

# THE GUSTI SCHOOL, A PRESSING ISSUE OF TODAY. FROM THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SCHOOL TO THE MATURING OF GREATER ROMANIA AND THEN ON TO OUR ALMOST-HELPLESS CIRCUMSTANCES OF TODAY<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *The Gusti School represents not only the culmination but especially the tool to reproduce the statehood and maturity of the Romanian society after the Great Union. The contribution of the Gusti School to Romanian civilization and universal science goes beyond Dimitrie Gusti. We will see that these issues are strikingly current.*

**Key words:** *Gusti School; Romanian sociology; Social Service.*

*'However, the ideal is not always clearly seen and the nations often strive for foreign ideals, incompatible with their character. Thorough research of the national ideal is thus necessary; it is an issue that stands as a nation's moral philosophy.'* (Gusti, 1937: 59)

## 1. What does the Gusti School and Dimitrie Gusti mean for Romanian civilisation and universal culture?

The Gusti School represents not only the culmination but especially the tool to reproduce the statehood and maturity of the Romanian society after the Great Union. The contribution of the Gusti School to Romanian civilization and universal science goes beyond Dimitrie Gusti. We will see that these issues are *strikingly current*.

The contribution of Dimitrie Gusti to the modernisation of the society, to the twinning and maturing of the Romanian state inside Greater Romania is systematised by Mircea Vulcănescu (1936)<sup>2</sup> as follows:

'By summing up..., we end up attributing the following achievements to him:

1. He created an original philosophical system designed to understand the society and the fields that deal with it...;
2. He set up an original research method of social units, both sympathetic and objective, erudite and concrete, which he applied himself in the study of Romanian society;
3. He organised social researches outside the university, conducting the political education of an entire generation of Romanian state leaders through the Social Institute and whetting the appetite of the community as far as social problems were concerned;
4. He taught these leaders to base their reforms on previous knowledge of the reality that they sought to reform; he taught the public to socially adhere based on reason;

<sup>1</sup> The present paper was published in Romanian under pseudonym with the title: „Școala Gusti, o actualitate prezentă. De la contribuțiile Școlii la maturizarea României Mari la precaritatea contemporană”, *Revista română de sociologie*, 1, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Mircea Vulcănescu (1936), study published in *Arhiva pentru știința și reforma socială*, year XIV, *Omagiu profesorului D. Gusti. XXV de ani de învățământ universitar (1910-1935)*, volume II, Bucharest: Institutul Social Român Publishing House, 1198-1287, in Vulcănescu, Mircea, *Școala sociologică a lui Dimitrie Gusti*, edited by Marin Diaconu, Bucharest: Eminescu Publishing House, 1998, pp.107-108. The page editing and numbering are ours.

5. He trained – by courses, conferences, seminars, and campaigns of works – the scientific researchers of social life and the specialists in various branches of social sciences, able to also understand the entirety of the phenomena that included their field;
6. He got these researchers familiarised with the general conditions of scientific work: the bibliography, the correct use of the material, the dignified and objective nature of discussions;
7. He vastly, tirelessly, and enthusiastically engaged in social reform, designed to organise Romanian cultural life, through the cooperation of the specialists and by stimulating the activity of the value-creating individuals. This action had as a goal organising the higher culture, the people's culture, and the cooperation between the elites and the people;
8. Consequently, as a teacher and a dean, he organised university life, setting up numerous student orientation and assistance institutions;
9. As an Academician, a Technical Advisor, and a Minister of Military Training, he organised higher culture [as a Minister of Education, 1932] (the Romanian Academy, the Cultural Senate, public libraries), by enabling international intellectual co-operation (intellectual exchanges with foreign sociological associations and international social foundations, international conferences, congresses);
10. As a director of Casa Culturii Poporului [The House of People's Culture] and then of Fundația Culturală 'Principele Carol' ['Principele Carol' Cultural Foundation], he organised people's culture;
11. He also organised co-operation, as the president of the National Office, and Radiodifuziunea [The Radio Broadcasting Institution], as the president of the society, setting up Universitatea Radio [The Radio University];
12. He was the organiser and leader of monographic research campaigns conducted by the student teams of Fundația Regală 'Principele Carol' ['Principele Carol' Royal Foundation] and 'Sociologie românească' magazine; he fought for the actual knowledge of Romanian realities and strived especially to get intellectuals interested in village life and culturally boost villages through the work of cultural elites;
13. Finally, he culturally lobbied for Romania in the country and abroad (the exhibitions from Barcelona, Dresden, and Paris; the Village Museum).'

All these were shortly followed by the Law of Social Service (1938)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Social Service was set up by the King in 1938 and is the outcome of Gustian paradigm. The idea appeared in the letters exchanged between Anton Golopenția, away with a scholarship in Germany, and the Professor, being stated in a letter with programmatic value addressed by Golopenția to Gusti on 14.10.1935 and further refined by Gusti. 'I would like to make a series of proposals concerning this beginning [namely the activity of Professor Gusti at the Royal Foundations], which is as dear to me as it is to you and to all those lucky to have been able to help you. This time around, it deals more with the educating functions of the young University students that the Royal Teams include. I believe that this function is as important as that of educating the people. Two things should be done to this end: the gradual extension of the activity of the *royal teams*, the gradual generalisation of taking part in them and *obtaining the obligation to take part in them* during at least one summer to be awarded an academic title, once there are *sufficient possibilities to enforce it*. Such a plan would surely be according to royal intentions; it is also included on the confuse wish list of the young. ... Universities would be of course happy to neutralise the exclusively-political action of student centres and political parties by recognising such an institution. After physical education entered Universities, the *route of such an education of the spirit of responsibility towards the people* is open. The beginning must be carved now and the capacity must be created – p. 279 to put to work 5000-6000 students during one summer; the university senates will easily declare it mandatory." Anton Golopenția, *Ceasul misiunilor reale*, pp. 278-279.

Last but not least, we should say that the monographic researches were part of the extended education system of the university students included in the Royal Teams. The effort to educate the young was another strategic direction to apply the Gustian conception. Not all the activities of the Royal Teams led to monographies, but all their actions considered *educating the young by boosting the village*. In 1939, Golopenția wrote<sup>1</sup>: 'The student-formed Royal Teams had already undertaken, until 1939, 220 work campaigns in 150 villages, with over 1600 students from all the special faculties and schools, supported by 950 doctors, agriculturists, foresters, and other technicians. The results of their work include 310 000 medical examinations, 15000 medical analyses, 12000 injections, 70000 veterinary examinations, 80000 vaccinations, 210000 injections in the case of domestic animals, creating 150 nursery gardens, procuring 54 wagons of selected seeds, setting up 5000 systematic beehives, building 600 garbage platforms, conducting 250 agricultural courses and 26000 cooking and tailoring courses, 200 constructions (community centres, houses, churches), repairing and constructing 600 bridges and 1200 wells, organising 3000 sewing bees. The work camps for community benefits included 30000 premilitaries from high schools and higher schools and over 400000 rural premilitaries in two work campaigns. The great diversity of the works for which they were required and which they performed, starting from fortifications, may be known from the annual accounts of the General Inspector for 1938 and 1939.

## 2. Today, on Gustian sociology. What is not right?

- Inter-war Romanian sociology is not an ontological joke, a certain exercise of the history of mentalities, a lost note of a post-modern complaisant assessment, detached and sovereignly sliced off from the acute reality represented by Gustian sociology.
- Gustian sociology has been for intolerably long the victim of a superficial approach, cast in the oblivion of minor concerns, of shortened thoughts and acronyms, as if the huge understanding effort wisped by it would be decoupled by the *feeling of us*, being rather assessed from the perspective of the members' humours than from that of the great significances that gave life to it and shattered it largely among the martyrs of the Communist gutter.
- Related to Gustian sociology – umbilically connected to the great issues –, the desert of decoupling social science from it arises on today's horizon.
- The first mission of Gustian sociology was the *soulful union of Romania*, Greater Romania. This necessity of the soulful union took shape in the sociology's mission to know, preserve, and develop the village. This focus point is less and less strongly represented today.
- Sociology is in itself a benchmark of the relation between good and evil in the society. Only a truly free society *feels* the need to know itself as a collective entity, with a national destiny. We are facing a double rupture today: between sociology and society, between sociology and the state. The society was largely alphabetised, in the *sillage* of the global trend that weakens reading, reducing it to the poor cost-benefit ratio, or, more prosaically, reading has become the victim of our daily lives. At its turn, the state empirically governs, most of the institutions renouncing their scientific memories. Consequently, Romanian society suffers the 'strictness' of a

<sup>1</sup> Study signed by Golopenția and named *Creșterea nouă a tineretului*, 1940, published in Golopenția, *Opere*, I, p.217.

double crisis: loss of literacy and denationalisation – of a soul depatterning on the individual and institutional Nostratic sublayer.

### 3. What is strikingly current?

On a shallow approach of the current character of the issue, strikingly current in Gustian sociology, the following aspects surface:

- Sociological knowledge can only be... patriotic – is the message of the deciphered Gustian sociological system; patriotism is, at its turn, the guarantee of *responsible* action: '<Accurately knowing reality – writes D. Gusti – is the only way to include and stimulate patriotism once again, by fathoming it, by awakening the feeling of social responsibility and developing social consciousness, consequently shaping a clear political view for what is impossible and for what stands as a political need, which must be fulfilled.> (D. Gusti, *Asociația pentru știința și reforma socială*, reproduced in *Sociologia militans*, p.22).' Patriotism is the condition of accurately knowing reality; it is not an 'ideological option'. Patriotism is the condition of emotional closeness, of bringing reality into consciousness *while caring for the other*.
- The scientific necessity to set up the governing act is today more 'empirical' than ever.
- The village. The state. The justice. The full awareness. The village is the justification of the intellectuals found in the society; it is the starting point to the state, thought Gusti. Left aside nowadays, the village remains the most important non-person, perhaps the most tragic absence from our current problems. The state – as a culmination of the ethical system and the knowledge, is to be theoretically rethought in this corner of the world and to be *regionally* interpreted. The full Gustian knowledge of social reality – multi- and transdisciplinary – is also a challenge in the context of thinking 'by projects', but without any 'Country projects'.
- The necessity to reinstate sociology in country and world matters – Noica shows that this word – 'reason' – connects thoughts and actions so concretely that one can walk, hold what they are talking about or scatter it, the reason being the base, the core, the stronger point, the sake of being what one is saying and thinking. Gusti showed that only by turning the real needs of the country into problems can we justify our existence; we will be 'cultural personalities' with a *reason* as people of a society. The country will then enjoy true social justice, governance based on knowledge.
- The necessity of full thinking. After deciding to re-embrace the sociological thinking of the country in a European and global context, we will ask ourselves *how* this way of thinking *is* possible. The incredibly simple yet complex answer of Dimitrie Gusti was the *law of parallelism* between circumstances and occurrences, possibilities and facts, a phrase of a few lines describing everything-that-is and everything-that-could-be, through which institutions can be rebuilt and *accounted for* in relation to the people financing them.
- The necessity to educate masses and propagate Romanianhood into the country and outside its borders. For Dimitrie Gusti, this function was or would be performed predominantly by the community centres in villages, the Atlas and the Encyclopaedia of Romania, the Seminar and the Law of the Social Service in the case of students, the international fairs – as cultural diplomacy means abroad. One cannot justly govern an audience lacking the consciousness of its dignity – thought Dimitrie Gusti.

- The creation of an 'intelligent aristocracy' (Vulcănescu on Gusti). The aristocracy of the intelligence is double-goaled: 'developing the self-consciousness of the society and assimilating the social experiences outside'. The moment that we are going through deals with the existence of an aristocracy of the intelligence, which, however, despises its society. Left without guidance, this behaviourally shatters into poor-developed country consumerism and dramatically scatters around the world. It is not a surprise that another quite current element of the Gustian system – namely educating masses – is more current than ever.

#### **4. Embranchment of the Gustian system**

The Gusti school was not a closed structure. It was a system encouraging side thinking, albeit not always comfortable with itself during this process. Thus, the Gustian thinking system did not mean only the Professor's way of thinking. The Gustian system generated true paradigms, argumentative and methodological constellations with their autonomy, stemming from the Gustian law of parallelism between circumstances and occurrences, from the central concept of social unity, of the central role played by the family and the state action, by the personality filtered through consciousness. We will consider a few directions, like those illustrated by Henri Stahl, Ernest Bernea, Golopenția, and Vulcănescu. Namely, the study of village communities (Stahl), the study of the functions of space and time in the village world and its culture (Bernea), the issue-centered summary monography, the geopolitics and the modern theory of administration (Golopenția), the Romanian dimension of existence and the economic management techniques under geopolitical pressure (Vulcănescu) are some of the most brilliant subparadigmatic directions of the Gusti School.

#### **5. What can be done?**

The Gusti School is a thinking system and an attitude. It is a heroic manner to create science by a non-ideologised reference to reality. Consequently, the Gustian system was and is still open towards any theoretical contribution able to support the soulful unification of Greater Romania. Of course, some of its developments have struggled with tensions – the tensions that any development experiences. Let us not confuse personal frictions – in the plan of organisation sociology – and the openness towards an ontological type of 'full' of the Gustian system.

Until social science becomes interesting for the authorities again, it can only strive for its mature reconsideration, beyond the ludic issues and the relational spectacular elements taught in school. The generalised resumption of Romanian sociology classes within the Romanian university system could even be the solution in line with the conservation instinct of current Romanian sociology.

The awarding of Gusti grants and scholarships by the Academy to sociologists interested in a systematic approach and in the full understanding of the society, especially of the village, faced (not only) with the geopolitics of Romanian communities, could be another solution to bring greatness to the name of the grand scholar.

In general, until national interest re-enters the applied institutional reflex, there is nothing left for us to do but look for the preservation of the progress of the sociological knowledge, centred on acknowledging the great issues of the society.

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