

Political Power and the Sociology School of Bucharest

In Romania sociology was purged from the public space and social sciences in 1948, when it disappeared from the University curricula as a discipline. The political power considered sociology a bourgeois science and, consequently, a danger to the new communist regime. After 1949, the Stalinist ideologists blamed the Sociology School of Bucharest and its creator, Dimitrie Gusti, that they ignored the rural conflicts and the class struggle of the peasants. The Stalinists claimed that Dimitrie Gusti and his students studied the class conflict from a bourgeois perspective.

In the early 1960s, the communist political power reevaluated 'the great scientific patrimony of the Romanian people' and of the fundamental Romanian personalities. Subsequently, in 1965 Dimitrie Gusti was recognized the (back then) merit to have tried to draw Romania closer to the Soviet Union in a time when he was a state minister in the National Rural Party.

New meanings were attributed to the Sociology School of Bucharest during the 1980s, when the researchers emphasized the 'specific nature of the Romanian sociological concepts'. On the one hand, the Sociology School of Bucharest was accused to have rejected the Marxist-Leninist revolution, but on the other hand it was praised for its 'nationalist tools of sociological analysis'. The communist ideologists acknowledged Gusti's merit that as a state minister he configured a viable public education system and resuscitated people's interest for the rural world and for the 'Romanian national culture'.

After 1989 the historians of Romanian sociology stigmatized the censorship from the '60s and '80s. From then on, Dimitrie Gusti was considered a 'great cultural personality' and the previous approaches were rejected. The sociologists who wrote about Dimitrie Gusti after 1990 claimed that Gusti ought to be treated as a 'great sociologist, founder of the Sociology School, creator of a sociology system recognized by the worldwide scientific community'.

Today, one of the reproaches the historians make towards the communist censors is that they prohibited the so-called "Sociology of the Nation and all the topics connected to the Nationalist Idea". These researchers believe that the Sociology of the Nation must be re-valued because "the scientist has to serve the nation" and because the monograph project "was not an utopia and is still valid today... all those who are faithful to eternal Romania have to organize their activity for the purpose of this ideology"[1]

Our hypothesis shall not legitimate itself neither by rehabilitating Gusti, nor by mending the scientific injustice caused to Professor Dimitrie Gusti. The hereby study recommends that Gusti ought to be reviewed from an angle which excludes the political judgments. The hypothesis claims that each political context determines different theoretical interpretations of one issue, which leads to different types of sociological investigations. For this reason, our intention is to abandon the “debts” that the scientists would have towards Gusti and to leave to the past the “moral obligations” of rehabilitating him as a ‘great cultural personality’.

We question the possibility to approach Gusti’s political and sociological system within the Max Weber’s paradigm that one can research without making political evaluations.

Our study regards the Sociology School of Bucharest as part of the inter-war Romanian civil society. We will examine the Sociology Seminar as a laboratory in which experts and clerks were trained to serve the 1918 state. From the perspective of Gusti’s sociological system, politics means having specialists and technical experts that are educated in the Sociology School of Bucharest: in the Sociology Seminar, the Science and Social Reform Association and the Romanian Social Institute.

What thinkers, sociologists, psychologists or political philosophers influenced Dimitrie Gusti in his process of building his sociological system? To what degree did Gusti’s political conception identify with the evolutions of the European political doctrines?

Gusti’s education cannot be separated of the social-historical status at the end of the 19th century. The Prussian model of social policy imposed by Wilhelm I Chancellor, Otto von Bismark, the concept of welfare state in Germany (where a Sozialstaat tradition was implemented) might have influenced Gusti when he elaborated his political concept [2].

In Germany, the social state policies [3] functioned since 1870-1880, enforced by the conservatory politician Bismark, who was fighting socialism in order to preserve monarchy. By these means, the Iron Chancellor was trying to gain the masses support for the monarchy and to diminish the sympathy for the republican ideas. Similarly, in the 1930s Gusti attempted to apply his agrarian policies favourable to the peasants. Gusti’s school has too served the monarchy interests, without fighting the socialist ascension, but opposing the extreme right wing peril of the legionary Fascism.

Dimitrie Gusti interacted with the German model of social state during Wilhelm II period. Influenced by the German culture, the young student from Iasi city was admitted in 1897 at the University of Berlin

(firstly, at the Faculty of Philosophy and secondly, in 1905, when he returned to study Sociology, Law and Political economy). He stayed at a boarding school and benefited of the social protection provided to the German protestant students [4].

Ever since the beginning of his studies, Gusti's sociological concept has been influenced by the German school of thinking and, especially, Wundt's psychology. Gusti worked at Wundt's Institute for three years [5].

The rural revolts at the beginning of the 20th century Russia and the rural rebellion in Moldova in 1907 are very likely to have determined Gusti to create his political system as an intervention of the state in order to help certain marginalized social categories (the peasants constituted the majority of the Romanian population).

The resemblance of the Romanian social structures with the ones in czarist Russia might have brought Gusti closer to the people's doctrine of the narodnicist Vasili Pavlov Vorontzov (an hypothesis not verified yet), and then in the 1930s to the agrarian policies promoted by the National Peasant Party.

While the peasants' uprising was happening in 1910, Gusti was named Head of the Sociology, Ethics and Politics Department at the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy, University of Iasi. In his 'Introduction to the Course of History of Greek Philosophy, Ethics and Sociology', he presented his first sketch of his social sciences system, which was based on his understanding of the political reform. That is what he called "the Science of the Nation".

Our entire work will be concentrated in a Sociological Seminar, connected to the likewise scientific research institutions from abroad. A sociology seminar as the one I attended during my studies in Germany, where the professor and the students are discussing both issues regarding the special sciences and subjects of high social impact. Let us hope that the future Seminars and Associations shall fundamentally change the awfully superficial manner in which the Romanian social problems are regarded. It is time that the study of sociological matters is transferred from the Ministries and Parliament Committees to the Universities. While we fight for the recognition of our nation, your work and science will bring a high confirmation, because you are the ethical hope of our people and you become personalities and create culture [6].

This was the first reform scheme for the state and nation. This is the point of view from which we are to explore the relationship and the influence that Gusti intellectuals exercised upon the monarchical regime and vice-versa. Gusti's concept, Sociology – Politics – Ethics, was exposed for the first time in 1910 in 'Introduction to the Course of History of Greek Philosophy, Etics and Sociology'

Politics and Ethics do not treat, as sociology does, social world as it is; Politics and Ethics deal with the social world as it should be. Sociology, Politics and Ethics form a rigorously logical series; each of the sciences is a logic consequence the others. Sociology is a logic consequence of the social sciences, Politics and Ethics are a logic consequence of Sociology [7].

1910 is the year when Gusti introduces his method according to which the social sciences, sociology, politics and ethics all form both a coherent unitary scientific system, and also the general concept about organizing a Seminar of Sociology and its role among the university studies. Our paper started with the question: What determined Gusti to understand science as a Messiah, as a Saviour of the undeveloped rural Romanian society? How did Gusti's way of understanding social sciences influence his relationship with the political power?

For Gusti, the Romanian society could have been improved by the means of what he called social personalities: technocrats dealing with social matters. These specialists were going to be educated at the Seminar of Sociology, Association for Science and Social Reform and the Romanian Social Institute.

Empirical research resulted in data that would serve the politicians and political power in implementing the public policies. The point was that the politicians should not resort to improvised information anymore; instead they should use scientific solutions. Only by the know-how of the technocrats could the reform be applied. Sociological knowledge was meant to sustain political action.

The Romanian historians of sociological ideas pointed out the Gusti's vision was inspired by Auguste Comte [8]. Too little has been said about the influence that Saint-Simon [9] had upon Gusti.

Gusti studied in Paris and the influence of the French utopist Saint-Simon's writings upon his sociology system is obvious. In „Communism, socialism, anarchism, syndicalism, bolshevism" (published in 1920), Gusti confessed that [10] :

Saint Simon's proposals for reforming the Law system are the fundament of creating of the Association for Study and Social Reform and deserve our entire attention. According to Saint Simon,

Politics must obey Science; Politics has to become an examination science, a science of production. While the old system was characterized by people who ruled other people by controlling and exploiting them, the new political system is based only on the administration of issues with the assistance of Science and nothing else. Saint Simon contemplates a way of doing politics where the political powers should be replaced by professional competences and the authority upon people should be replaced by the administration of issues. In order to better organize the human society Saint Simon wanted a new economical order and a new moral order. This means he propagated a new religion which he displayed in Nouveau Crestianism.

In fact, for Saint-Simon the industrial scientific system was nothing but the Christianity itself understood as a Political Constitution. Nouveau Crestianism circulated little before the count Saint Simon died. This book describes the final moment of the three successive stages of the evolution of this political and scientific thought. In *Lettres d'un Habitant de Geneve* he explains the matter of Science, in *Catechisme des Industrielles* Saint-Simon debates upon the subject of Industry and in *Nouveau Crestianism* he exhausts the topic of renovating the Religion, Science and Industry. These are the three principles of a new saint-simonian society.

Our conviction [11] is that Saint-Simon's triad metamorphosed into Gusti's sociological system as follows: Science became Sociology, Industry became Politics and Religion became Ethics. Viewed as a transitive logics relationship, the influence of Comte upon Gusti was an indirect one, originating in Saint-Simon's triad.

This is how Gusti became preoccupied to modernize Romanian society with the help of social sciences, throughout political means and in harmony with an ethical ideal. Sociologic investigation was the first step in the transformation of Romania.

The monographs of Gusti's School of Sociology were confident that the democratization of science would lead to Romania's modernization and to the improvement of the Romanians' life status. Gusti tried to reform the public education system and to transfer the expert appraisal from the University Departments to Seminars, from Seminars to the Scientific Associations, then into scientific periodicals and all the way to the villages, throughout the monographs' cultural work. [12] Gusti's main purpose was to develop new social structures in Romania for training cultural personalities, specialists and technocrats, who were able to modernize an agrarian society.

Whereas the ideas regarding the Sociologic Seminar and the Social Reform Associations are borrowed from Germany, it is surprising that Gusti's triad (Sociology, Politics, Ethics) is actually born from the reformist political way of thinking of the French utopian socialist Saint Simon.

As he got back from Germany, Gusti's political ambition translated into The Science of the Nation. This meant using sociology for modernizing the Romanian village and the social status of the peasants. Sociologic research had to gather information for the politicians, in order that the politicians would not resort to improvised data, but would use scientific solutions. According to Gusti's political considerations, only the scientific vision could save Romania.

In 1918, when he was named the Dean of the Literature and Letters Faculty, Gusti established the Association for Study and Social Reform in Romania, in Iasi city – a debate club who reunited intellectuals and experts interested in the institutional development of Romania. This Association set the bases of the Romanian Social Institute, where a series of conferences about the Romanian socio-political status were organized during the 1920s. Gusti had “the skill to attract at these conferences of the Social Institute the future elite politicians, bureaucrats and state ministers”, such as Mihail Manoilescu [13], who became Foreign Affairs Minister. The participants at the Romanian Social Institute conferences were ideologically eclectic and all of them were able to deal with social issues and to improve such issues through reforms.

The Association for Study and Social Reform organized a Service of Propaganda for achieving the social reform and the social education of the masses through conferences, courses, gatherings and through the publications that will compose the propaganda and social education library.

Propaganda was used since the first monographic researches, through publishing the photos took by the student teams at the countryside. It gained size by opening museums in the villages and reached its peak when Gusti took the mission to be General Commissary of the Romanian Pavilions at the international fairs in France, USA and others [14]. We are obliged to underline the significance of the oral history papers [15], that – unlike the nationalist-communist approaches of Romanian historians of sociologic ideas – show that the role of propaganda was in the 1920s and in the first half of the 1930s to persuade King Carol II that it was necessary for him to donate money for social research. The sociologist Zoltan Rostas points out that, after 1935, Gusti's propaganda was aiming to attract the young people (the elites) and the peasants (the masses) on King Carol's side and to make them opponents of the Legionary Movement, which was however very popular [16].

In the 1920s Gusti was making propaganda for rural research, while in the 1930s he was making propaganda for Carol, praising the monarchy. Whereas Gusti used monarchy and the political elite for financing his social research, Carol and the supporters of the monarchy used Gusti's students' teams for their propaganda and for annihilating their opponents, who were joining the Legionary Movement.

In the 1920s, Gusti did not belong to any political party [17], but he served in public functions. In 1922, he was the director of the Cultural House of People for a brief period. In 1930 he was named the President of the Romanian Radio Society.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Dimitrie Gusti got closer to the National Peasant Party. He was a friend of Virgil Madgearu, a agrarian economist who was for a while the secretary of the Romanian Social Institute [18]. At the seminar of Bücher [19], Gusti met Madgearu when the latter was taking his PhD in Economy in Leipzig. The philosopher Mircea Vulcanescu recalled [20] that the agrarian "Madgearu was promoting the doctrines of the Russian narodnicists, according to which the undeveloped agrarian countries might jump over the bourgeois phase".

In the 1930s, Dimitrie Gusti's political action leaned on politicians like Virgil Madgearud, theoretician of the al National Peasant Party, and benefited of a "parental" care from King Carol II. Due to the fact that Gusti's school benefited of the financial support of the king, since 1930, Carol II became the Honorific President of the Romanian Social Institute The 1930s bring the rising of Fascism and accentuate the democracy crisis. On June 8th 1930, the Parliament allowed Carol II to return to his throne, although he had abandoned his title a few times before. Until 1938, Carol II took more and more authoritarian measures, ending up with a personal royal dictatorship.

First, Carol II tried to manipulate the legionaries and use them as a personal political weapon. That turned out to be an unsuccessful strategy, so after a few years the king got into an open conflict with the leaders of the Legionary Movement and ordered the Police to eliminate them. In 1932-1933, Gusti was named Education, Cults and Arts Minister in the National Peasants Party Government. In 1934 he became the general manager of the Royal Cultural Foundation 'Prince Carol'; it was the year when the students' research teams from the Royal Cultural Foundation merged with the monograph students' teams from the Sociology School of Bucharest.

Nationalism, understood as the legionary movement that was fighting foreigners (especially the Jews) turns into social-cultural work for the monograph's teams. Gusti's interdisciplinary teams were making propaganda for monarchy by organizing the life of peasants in a more efficient way. Volunteer work

at the countryside was meant to counterattack the Legionary propaganda. In 1936, after two years of activity the Royal Cultural Foundation 'Prince Carol' mutates from a scientific organization into a political cultural movement. Gusti's 1920s propaganda for social research transformed in the 1930s into Carol II's propaganda that was encouraging people to support monarchy.

In 1938, Gusti was named the president of Social Service and fulfilled the task of a state minister. By the Social Service Law from 1938, promulgated by King Carol II, all Romanian students were obliged to work in the villages in order that the peasants' life status improves. After Romania entered World War II and the Social Service was abolished, Gusti did not have ministerial positions anymore.

During the functioning of the Social Service, thousands of Romanian students were organized in camps in the summertime. The camps were situated in the villages, where the students were helping peasants to improve their everyday life. All these activities were made out of King Carol II orders and implemented by Gusti's teams with the purpose to provide a good image for the king in rural areas. The Law of the Social Service introduced uniforms, matinee square formations, raising the flag, singing patriotic songs for monarchy, marching in parades – these were all part of the cultural policy of the Carol II dictatorship. No student could have obtained his degree unless he had completed six months of voluntary work in the rural area, helping the villagers. We can assume that Gusti did not have this kind of cultural policy in mind at the time when he had thought his triad of Sociology, Politics and Ethics.

In October 1939, king Carol II suspended the Social Services. The village social work started in the 1920s during the Sociological Seminar, it extended through the teams of the Royal Cultural Foundation 'Prince Carol', and became compulsory for all Romanian students by the means of the Social Service Law.

Some researchers claimed that the Social Service was a social engineering. Others, among which professor Zoltan Rostas, interpret it as a legal institution, controlled by the state. By implementing the village work, Gusti not only wanted to mobilize the peasants, but also wished to determine students to support the monarchy and to reject the extremist Legionary Movement.

The Social Service constituted a temporary success, because the extremist Legionaries managed to infiltrate into the students' teams and to contaminate Gusti's cultural-political actions. The fact is that through his social work in the villages, Gusti did not intend to mobilize only the peasants, but desired to draw the students' elite on Carol II's side.

It was a political competition against the Legionary Movement. In the end, Gusti's political project did not succeed.

Footnotes:

1. Ilie Badescu, "Performata europeana a lui Dimitrie Gusti: Sociologia natiunii", [The european performance of Dimitrie Gusti: Sociology of the Nation], Introduction to Gusti, Dimitrie, "Sociologia natiunii si a razboiului", [Sociology of the Nation and of the War], Floarea albastra Publishing House, 1995, Bucharest, VIII-IX.

2. In Bismark's Germany, the lecturer's chair socialists introduced the term wofahrstaat (social state), mocking the political economy professors with socialist affinities. The notion Sozialstaat was used to illustrate the reforms that Chancellor Bismarck implemented in 1880, such as the social insurances for industrial workers.

3. The social insurances system establishes the relationship between the state and the various parts of society, bringing advantages both for the state functionality, and for the citizens. The social insurances state pursuits social solidarity and the equalization of the incomes by applying taxes on the primary incomes (wage, profit, interest) and redistributing the budget to the tax payers (pensions, unemployment, allowances, free health services).

4. Ovidiu Badina and Octavian Neamtu, "Dimitrie Gusti, Viata si Personalitate", [Dimitrie Gusti, Life and Character], Tineretului Publishing House, (1967), 25-30.

5. Dimitrie Gusti, „Opere”, [Works], vol. I, Academiei RSR Publishing House, Bucharest, (1968), 19.

6. Dimitrie Gusti, "Introducerea la cursul de istorie a filosofiei grecesti, etica si sociologie", [Introduction to the Course of History of Greek Philosophy, Ethics and Sociology] in „Works”, 216-223.

7. Gusti, „Works”, 216-223.

8. Auguste Comte introduced the term „Sociology” as a corollary of all the other sciences. He was born in 1798 and died in 1857. He graduated a technical faculty and was the secretary of Saint-Simon. After worshipping him for two years, Comte ends up despising Saint Simon and confessing in a letter that Simon is “an individual from whom one cannot learn anything”. At the age of 24, Comte wrote “A plan of scientific works, necessary for organizing the society”. Later on, he developed these ideas in the 6 volumes of “Course of positive philosophy” and in the 4 volumes of “A system of positive politics”. Comte invented the

notion of "Sociology" when using it in "Cours de philosophie positive". The optimism of his positivism is concentrated in the belief that science will, at a certain time, be able to solve all the problems of the human society. Towards the end of his life, Comte intended to create a new religion: the positive religion. In this new religion, Humanity replaces God. Comte's thinking scheme (extremely similar to the one Saint-Simone proposed) is presented as follows: the industrialists and the bankers (who are truly competent) substitute aristocracy, science and the religion of Humanity (according to which the spiritual power is destined to the ones who know the secret of the social order: scientists, sociologists) substitutes the Catholic religion, and the republic replaces monarchy. This triad pattern resembles the one suggested by Saint-Simon.

9. Saint Simon founded the utopist socialism and praised the industrialism. He is a noble who lived between 1760-1825 and fought in the American Independence War and in the French Republican Revolution. In Nouveau Christianism, he speaks of the rebirth of the Christian religion. His main thesis is that the government of people should be replaced with the administration of issues: the scientific, rational management of the industry made by technocrats is the base of the modern society.

10. Dimitrie Gusti, "Comunism, socialism, anarchism, sindicalism, bolsevism", [Communism, socialism, anarchism, syndicalism, bolshevism], Scientific Publishing House, (1920), 53.

11. I hereby launch my work hypothesis that I will verify in the next research for my PhD thesis at the Faculty of Sociology, University of Bucharest. The paper is named "A political history of the Sociological School of Bucharest" and is coordinated by professor Zoltan Rostas.

12. Badina and Neamtu, "Dimitrie Gusti, Life and Character", 76.

13. Mihail Manoilescu, "Memorii", [Memoires], Encyclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, (1993), 49-50.

14. Zoltan Rostas, „O istorie orala a Scolii Sociologice de la Bucuresti”, [An oral history of the Sociology School of Bucharest], Printech Publishing House, Bucharest, (2001), 73-74.

15. See Zoltan Rostas, „O istorie orala a Scolii de Sociologie de la Bucuresti”, [An oral history of the Sociology School of Bucharest], Printech Publishing House, Bucharest, (2001) and also Zoltan Rostas, "Atelierul gustian. O abordare organizationala", [Gusti's Workshop. An organizational approach], Tritonic Publishing House, Bucharest, (2005).

16. Rostas, „An oral history of the Sociology School of Bucharest”, 89.

17. Manoilescu, „Memoires”, 50.

18. The narodnicist doctrine of the journalist and political thinker named Constantin Stere was preaching for the raise of the masses of peasants through a state politics. Perhaps this was the reason for which Gusti's mentality was closer to the National Peasants Party. As the villagers represented the majority of the population, the narodnicists stated that the peasants' life could be better if the state helped the village households to develop by expanding the crafts and the small industries.

19. Badina and Neamtu „Dimitrie Gusti, Life and Character”, 76.

20. Mircea Vulcanescu, “Nae Ionescu. Asa cum l-am cunoscut”, [Nae Ionescu as I knew him], Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, (1992), 53.

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