. Unfortunately, not all members of the generation are known to the general public.

*Keywords:*Mircea Eliade, the young generation, Spiritual itinerary, Romanian culture.

Mircea Eliade is a leading representative of '27 Generation<sup>1</sup>, being recognized as the leader of this generation. Constantin Papanace in *Destinul unei generații* (The Destiny of a Generation), gives us a definition of the generation: "The generation is defined by assuming or referring to some essential values for a certain people. For Romanians, these values are God and the Romanian nation. God means the Holy Trinity while the nation is made up of the totality of the people – alive or passed away among the righteous - who live in a Romanian manner, live having as fundamental benchmarks the faith and tradition of the Romanian people"<sup>2</sup>

This *young generation* also included: Anton Holban, Emil Cioran, Mihail Sebastian, Eugen Ionescu, Petre Țuțea, Mircea Vulcănescu, Constantin Noica, but also other representative names, whose mentors were Vasile Pârvan and Nae Ionescu.

Nae Ionescu, the mentor of the majority of young people with cultural vocation from the interwar period, in one of his courses, proposed "the destiny community within the Orthodox nation as the path towards individual salvation, a fact achievable through self-giving, love of others and of God"<sup>3</sup>.

During his stay in Geneva, Mircea Eliade wrote a series of leaflets, for the magazine *Cuvântul*, entitled *Itinerariu spiritual (Spiritual Itinerary)*, in which he set out to examine all the crises and temptations he had gone through.

This *Itinerary* of the "young generation", that is, of those who had been children or adolescents during the war and were now, in 1927, between 20 and 25 years old<sup>4</sup>, was meant to show the differences between the younger generation and those who preceded it. These

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<sup>1</sup> Named thus by Dan C. Mihăilescu, considering two aspects: the appearance in *Cuvântul* magazine (September 7<sup>th</sup> -November 16<sup>th</sup>,1927) of the articles entitled *Itinerariu spiritual (Spiritual Itinerary)*, Mircea Eliade, considered to be the *manifest of the young generation*, and the second aspect is represented by the appearance in Iasi, on June 24, 1927, of the Legion of Archangel Michael, by means of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Ion Moța, Ilie Gârneață, Corneliu Georgescu and Radu Mironovici.

<sup>2</sup>Constantin Papanace, *Destinul unei generații (Destiny of a Generation)*, SCARA Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002, p.6.

<sup>3</sup>Nae Ionescu *Curs de metafizică (Course on Metaphysics)*, edition curated, notes and indices by Marin Diaconu and Dora Mezdrea, Bucharest, "Roza vânturilor" Publishing House, 2005, pp.398-419.

<sup>4</sup>Mircea Eliade, *Itinerariu spiritual (Spiritual Itinerary)*: "The young generation", published in "Cuvântul în exil", no. 40-41 from September-October1965, p. 1, reproduced in the volume *Profetism românesc (Romanian Prophecy)*, vol. I, "Roza Vânturilor" Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990, p. 10.

were due primarily to the fact that "the forefathers had fulfilled their historical mission: the unification of nation"<sup>5</sup>.

The *Itinerary* strives to capture the spiritual anxieties and synthesis of the generation. Much of the elite consciousnesses of youth turn the religious experience into a protest, as "the return to the Church is redemptive and necessary"<sup>6</sup>, lingering on the scientific method, on dilettantism, culture, literature, art, not wishing the mere anatomy of a bunch of wishes and restlessness, but to relate them to various spiritual positions, a relation that always leads to criticism.

Mircea Eliade, believes that in the spirit of the youngest of contemporaries, the stance against dilettantism and laboratory positivism is alive, ardent and sincere. Attitude to which the impulse towards synthesis corresponds, towards that personal creation reached by means of the harmonious exercise of all the soul functions, since the synthesis is "the central focus of the contemporary consciousness. Towards it we tend, not by storing knowledge, because a human life is not sufficient in order to honestly gather the material of a synthesis, but through soul experiences, which decant the content of consciousness and make use of it. The experiences make those two miracles which are called *personality and culture*. Both are balance of soul forces, harmonious crystallization of values elaborated after the exercise of a bunch of functions"<sup>7</sup>.

The new generation the exponent of which was Eliade, was dominated by the Papinian inner turmoil, by the modern anti-dilettantism and by the love for the passionate experience of adolescence which, alone, is about to create the spiritual balance of the later individual.

The first program-articles of the "young generation" are *Itinerariu spiritual* (Spiritual Itinerary) of 1927, written by Mircea Eliade and *Manifestul Crinului Alb* (White Lily Manifesto) (1928), written by Sorin Pavel, Ion Nestor and Petre Marcu-Balș [Pandrea]<sup>8</sup>.

By means of the two manifests, "the generation announced itself as having apolitical, autochthonous, anti-French, orthodox, anti-forty-eightier, anti-Junimea intentions, being at the same time in an open combat with all the preceding generations. The violence with which they attacked their forerunners of the immediately preceding generation, made Mihail Iloviți flatter it by calling it "the generation that kills its idols", while Eugen Ionescu called it

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p.11.

<sup>6</sup> Mircea Eliade considers that "not all the mystics of the generation have joined the Church, the Orthodoxy. The causes can be of two kinds: many are still at the beginning of the religious life, thus retaining reminiscences of rationalism expressed in the form of a sentimental individualism. There are also consciousnesses which organically cannot accept Orthodoxy either due to the historical-philosophical culture, or to the inadequacies of the religious experience, or to the innate Protestant structure." (Mircea Eliade, *Cuvântul (The Word)*, year III, no. 915, November 3, 1927, p.1, reproduced in *Profetism românesc*, vol. I, *op.cit.*, p.55.)

<sup>7</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Cuvântul (The Word)*, year III, nr. 928, November 16, 1927, p.1 reproduced in *Atitudini și polemici în presa literară interbelică (Attitudes and polemics in the inter-war literary press)*, *op.cit.*, 1984, p. 353 and in *Profetism românesc (Romanian Prophecy)*, vol I, *op.cit.*, p.60.

<sup>8</sup> In 1927 three young people, Sorin Pavel, Ion Nistor and Petre Marcu- Balș [Pandrea], publish in *Gândirea* a voluble and vehement manifesto, named of the *White Lily*, defending «the young Romanian generation - the most beautiful, the proudest and the newest, tormented by problems» against the elders. As a motto, Vasile Pârvan's observation was that «in general, the Romanian life is devoid of thoughts». The protesters brought a true Renaissance program, recommending the most opposite aims: «the variety and the passion, the generous pessimism and the fanaticism of the idea, the return to the Past in order to discover the ancient roots and to solve the misalignment, the creative revolt and the abnegation», all «tragic gifts of restless youth», history, autochthony and faith, fact and ideal. This would be called *completectudinsim*. *Compectudinism* did not succeed, because the initiators did not give the example of the great deeds. The only interesting element in this manifesto is that, just as in 1840, 1860, 1867, 1900, at every stage of political history, the young Romanian suffers from the lack of prestige of the national culture outside, and he undertakes to bring it to the top". (George Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române, de la origini până în prezent (The history of Romanian literature, from its origins to the present)*, Editura Fundația Regală Pentru Literatură Și Artă, Bucharest, 1941, p.887).

"paricide [...] The obsession of the generation, at launch, was to remove the Romanian culture from "provincialism" and make it exist on a universal scale"<sup>9</sup>.

The "young generation" brought through its orientations and manifestations, both on the stage of cultural and literary life, a new breath, detaching itself from the old generation and fulfilling a new wish, that of the Romanians' union under the sign of the same spirituality, affirming this national spirituality as a manner of specific valorization of the Romanian culture.

In his journalistic writings and not only, Mircea Eliade placed culture in the foreground, emphasizing its importance and value in the evolution stages of a people. He believes that a people can reach a high level of spiritual development only by supporting the culture, thus becoming a messenger of the dissemination of ideas regarding the problems of the Romanian culture. Eliade proves to be attached to Romania, a fact that strengthens the specificity of the people, assigning them a spiritual importance in the universal culture.

Mircea Eliade creates a new type of dilettantism, which will outline the contour of the "young generation" and which designates a certain aspect of its consciousness.

According to Mircea Eliade, the criticism of dilettantism must be understood as relating to a spiritual opposition, which is largely foreign to the 1927 generation. He specifies the sphere of the notion of "dilettante", showing what "dilettantism is not": "A dilettante is not the paradoxical-superficial, therefore undisciplined, salon *scholar*; he is not an *art lover*, because authentic dilettantism implies sensitivity and artistic culture, but the central focus remains the synthesis obsession, the dilettante is not the polygraph encyclopaedist of all times"<sup>10</sup>.

"Along with the «skeptical, easy, sufficient» dilettantes<sup>11</sup>, the constructive dilettantes could be found. This can be considered a new dilettantism. The representative feature is the necessity of the universal synthesis, of the rounding, of the systematics, of the enactment. The horizon of fecund dilettantism could be called «philosophical», in contrast to the other modern dilettantism, good for the lazy minds and transparent consciences. [...] Philosophical dilettantism is very close, almost to the point of merging, to the so-called "philosophy of history or culture"<sup>12</sup> [...] The dilettantes have always sympathized history and understood it. They looked for laws, causes, constructive elements and their dynamism. They saw above the matter, concepts: *race*, *class*, *culture*, etc.<sup>13</sup>

The '27 Generation gave the Romanian culture many important names and works. The youthful effervescence of its members led to the emergence of an impressive number of newspapers and magazines. Feeling that they had something to say to the contemporaries, some members of the generation laid the foundations of the *Criterion Association* [...] The *Criterion* meant exceeding the university moment in culture, the lowering of the intellectual

<sup>9</sup> Marta Petreu, *De la Junimea la Noica. Studii de cultură românească (From Junimea to Noica. Studies of Romanian Culture)*, POLIROM Publishing House, Bucharest, 2011 p. 254.

<sup>10</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Profetism românesc (Romanian Prophecy)*, vol. I, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>11</sup> As Mircea Eliade observes: "The dilettante approaches reality with a closed eye to irony, with smiles. He does not understand the appreciation we have to show to our functions of knowledge and to known objects. Dilettantism is never serious. It considers seriousness as foolishness, ignorance, or pedanterie. It is true that a certain seriousness betrays all these sins. But at the same time, the creation of works or values - implies sober seriousness. You cannot create something in which you don't completely believe. But, as usual, the dilettante mistakes these two seriousnesses for one another, hence the prudence of the dilettante. He does not engage in affirmations or negations. He makes up the great class of skeptical, sufficient, superficial dilettantism". Intelligences that cannot penetrate to the core of mysteries but they are content to describe them as they perceive them on the surface" (Mircea Eliade, "Profetism românesc (Romanian Prophecy)", vol. I, *op.cit.*, 1990, p. 24).

<sup>12</sup> "Most prominent dilettantes - Montesquieu, Vico, Gobineau, Marx, Chamberlain, Spengler - have worked in this field (Mircea Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 24).

<sup>13</sup> Mircea Eliade, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

in the arena, direct contact with the public, especially with the youth"<sup>14</sup>.

Eliade states that he is part of the most fortunate generation that Romania's history has known: "Never before, nor after our generation, Romania has ever known the freedom, abundance and availability that we, those who have written between 1925-1940 have enjoyed [...] We were the first Romanians who could do anything other than national history, Romanian philology and cultural prophetism – without having the feeling that we betrayed the cause of the nation. We had a freedom that had been conquered with a lot of blood and a lot of renunciations, and I do not know if we were always aware of the immense sacrifices made by our forerunners so that we could go to India or the United States, so that we could discuss Freud or André Gide at the Carol Foundation"<sup>15</sup>.

The author considers that "Nicolae Iorga's generation had been confiscated by the national and cultural prophetism that had to prepare the war for the unification of the nation. The front generation had been sacrificed so that we find a great, free and rich Romania"<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Mihaela Gligor, *Anii tulburi: 1932-1938 (Troubled Years)*, foreword by Liviu Antonesei, EuroPress Group Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, pp.55-56.

<sup>15</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Caiete de dor*, year III, no. 7, 1953, p.11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

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