

Transcending pain: A glimpse into the life of philosopher Ioan Miclea

Lino BIANCO

University of Malta, Msida, Malta

University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy, Sofia, Bulgaria

Abstract: *Hardly known in his native country, Ioan Miclea was a Romanian Neo-Thomistic philosopher who flourished in the mid-twentieth century. A prolific writer on matters relating to philosophy, theology and literary criticism, he was respected by the leading scholars of the time, notably Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson and Réginald Garrigou-Lagrance. Despite the many manuscripts destroyed and/or confiscated by the Securitate, a significant number surfaced after 1989 and were subsequently published. Grounded in a biographical approach, namely the testimony of Miclea's granddaughter expressed in an interview with the author via email, this article outlines the life of a man whose ultimate loyalty was the Greek Catholic Church.*

Keywords: *Ioan Miclea, Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrance, Vasile Căseanu, Neo-Thomism, Neo-Thomistic philosophy.*

Introduction

Daniel Callus (1888–1965), a Maltese Dominican scholar at the University of Oxford, once stated:

“The philosopher is a man of firm principles, who always acts with deliberation, and would not leave unchallenged anything of which he did not approve. But as a true philosopher, he would search for the cause, and assign the reason for all his actions”.¹

Callus was a historian and philosopher who contributed to twentieth-century Neo-Scholastic thought, principally to the Aristotelico-Thomistic tradition. The opening statement by this intellectual, an acquaintance of the French scholars Réginald Garrigou-Lagrance (1877-1964), Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), and Étienne Gilson (1884-1978), is insightful and applicable to the Greek-Catholic Romanian philosopher Ioan Miclea (1902-1982) (Fig. 1).² Although little known in cultural and academic circles in his native country, he was respected in the intellectual circles of Neo-Thomist philosophy in the West, notably by Garrigou-Lagrance, Maritain and Gilson. In his time, he was the leading scholar in Neo-Thomist philosophy in Romania. Maritain, who corresponded with him, once exclaimed that Miclea was “the greatest Romanian thinker” of his period. On the golden jubilee of his ordination, Miclea received an “apostolic blessing” from His Holiness Pope John Paul II, the only distinction which he received in his lifetime. His Holiness, now St John Paul II, was a former doctoral student of Garrigou-Lagrance at the Pontificum Institutum Internationale Angelicum, the future Pontifical University of Saint

¹ Cited in M. F. Montebello, *Daniel Callus - Historian & Philosopher*, Malta, University of Malta, 1994, p. xi.

²The Romanian Greek Catholic Church is referred to as the Uniate Church. For the pejorative reading of the term ‘Uniate’, cf. R. F. Taft, “Reflections on ‘Uniatism’ in the light of some recent books”, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 65 (1999), no. 1, p. 153-184.

“Transcending pain: A glimpse into the life of philosopher Ioan Miclea”, *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 141-161.

Thomas Aquinas, the Angelicum, Rome. His Holiness was also a former student of Callus’s contemporary, the Maltese Dominican intellectual Paul Natal Zammit (1904-1995).³

The popular claim that Miclea passed away unrecognised is not justified. His funeral service, officiated by Metropolitan Alexandru Todea together with 101 priests, was tolerated by the Securitate, the political police of the Socialist Republic of Romania.⁴ It is true that Miclea was appreciated outside Romania, but his memory and intellectual heritage is now gaining momentum in his homeland, especially within the Greek Catholic Church, and in his hometown of Racova. The aim of this article is to look at Miclea’s private life using an interview via email that the author held with his granddaughter, Delia Oprea, who was asked to share some insights about her grandfather at his funeral. Her communication is reproduced as an appendix at the end of this article.⁵ This biographical approach is a valid contribution to research.

The article also draws on Ruxandra Cesereanu’s book on the persecution of and resistance by her grandfather, Vasile Cesereanu, a Greek Catholic priest who flourished and then resisted clandestinely during the same period.⁶ This article intends to go beyond the personal, subjective narrative of the interview to gain a new perspective on Miclea and his intellectual standing. A brief biography and his main intellectual legacy are outlined.

The man and his standing

Miclea flourished in the mid-twentieth century. Born to a peasant family in Racova commune, Satu-Mare county, he had seven siblings.⁷ After graduating from high school in Blaj,⁸ he proceeded to the Theology Academy,

³ L. Bianco, “Daniel Callus, a Maltese Dominican scholar at Oxford”, in *Journal of Maltese History*, 6 (2019/2020), no. 1, p. 90-100.

⁴ Delia Oprea, personal communication.

⁵ Email dated 31 August 2020, 18:44 hrs.

⁶ R. Cesereanu, *Persecuție și rezistență: Vasile Cesereanu – Un preot greco-catolic în Dosarele de urmărire de către Securitate* (Persecution and resistance: Vasile Cesereanu. A Greek Catholic priest in the files of Securitate), Târgu Lăpuș, Galaxia Gutenberg, 2017.

Over the period 1952-1964, Cesereanu was detained six times. According to Maria Fărîmă, he managed “to describe all the features that characterize her grandfather as a priest, a man, a father, a husband, a true fighter for faith” (M. Fărîmă, “We were not meant to die”, in *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 18(2019), no. 52, p. 170-174).

⁷ V. Câmpean, “118 ani de la nașterea preotului-filosof Ioan Miclea și cele 2 scrisori ale lui Moisa Novac din temnița de la Carei” (118 years since the birth of the priest-philosopher Ioan Miclea and the 2 letters of Moisa Novac from the dungeon of Carei), in *Buletin de Carei* (26 April 2020). Retrieved on 20 August 2020 from <https://www.buletindecarei.ro/2020/04/118-ani-de-la-nasterea-preotului-filosof-ioan-miclea-si-cele-2-scrisori-ale-lui-moisa-novac-din-temnita-de-la-carei.html>

⁸ The future Bishops Ioan Suciu, Tit Liviu Chinezul, and Vasile Cristea were among his colleagues at the high school in Blaj (V. Câmpean, “118 ani de la nașterea preotului-filosof Ioan Miclea și cele 2 scrisori ale lui Moisa Novac din temnița de la Carei” (118 years since the birth of the priest-philosopher Ioan Miclea and the 2 letters of Moisa Novac from the dungeon of

graduating in 1929. He married Dorina Sabău and was subsequently ordained a priest (Fig. 2). He lived in Târgu Mureş with his family until the Vienna Diktat of 1940, under which the territory of Northern Transylvania, including Maramureş and part of Crişana, was taken from Romania and annexed to Hungary.⁹ After this occurred, they took refuge in Blaj (in 1940), never to return to Târgu Mureş. Miclea completed his thesis on *Coordinates of Medieval Culture* at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Cluj, under the academic supervision of Lucian Blaga (1895-1961), a Professor of Philosophy of Culture at the same university, from 1939 until his dismissal in 1948.¹⁰ Blaga had noticed “the high philosophical quality of [Miclea’s] thesis, which could be presented as a doctoral thesis”.¹¹

Although the dissolution of the Greek Catholic Church in Romania was imposed by the Communist regime on 1 December 1948, the administrative actions had been set in motion in early autumn of the same year.¹² Whilst several priests ‘converted’ to the Orthodox faith, all Greek Catholic Bishops were imprisoned in November as they refused to annex their Church to the Romanian Orthodox Church.¹³ In fact, in November 1948, weeks after he was

Carei), in *Buletin de Carei*, 26 April 2020. Retrieved on 20 August 2020 from <https://www.buletindecarei.ro/2020/04/118-ani-de-la-nasterea-preotului-filosof-ioan-miclea-si-cele-2-scrisori-ale-lui-moisa-novac-din-temnita-de-la-carei.html>). The first two graduated with a doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Angelicum; they were two out of the seven Greek Catholic bishops beatified by Pope Francis on 2 June 2019 as martyrs under the Communist regime in Romania (***, “Pope in Romania: Who are the 7 Greek-Catholic martyrs?”, in *Vatican News*, 02 June 2019). Retrieved on 12 September 2020 from <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-06/pope-francis-romania-beatification-7-greek-catholic-martyrs.html>). They were contemporaries of Zammit, who obtained his doctorate in theology from the Angelicum in 1932 (L. Bianco, “Daniel Callus, a Maltese Dominican scholar at Oxford”, in *Journal of Maltese History*, 6 (2019/2020), no. 1, p. 90-100).

⁹ Following the Vienna Diktat, the University of Cluj was temporarily located in Sibiu.

¹⁰ Blaga, after whom a public university founded in Sibiu in 1990 is named, was dismissed because he failed to endorse the post-war Communist regime. He was prohibited from publishing new books and poems except for translations. It has been claimed that the Romanian Communist government objected to his nomination in 1956 for the Nobel Prize for Literature, but a search through the Nobel Prize website yielded no such information (retrieved on 3 November 2020 from <https://www.nobelprize.org/nomination/archive/country.php>)

¹¹ His dissertation was published posthumously as I. Miclea, *Coordonatele Culturii Medievale – Teză de licență susținută la profesorul Lucian Blaga*, Cluj-Napoca, Ecou Transilvan, 2016.

¹² For a concise overview of the background leading to this event cf. C. Vasile, “The Suppression of the Romanian Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church”, in *East European Quarterly*, 36(2002), no. 3, p. 313-322. This publication systematically and chronologically details the initial collisions immediately after the Second World War between the Greek Catholic Church and the pro-Communist Romanian government led by Prime Minister Petru Groza (1884-1958), the Communist Offensive against the Greek Catholic Church and the eventual total suppression of the Church.

¹³ M. Grancea and C. Moşneag, “The end of a decade and the beginning of the war in Transylvanian Greek-Catholic press”, in *Catholicism and Fascism in Europe 1918-1945*, eds Jan Nelis, Anne Morelli and Danny Praet, Hildesheim, Georg Olms Verlag AG, 2015, p. 379-388. From 28 November 1948 until the execution of Nicolae Ceauşescu (1918-1989), the only

“Transcending pain: A glimpse into the life of philosopher Ioan Miclea”, *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 141-161.

appointed professor at the Department of Philosophy of the Theological Academy in Blaj, Miclea was arrested. He was released in 1949, marginalised, forced to work as an unskilled labourer and continually persecuted by means of investigations and searches by the Securitate until his death. Over 3,000 pages of handwritten manuscripts and typed work were confiscated and most were destroyed.¹⁴

By 1948, Miclea was a prolific scholar who had published extensively – books, studies and articles – on themes relating to philosophy, theology and literary criticism. Significant books include *Romanian Tangents in Christian Philosophy*,¹⁵ *Principles of Christian pedagogy – Methodology of religion*,¹⁶ *Is that how Christ thought? or Gospels from the Gospel*,¹⁷ *Philosophies and Christian Philosophy*,¹⁸ *Realism in Romanian philosophy*,¹⁹ *Echoes from Eternity: Reflections on the Gospels from all Sundays of the year*,²⁰ and *Elements of Christian Politics*.²¹ *The Theory of Originality in Philosophy* was published over a decade after his death.²² His notebooks were published in two volumes in 2005,²³ but regrettably his opus magnum, *Philosophy of Evil*, was never published, as the manuscript had been confiscated by the Communists. Most of his unpublished work surfaced after the Ceaușescu era through Greek Catholic channels.

Interest in his work has been limited until recently. The main extensive discussion of his contributions can be found in a book by Alexandru Popșor

Divine Liturgy in Romanian language was that aired by Vatican Radio (***, “Pope in Romania: Who are the 7 Greek-Catholic martyrs?”, in *Vatican News*, 02 June 2019. Retrieved on 12 September 2020 from <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-06/pope-francis-romania-beatification-7-greek-catholic-martyrs.html>)

¹⁴ C. Laslo, “Ioan Miclea - 110 ani” (Ioan Miclea – 110 years), in *Biserica Greco-Catolica*, 23 April 2012, <https://prcristianlaslo.wordpress.com/tag/ioan-miclea/>

¹⁵ I. Miclea, *Tangete Românești la Filosofia Creștină* (Romanian Tangents in Christian Philosophy), Blaj, Tipografia Seminarului, 1941.

¹⁶ I. Miclea, *Principii de pedagogie creștină - Metodologia religiei* (Principles of Christian pedagogy – Methodology of religion), Blaj: Tipografia Seminarului, 1942.

¹⁷ I. Miclea, *Oare așa s-a gândit Hristos? sau Evangheliu din Evanghelie* (Is that how Christ thought? or Gospels from the Gospel), Blaj, Tipografia Seminarului, 1943.

¹⁸ I. Miclea, *Filosofiile și Filosofia Creștină* (Philosophies and Christian Philosophy), Blaj, Tipografia Seminarului, 1943.

¹⁹ I. Miclea, *Realismul în Filosofia Românească* (Realism in Romanian philosophy), Blaj, Tipografia Seminarului, 1944.

²⁰ I. Miclea, *Ecouri din Veșnicie: Reflexii pe marginea Evangheliilor din toate duminicile anului* (Echoes from Eternity: Reflections on the Gospels from all Sundays of the year), Blaj, Lumina, 1944.

²¹ I. Miclea, *Elemente de Politică Creștină* (Elements of Christian Politics), Bucharest, Vreamea, 1947.

²² I. Miclea, *Teoria Originalității în Filosofie* (The Theory of Originality in Philosophy), ed. Tertulian Langa, Iași, Ars longa, 1996.

²³ I. Mitrofan, *Caietele Ioan Miclea: Preot, profesor și filosof blăjean – Texte inedite* (Ioan Miclea Notebooks: Priest, teacher and philosopher from Blaj - Unpublished texts), 2 vol., Blaj, Aridia, 2005.

published over two decades ago.²⁴ Articles of scientific standing appeared in 2002²⁵ and 2003.²⁶ Now, his memory and writings are increasingly recognized, and he is regarded as a beacon of scholarship of his era.. In 2012, to mark 110 years from his birth and 30 years from his death, a commemorative plaque was placed at his parental home and a colloquium was held wherein distinguished scholars discussed the scope and relevance of his work.²⁷ A concise biographical entry is included in the *Online Encyclopaedia of Romanian Philosophy*.²⁸

The two themes which emerge from Miclea's writings are Neo-Thomism and spirituality; in essence, he attempts to connect the two strands. In *The Theory of Originality in Philosophy*, Miclea argued for the originality of Thomistic philosophy, a theory in line with the one put forward by Gilson. He attempts to extract Christian principles from Romanian philosophy, a system of thought which had not been integrated in the corpus of the discipline. He was against the nominalist Anglo-Saxon philosophy, the historical opponent of Thomist "realism", which he denounced as "illicit metanarratives".²⁹ Further to this

²⁴ A. Popsor, *Contribuții la biografia unor dascăli de neuitat: Dumitru Martinas și preot Ioan Miclea de la Liceul Al. Papiu Ilarian din Tg. Mureș* (Contributions to the biography of some unforgettable teachers: Dumitru Martinas and priest Ioan Miclea from Al. Papiu Ilarian from Tg. Mures), Bucharest, Bonifaciu, 1999.

²⁵ R. A. Ghizdavu and B. A. Ghizdavu, "Mărturii și documente despre activitatea clandestină a pr. prof. Ioan Miclea (1964-1975)" (Testimonies and documents about the clandestine activity of Fr. Prof. Ioan Miclea (1964-1975)), in *Studia Theologia Catholica*, 47 (2002), no. 2, p. 59-69.

²⁶ M. Lupu, "Viața și personalitatea lui Ioan Miclea" (The life and personality of Ioan Miclea), *CCB*, 6 (2003), no. 3-4, p. 200-231.

²⁷ C. Laslo, "Ioan Miclea - 110 ani" (Ioan Miclea – 110 years), in *Biserica Greco-Catolica*, 23 April 2012, <https://prcristianlaslo.wordpress.com/tag/ioan-miclea/>

Distinguished professors who contributed at the colloquium included Ioan Mitrofan (Jacques Maritain Blaj Cultural Centre), Mircea Popa (University of Cluj-Napoca) and Ioan Buzăși (University of Alba-Iulia), Claudiu Porumbăcean (Western University 'Vasile Goldiș', Satu Mare Branch) and Nicolae Iuga (Western University 'Vasile Goldiș', Baia Mare Branch). This event was also reported by tv1sm (***, "In memoria preotului și filosofului Ioan Miclea" (In memory of the priest and philosopher Ioan Miclea), in *Buletin de Carai*, 21 April 2012. Retrieved on 12 September 2020 from <https://www.buletindecarei.ro/2012/04/in-memoria-preotului-si-filosofului-ioan-miclea.html>

²⁸ See F. Crișmăreanu, "Ioan Miclea", in *Online Encyclopedia of Romanian Philosophy*. Retrieved on 7 June 2020 from http://romanian-philosophy.ro/ro/index.php/Ioan_Miclea#C.C4.82R.C5.A2I_DE_AUTOR). Typical of articles in this encyclopedia, the entry is a brief biography listing his primary works together with a bibliography of readings.

This encyclopedia, a collective project initiated by the Romanian Society of Phenomenology, is governed by an international scientific board coordinated by Cristian Ciocan (Romanian Society of Phenomenology), George Bondor (Al. I. Cuza' University of Iasi) and Mona Mamulea (Constantin Rădulescu Motru' Institute of Philosophy), the first as general coordinator whilst the latter two as scientific coordinators.

²⁹ N. Iuga, "Un filosof neotomist: Românel Ioan Miclea (1902-1982)" (A neo-Thomist philosopher: The Romanian Ioan Miclea (1902-1982)), in *e-Bibliotheca Septentrionalis*, 2015. Retrieved on 20 September 2020 from <https://ebibliothecaseptentrionalis.wordpress.com/2015/03/27/un-filosof-neotomist->

“Transcending pain: A glimpse into the life of philosopher Ioan Miclea”, *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 141-161.

intellectual pursuit, Miclea’s view of life was not dualistic. He lived according to his beliefs; he was considered a teacher in old Blaj and served as a moral and educational role model.³⁰ With an extraordinary determination to pursue his study of philosophy, he continued to write, even though he was well aware of the risks to himself and to the well-being of his family.

The interview

Miclea’s granddaughter – Delia Oprea – a graduate in mathematics and ITC from the Faculty of Mathematics, University of Bucharest, is an avid writer. She lived with her grandparents in Blaj until the age of 6 when she started school in Braşov. Until her early teens, she regularly spent her weekends and holidays with her grandparents. Afterwards, she still met them frequently when they travelled to her home city. Delia was one of Miclea’s five grandchildren.

Ioan was married to Veronica, known as Dorina, Sabău who outlived him by 22 years. Her dream to become a French teacher was cut short by the arranged marriage to Nitzu, as she used to call Ioan. She was an intelligent woman, kind yet ironic, with whom Ioan conversed and shared his daily writings. To use Ioan’s words, she was “a blessing” in his life. They had four children – Aurora, Adela, Dorian, and Felician; Delia is the only child of Aurora (Fig. 3).

The matrimonial home was in Târgu-Mureş; Dorina’s relatives were members of the nobility and thus enjoyed a social life associated with this status. One of Dorina’s sisters owned the main bookstore in town which regularly hosted authors for book-signing events. Her family was typical of Transylvania, meeting regularly at reunions in the traditional family spirit.

From exile to forced domicile

In Târgu-Mureş, the family led a good-life – both publicly and in private – until it was brutally disrupted when the Vienna Diktat came into force in 1940. The Micleas were compelled to flee to exile in Blaj, a centre of Greek-Catholicism and the cultural capital of Transylvania. Ioan Miclea opted to become a refugee in this city as they could be sheltered by Dorina’s uncle, a Greek Catholic archpriest who lived in an apartment in the centre of town. He opposed the annexation of Transylvanian territory to Hungary and held a staunch patriotic stance towards his native country. This tragic historical event had been followed by three others. The first two occurred as a result of the Second World War, namely the invasion of Romania by the USSR in 1944 and

romanul-ioan-miclea-1902-1982/); article also downloadable from <http://paradigme-bm.uvvg.ro/Articole/Nicolae%20IUGA%20despre%20MICLEA.pdf>

³⁰ V. M. Manoiu, “Brief history of teachers and nature lovers in Blaj and certain local specificities of nature protection”, in *Proceedings of INTCESS 2019- 6th International Conference on Education and Social Sciences*, 4-6 February 2019, Dubai, p. 51-60.

the subsequent replacement of the monarchy with a republic led by a Communist government. The third event, which led to the Micleas' forced domicile, was the dissolution of the Greek Catholic Church in 1948, depriving it of ecclesiastical and material rights in favour of the Romanian Orthodox Church or the State. Those members of the clergy who refused to convert and be assimilated into the Romanian Orthodox Church were imprisoned and a number of them died in notorious prisons such as the one in Sighet.³¹ Unlike Cesereanu, who had emigrated to the West in the late 1970s, Blaj remained Miclea's home until his death, even though he was under constant surveillance by Securitate agents.³²

After the confiscation of Church property by the Communist government, the Micleas had to leave the apartment of Dorina's uncle and took refuge in the basement of Villa Teodora, the residence of Octavian Modorcea, which comprised two rooms and a kitchen.³³ These spaces, "more a cave than an apartment—were transformed into the warmest and merriest place on the earth".

Within a decade of the dissolution of the Church, Blaj was transformed from an exquisite Baroque town and seat of the Major Archdiocese of Alba Iulia and Făgăraş into a town of intellectuals and dignitaries released from prison and of migrant workers lacking any memory of the place. A prison record was a distinction for political thinkers; it was proof of their values.

The released intellectuals, lawyers and clergymen all dressed in smart attire, although many wore suits and ties that had seen better days. Despite their experiences in various notorious prisons and the inhuman treatment dealt them by the Securitate, they still pursued "their ideals and still dreamed of reviving Romania". In the repressive years of the fifties and sixties, they persevered and strove to live in dignity, ignoring the perpetual phone taps, home searches, interrogations and other methods of intimidation by the Securitate. Home searches might take place at any time of day or night, even at three in the morning.

On more than one occasion, in the 1960s, Miclea was taken to the Securitate Headquarters in Cluj or Alba Iulia. This was in the years after his old friends, such as Ştefan Manciu (1894-1985), known by the children as Nenea

³¹ Cf. Fundația Academia Civică, *Memorialul Victimelor Comunismului și al Rezistenței*. Retrieved on 11 October 2020 from <https://www.memorialsighet.ro/?lang=en>

³² Security agents followed even Romanian intellectuals abroad. Such was the case with the writer Virgil Gheorghiu (1916-1992) who studied philosophy and theology in Bucharest and Heidelberg. Cf. I. M. Morariu, "Virgil Gheorghiu's Literary Activity Reflected in Securitate Archives", *Astra Salvensis*, 6 (2018), no. 2, p. 149-155.

³³ Octavian Modorcea (1892-1974) was a professor and Greek-Catholic priest. He was married to Teodora Modorcea (***, "Octavian Modorcea", in *Geni*, 24 November 2016. Retrieved on 11 October 2020 from <https://www.geni.com/people/Octavian-Modorcea/6000000012085849640>).

“Transcending pain: A glimpse into the life of philosopher Ioan Miclea”, *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 141-161.

Ștefan, had been released from prison.³⁴ The Micleas’ best friend was the priest Alexandru Olteanu, a former political prisoner at Sighet, with whom they critically discussed the church and its future and exchanged political jokes. “Of course,” Oprea recalls, we, “the children knew well we had not the right to reproduce those jokes, as it was dangerous”; but it worked as a form of therapy for the adults.

Persecution and resistance

As he progressed in his research on Neo-Thomism, Miclea noted the significance of a formal academic grounding which only a university education could offer. He went back to university at the age of 40, an unusual decision at the time, to complete his degree in philosophy at the University of Cluj. When he was arrested in the late 1940s, Miclea was completing his doctorate under the direction of the leading Romanian philosopher at the time, Lucian Blaga. His studies came to an abrupt end; “instead of a philosophy chair at the theological university from Cluj he arrived at Dumbrăveni prison”.³⁵ His granddaughter described how, together with several other priests in Dumbrăveni prison, he celebrated the Christmas liturgy, “the most mystical experience of his life”, amidst an inferno of pain and despair. His deteriorating health soon led to his release from prison, as he was considered close to death.

From the 1950s onwards, his sole ambition was achieving the freedom of his church. All efforts in his life were directed towards this aim, which was whole-heartedly supported by Dorina; he never departed from this objective, much less gave it up. Clandestinely, he was made an honorary archpriest by the Vatican with the mission to prepare men for priesthood. Accepting such a mission during that period was an incredible act of courage and determination. It seemed “more like a suicidal mission than a faith calling” both for him and his students.

Miclea looked forward to receiving mail, as it was the only medium through which he was linked with the intellectual world. He was not prevented from retaining written communications with foreign personalities, such as Jacques Maritain, who often sent him their new publications. Maritain and his wife Raïsa were bound to Miclea “by a deep friendship that transcended the limits of the intellect and arrived in the feelings’ realm”, according to Oprea. A Russian poet and philosopher educated at the Sorbonne, Raïsa also sent her works to Miclea. Most of Miclea’s books were donated posthumously to the Jacques Maritain Cultural Centre in Blaj, three houses away from the apartment where they resided after 1948. This Centre, the former residence of Ștefan Manciulea, was set up after the demise of Manciulea’s daughters.

³⁴ Manciulea was a leading geographer in the country and a Romanian Greek Catholic priest.

³⁵ Cf. V. Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003.

Miclea used to be invited to participate in congresses outside Romania. Whilst aware that he would not be granted permission, on each occasion he persisted in writing a paper. For each event, he was ordered to submit it to the Securitate when he requested his passport to travel.³⁶ He was never granted permission to leave the country. Oprea recalls that at one of these fora, an author introduced himself as Ioan Miclea; a member of the audience stood up and denounced him: “You are not Professor Ioan Miclea. I know him well; he was my teacher.”

Miclea regarded the landing of the first humans on the lunar surface in July 1969 as a major feat in human history. He congratulated the American government through correspondence sent to the American Embassy in Bucharest, a move unheard of in Romania at the time, where only a few even dared look at the embassy. Within a month, he received a photographic album of the lunar landing signed by President Richard Nixon.

In the 1970s, Miclea wrote a memorandum regarding the Greek Catholic Church and sent it directly to the President of Romania, Nicolae Ceaușescu. The response was a usual visit to his home by two colonels from Bucharest who inquired about his intentions. He spoke his mind without fear of any repercussions and strangely enough he was never picked up again for interrogation by the Securitate.

Due to the persecution by the Secret Police, he was compelled to destroy or hide his writings. Most of the later works have been lost. As Oprea recalls, “He was never bitter or regretful, his faith made him believe in his role and accept his destiny. My grandmother also accepted with benevolence and understanding his way of living”.

Matrimonial life in Blaj

When his children were born (in Târgu Mureș), Miclea was immersed in his work and the burdens associated with it. When growing up, he was too absorbed in his problems. His matrimonial life was typical of the time: Dorina took care of the household whilst Ioan worked hard, taking on additional assignments to secure an adequate income to maintain his family. One such job was as a librarian, a post where, using Oprea’s words, “he was ‘cheating’ because being among books was his best time possible – an exquisite pleasure and not a chore”.

The grandchildren were exposed to a standard routine – starting with the daily liturgy that he celebrated each morning at eight o’clock at a small altar in the shared bedroom, followed by breakfast and then daily work. For the grandchildren, the time at Miclea’s home was “a perfect universe of love, beauty and knowledge”. A daily walk along the streets and parks of the town was part

³⁶ Until 1989, all Romanians had their passports stored at the Police (Miliția) and rarely received it to travel.

“Transcending pain: A glimpse into the life of philosopher Ioan Miclea”, *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 141-161.

of the routine (Fig. 4). He conversed in French with friends whom he met in the street to avoid eavesdropping by third parties.

Each morning he spent four hours writing using a Pelikan fountain pen and later a typewriter given by his former student, the ethnic Romanian Jesuit Emil Puni.³⁷ At the time, typewriters had to be registered with the Securitate, which kept a sample of typed pages from it as a means of tracing any written material hostile to the government. Often Miclea’s typewriter was confiscated by the Securitate for several days, leading him to complain at home that “they have arrested my typewriter again”. Father Puni, who was allowed to travel across Romania, also brought him tape recorders, radios and hearing aids, as Miclea tended to be hard of hearing.

Miclea liked a glass of good wine from the Tarnaveni vineyards to accompany the exquisite meals cooked by his wife, thus “meals were tasty and merry”. When diagnosed with cancer at the age of 73, he opted not to take treatment and lived another seven years free from the pain associated with this terminal illness, which, however, became acute and painful in the last month. In his last minutes, on his deathbed, Miclea requested a teaspoon of wine.

Although he was hardly aware of it, Miclea was the main focus in the household. He did not mind where he lived; home meant family. He was generous both with his family members and with acquaintances. On one occasion the “postman told him with a somewhat regretful voice that he was bringing so often books to him but he had never received one”. Miclea wrote to the director of Larousse Publishing House about his encounter with the postman and within weeks the postman received a dictionary from the publisher, an event which made the postman cry with excitement.

Final comments

All his children had the opportunity to study at university, a right that was generally denied to political prisoners.³⁸ Indeed, he was an eminent political prisoner. As Oprea recalls, his unexpected release after succumbing to a severe digestive illness followed the prison management’s resolve to ensure that he died outside the prison. This was viewed as the reason why his case did not proceed to the prosecutor’s office and thus no political record could be traced. Putting his life and career at risk, the prosecutor had erased Miclea’s records. Years later, Miclea discovered that the prosecutor was one of his former students.

³⁷ During the period when the Society of Jesus was suppressed in Romania, namely 1948-1989, few Jesuits kept on having an underground network. Puni served as a provincial of the Society of Jesus from 1967 onwards (P. Shore, “Jesuits in the Orthodox world”, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, ed. Ines G. Županov, New York, Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 318-348).

³⁸ Indeed, the son of Vasile Cesereanu was dismissed from school because his father was a priest and a “kulak”, a peasant owning significant agrarian land (M. Fărîmă, “We were not meant to die”, in *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 18(2019), no. 52, p. 170-174).

From records available at the Securitate available at Oprea's family, it is evident that officers were continuously assigned to keep Miclea under surveillance. The last house search was carried out after his wife had returned from Braşov, where she had gone directly after his funeral. As his intellectual companion and co-sharer of his ideals, Dorina took over his correspondence. Both had believed in the ultimate triumph of their ideals, and indeed, after 1989, she witnessed the restoration of the right of existence of the Church.³⁹ In 1990, Dorina requested her passport from the Alba Iulia Police Office. This time she acquired it and at the age of 77 she took a plane, alone, to go to Paris.

In the words of his granddaughter, Miclea "lived like an exquisite flower blooming only in a greenhouse, never to know the promising heights of the open sky. Nevertheless, his life was an example of fulfilled duty in the material world and spiritual happiness in all the spaces that our eyes cannot see. And I really hope that my sweet granny is teaching some angels to speak French".

During his visit to Blaj in 2019, His Holiness Pope Francis took lunch with Cardinal Lucian Mureşan in the same apartment in which the Miclea couple had lived when they first arrived in Blaj.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express his gratitude to Delia Oprea for the interview via email. The images reproduced in this article are with the kind permission of Aurora, Delia's mother and daughter of the late Ioan Miclea.

³⁹ Nevertheless, the properties of the Greek Catholic Church remained under the control of Romanian Orthodox Church, an issue highlighted in the visit of His Holiness John Paul II to Romania in 1999. Cf. C. Vasile, "The Suppression of the Romanian Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church", in *East European Quarterly*, 36(2002), no. 3, p. 313-322.

“Transcending pain: A glimpse into the life of philosopher Ioan Miclea”, *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 141-161.

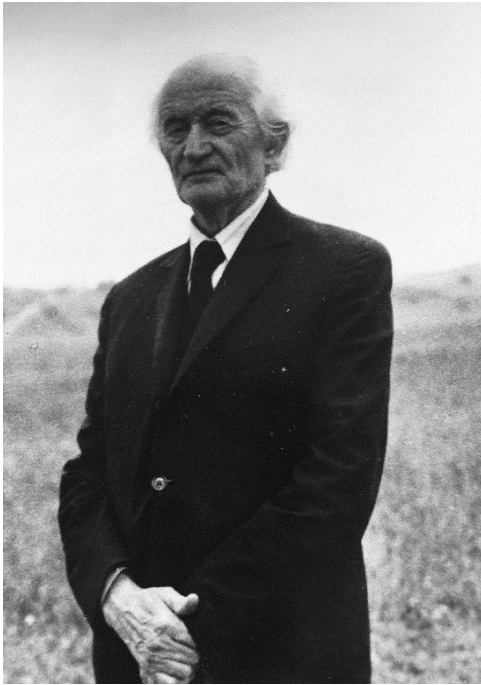


Fig. 1. Ioan Miclea (1902-1982)



Fig. 2. Miclea and his spouse Dorina Sabău on their wedding day



Fig. 3. Miclea family with their children: (left to right) Felician, Aurora and Dorian; Adela is in Dorina's arm⁴⁰

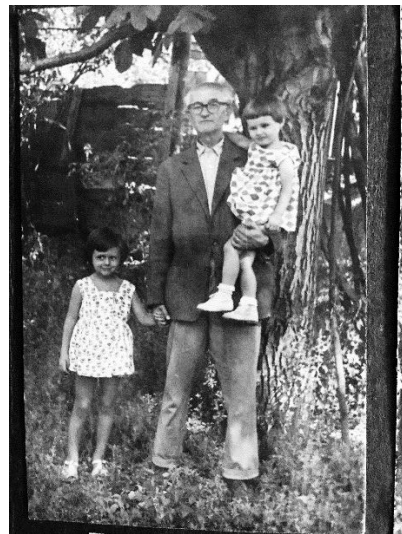


Fig. 4. Miclea with his grandchildren: Delia is standing and her cousin Adela is in his arm

⁴⁰ Photo probably taken when family still resided at Târgu-Mureș (Delia Opera, personal communication).

**Appendix: Interview ad verbatim via email with Delia Oprea (DO)
by Lino Bianco (LB)⁴¹**

LB: How do you recall your stay at your grandparent's house as a child, teenager and an adult?

DO: I was born in the middle of the worst period my country had ever seen: the communism. My parents lived in a small room in Braşov, and as they both had jobs, naturally, my maternal grandparents took me to Blaj when I was no more than a year old. And my fairy tale began as no matter what happened outside our home, inside Buni and Bunicu (Granny and Grandpa) created for me and my cousins a perfect universe of love, beauty and knowledge.

They had had four children, but Bunicu often said that I was the first child to see growing up. When his own children were born, he was too deepened in his problems, he was a professor, a Uniate priest and a nascent neo-Thomist philosopher before being a father and that occupied all his time. As life was like in the thirties the woman took all the duty of the household while the man provided for his family. And he was doing the best he could, even taking extra jobs to augment his family's income—like librarian. But then he was 'cheating' because being among books was his best time possible—an exquisite pleasure and not a chore. They lived in Târgu-Mureş an idyllic life amid my granny's relatives who were among the city notability. One of my Granny's sisters owned the most important bookshop in town where all the writers of the time came to offer autographs. They all met in glamorous balls and family reunion with a profound sense of family proper to Transylvania.

This meaningful life, full of delightful events and beautiful people, unexpectedly ended in 1940 when, after the Vienna Dictate, Romania was forced to cede almost half (43,492 km²) of Transylvanian territory in favour of Horthy Hungary. Due to Grandpa's patriotism and constant opposition to that horrible act he was forced to leave Târgu-Mureş with his family, and they took refuge in Blaj, which was, at the time, the cultural capital of Romania and the centre of Greek-Catholicism.

Their life was brutally disrupted, and unfortunately, that tragic event was only the beginning of a life of fight, opposition and deprivation as after five years of war the Soviet Union invaded Romania and instituted the communism. In 1948 the Uniate Church was deprived of its ecclesiastic and material rights in favour of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Its twelve bishops and hundreds of priests who refused to become orthodox were imprisoned and many died in the most atrocious penitentiaries like Sighet Prison.⁴²

⁴¹ Email dated 31 August 2020, 18:44 hrs.

⁴² Cf. Fundația Academia Civică, *Memorialul Victimelor Comunismului și al Rezistenței*. Retrieved on 11 October 2020 from <https://www.memorialsighet.ro/?lang=en>

“Transcending pain: A glimpse into the life of philosopher Ioan Miclea”, *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 141-161.

Its four cathedrals were transferred to the Romanian Orthodox Church, while the remainder of properties were confiscated by the State. My grandfather was among those who went to prison decided to defend his faith to the death.

LB: Their matrimonial house: How did your maternal grandparents live? Their type of accommodation? Their lifestyle?

DO: When I arrived in Blaj, my grandparents had forced domicile. That was a sort of home imprisonment that meant he had not the right to change home and was under constant surveillance. When they came first in Blaj in 1940, they were received by one of my granny’s uncles who was a Uniate archpriest and had a beautiful apartment in centre Blaj, just across from the cathedral. But after the communists took the church’s properties, they were obliged to search for a house. Unfortunately, nobody wanted to have them, there were difficult times and in Blaj almost all people were connected in a way or another to the Uniate Church and suffered the repercussions. Finally, a math teacher Mr Octavian Modorcea received them in the basement of his villa. Two rooms and a cold kitchen—more a cave than an apartment—were transformed into the warmest and merriest place on the earth. Some of the old furniture came in the new home, mostly from my granny’s uncle—a majestic desk, a chair like a throne that we all adored and I still have in my house, leather sofas and armchairs and the little round table where Grandpa wrote each morning for four hours using his Pelikan fountain pen and then a typewriter he had received from a former student who became a Jesuit. Each typewriter had to be registered by Securitate (the feared political police) and have a sample with the writing for them to be able to identify any hostile documents that eventually might appear. I remember how angry Grandpa was as he had to leave his beloved typewriter a few days at Securitate. They have arrested my typewriter again, he used to say.

Grandpa did not hear very well, so he was secluded in his universe undisturbed by our games or noises. Only when he wanted he opened his auditive device. And he had more than one as if he liked anything besides his studies it was the technology that was at the inception phase in the sixties and seventies. The same Jesuit, Father Puni, who could travel across Romania, brought him tape recorders, radios or hearing devices that made my grandfather really happy. I am convinced that he would have been the first in Romania to have a personal computer if he had lived in the nineties.

Showing me, more than once, a book by Heisenberg—always present on his table—he used to say that if he were to choose again his studies he would have begun with the physical science. The quantum mechanics fascinated him as any real philosopher of the twentieth century should be.

The most crucial moment of the day was the arriving of the postman as the letters were the only connection my grandfather had with the world. By strange circumstances—never explained—he continued to have the right to

write and receive letters from personalities as Jacques Maritain all his life. Monsieur Maritain sent him often his new books, and even after he became ill, his secretary continued this tradition. Jacques Maritain and his distinguished wife Madame Raisa Maritain were bound to Grandpa by a deep friendship that transcended the limits of the intellect and arrived in the feelings' realm. Madame Raisa Maritain was a delicate poetess, and Grandpa also received her volumes.

Most of his books were donated by my family to Jacques Maritain's museum in Blaj, which is located only three houses further from the home where we used to live.

LB: Their matrimonial home: How did they raise their family? What sort of quality of life/well-being?

DO: As I said, it did not matter much where they lived. Home meant for us them, Nitzu (as Granny called him) and Dorina. I do not know why my father and all their other children-in-law called them Mery and Pery, but for me, they were Buni and Bunicu. Until three years old, I used to call him Motiu (coming from Moș that means in Romanian, old man).

Our life was very well ordered, we have a well-established program that began with the daily liturgy that he officiated each morning at eight o'clock. When I was very little, I used to sleep during the liturgy as his small altar was in the bedroom that we shared. That is why all my life I could say every word the priest says, but not much of the cantor's part as my grandfather's voice was dominating the room while my granny whispered as not to wake me. Then came breakfast and the hours of daily work.

Every day we went for a walk on Blaj streets and parks. When I was born, more than a decade after the Church's ban, the communist had deliberately fallen Blaj into oblivion. From the resplendent little town which sheltered the Major Archdiocese of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș in a beautiful baroque palace and whose schools were famous in Romania, it became a city of intellectuals and dignitaries who just came out of prisons and of newly arrived workers who knew nothing about the glorious past. On the dusty streets, we met my grandfather's friends, and they usually spoke French as they did not want anybody around to understand their conversations.

Professors, academicians, priests, lawyers they had two things in common, they were all perfectly dressed in suits and ties—that had seen better days—and they all had known the horrible communist prisons and Securitate's ulterior treatments. However, nothing ever had changed their ideas as they continued to follow their ideals and still dreamed of reviving Romania. In the most terrifying years, during the fifties' and sixties', they continued to live in dignity, ignoring the sufferings, the perpetual Securitate's interrogations and supervisions, the searches that the Securitate was performing at three o'clock in the morning or any other method of intimidation that the political police led towards their opponents.

“Transcending pain: A glimpse into the life of philosopher Ioan Miclea”, *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 141-161.

Besides the searches that us, the grandchildren, inevitably witnessed not once my grandparents discussed their sufferings. What we knew about the Securitate was only out of our deduction—the searches, the phone that was supervised and we had to take care what we spoke, frequently advised not to talk about the regime or to criticise the leaders. Then my grandfather’s disappearances when he was taken to Cluj or Alba Iulia Securitate’s HQ. We witnessed the arrival of old friends from prison, like Ștefan Manciulea, the eminent geographer who had written a crucial work on Romania’s borders. After his daughters’ death, their house became Jacques Maritain Blaj Cultural Centre. Nenea Ștefan, as we called him, stayed all day long in his workshop and I remember him working in wood without a word. I cannot remember him walking with us as other friends did. For instance, my grandparents best friend, the priest Alexandru Olteanu who had been imprisoned at Sighet. They discussed their church and its destiny, they argued a lot, but it was only a friendly conversation. Many times they said jokes. It was such a little revenge to have all kind of jokes about communism and the party’s leaders, but it worked, they laughed and felt better. Of course, us, the children knew well we had not the right to reproduce those jokes, as it was dangerous. With an instinct proper to the children we precisely knew what was happening, why the prison was a distinction for some but at the same time a place for those who murdered or stole, we recognised the friends, and we accepted that duplicitous life where we spoke in one way at home and in another at school.

LB: What is your impression and/or opinion of each of the characters of your grandparents, mostly of your grandfather?

DO: Nitzu and Dorina loved each other a lot. Even if they married—as it was the custom at the beginning of the last century—for different reasons than love. My Granny, still very young when she had to marry, almost did not know what was happening to her. One day she was in school and the other they told her she had to get married although her dream was to leave for Switzerland and become a French teacher. If she regretted her lost destiny, we do not know as she was the most perfect being I have ever met. Highly intelligent she was participating in all the conversations, and I remember well my grandfather reading to her in the kitchen door what he had been writing all morning long. She was kind but ironic, and her beautiful brown eyes were full of wisdom, care and love. The last words my grandfather said before dying were for her: You had been a blessing!

Him—well, he was the main character of the house. Everything was revolving around him, and most of the time he seemed not to see that evidence. He was generous, I remember receiving a gift on his birthday with the note, for Deliuța for my birthday.

Once the postman told him with a somewhat regretful voice that he was bringing so often books to Mr Miclea, but he had never received one. So my

grandfather wrote to the director of Larousse Publishing House in France telling him the story about the postman and in a month or so the postman received a splendid dictionary. The man was so excited that he came crying at our door, I can say that I rarely have seen anyone more grateful.

When Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the moon we spent almost all night outside, looking at the moon, he considered that event one of the most important in human history and he wrote to the American Embassy in Bucharest to congratulate them. He received after a month a splendid album with the landing, signed by President Richard Nixon. It was again an unexpected event as in Romania there were few men or women to have the courage even to look to the American Embassy.

My grandfather also wrote to Ceaușescu a memorandum regarding the Greek-Catholic Church. Instead of any answer, he received the visit of two colonels from Bucharest who wanted to know which were his intentions. He spoke freely with the officers that came to our house, never afraid of the repercussions and strangely from the seventies' on, besides the searches and the colonels' visit, he was never taken again to Securitate.

After his death, my grandmother took over his correspondence as the true heiress of his ideas and ideals and all his correspondents admired her for her courage and intelligence.

Luckily, soon after his death, she received permission to buy a small apartment in Blaj and she finally moved in some decent conditions.

They never doubted the victory of their ideals, and indeed after 1989, my grandmother saw their Church restored to its rights. As a crowning of their life in 2019, His Holiness Pope Francis came to Blaj and the huge gathering for the beatification of seven of its bishops who died a martyr's death was celebrated at 500 meters from my grandmother's late apartment. Then His Sanctity had lunch with Cardinal Lucian Mureșan in the same apartment where my grandparents lived when they first came to Blaj in 1940.

LB: When did you get to know about your grandfather's academic and intellectual standing?

DO: From the very beginning of my life I understood that he was an outstanding person. It was the way he walked through the world, the way the others looked at him, I was no more than three but with my hand in his I felt like a princess. Later I understood that our wealth was not of this world but of the universe of ideas and it was a revelation that made me even more special. I had the honour to step near him and be the innocent recipient of his realm that was sometimes too vast for a little girl but I did not feel lost as he was always near me.

My grandfather, a professor for almost 20 years, was not ashamed to go back to school at 40 and complete his initial formation with a philosophy degree at Cluj University. At the end of the forties, when he was arrested, he was preparing his PhD in philosophy with the most important Romanian

“Transcending pain: A glimpse into the life of philosopher Ioan Miclea”, *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 141-161.

philosopher, Lucian Blaga, who had written on his graduation paper that with a few additions it could be considered a PhD dissertation. I asked him once why he wanted to have a degree in Philosophy. I do not remember his answer but now it is so evident to me—he was insatiable for knowledge. As his studies in neo-Thomism evolved, he felt the need to have an academic basis that only the university could give him. Unfortunately, his plans were shattered by the communism. Instead of a philosophy chair at the theological university from Cluj he arrived at Dumbrăveni prison.

From that prison he unveiled only one memory: together with dozens of other priests he had celebrated the Christmas liturgy that had become, after his sayings, the most mystical experience of his life. Many other priests from the communist prisons had made the same affirmation, the chorus of their voices for once opened the heavens for some blessed moments in that ocean of sufferings and desperation.

He was honorary archpriest made clandestinely by the Vatican as he had the mission to prepare men to become priests. In the basement of Villa Teodora during a period when most of Romanian barely breathed he had the courage and determination to initiate equally brave men on that difficult profession that looked like more like a suicidal mission than a faith calling.

He continued writing but due to the Securitate’s frequent searches he was obliged to destroy or hide his texts. Most of the texts he had hidden were also lost. Once he told us that his major contribution to neo-Thomism, a monumental work of nearly three thousand pages, he had to bury and finally destroy. He was never bitter or regretful, his faith made him believe in his role and accept his destiny. My grandmother also accepted with benevolence and understanding his way of living. That kind of life had taken away all the promises she had received in her youth but her incredible character made her live in love and acceptance near him. In 1990, only a few months after the revolution she went to Alba Iulia Police and asked for her passport (during communism the Romanians did not have their passports in their possession, they were stored at Police and rarely given for a trip, mostly in the communist countries.) My grandmother’s arrival provoked a huge torment to all those that still considered them as enemies. Finally, she got her passport and at 77 she took, alone, the plane and went to Paris – the dream of her youth. I am sure that as she strolled the streets of Paris she had Nitzu with her celebrating together their victory upon the ugliness, terror and stupidity, that had governed Romania for so long.

Ioan Miclea was frequently invited to participate in congresses all over the world. Although he knew he would never receive the authorisation to leave Romania, each time he prepared the paper asked in the calls. When asking for his passport, he also submitted these papers to the Securitate. Obviously, he never received permission to attend a congress. But once at such a meeting, a man who introduced himself like Ioan Miclea was ready to read the paper when

suddenly from the auditorium a man stood up saying, you are not professor Ioan Miclea. I know him well; he was my teacher.

LB: What do you recall about your grandfather's vision/dream?

DO: He had only one dream—the liberty of his church. Everything that he thought or made in his life was subordinate to that dream.

My grandpa told me that during his life, he had been the direct recipient of three miracles.

The first was his destiny, a young boy from a distant village in northern Romania to become one of the most influential thinkers of his time. It seems that when she was pregnant with him, his dear mother had a dream, Virgin Mary, telling her that her son will be a priest. He became a priest, a teacher, a thinker indeed but he always remembered the boy that one autumn was taken by the local priest to a school in Carei to begin his incredible journey in the realm of faith and ideas.

The second miracle happened while he was imprisoned. He got so ill that the prison's management decided to let him go home and die out of the prison. He arrived home with a severe digestive illness that continued to torment him all his life. Because his unorthodox release from prison, it seems that his case did not go further to the prosecutor's office and he had not a political record. That is why his four children: Aurora, Adela, Dorian, and Felician had the chance to be accepted to study in Universities. Much later in life, accidentally, he found out that the 'angel' responsible for that miracle was one of his former students who decided to erase his records, risking his life and position as a prosecutor.

The third miracle was absolutely stunning. Once, during those hard years, he was in need of a sum of money—a matter of life or death. He could not sleep for the night, and suddenly, just before sunrise, he got dressed and went out for a walk almost like in a dream. When he arrived on a pond, a stranger came to him and gave him an envelope with the exact sum of money that he needed.

Those were the auspices of his life between greatness and poverty he remained the same relentless person who decided for a path in his life and never deviated or gave it up.

LB: What do you recall of his later years?

DO: He was very proud when I decided to follow Math at Bucharest University. Unfortunately, in those years, we were more distant than in the past. He wrote me many letters, giving me advice that I considered, as every youngster, obsolete. However, when we met the joy was as big as in my childhood. That unique atmosphere from their house in Blaj I have never found it again in my life. They emanated love and kindness and we adored them but we also respected them with a fervour next to faith. My mother and my aunt—even in their late forties—they did not dare to smoke in his presence

“Transcending pain: A glimpse into the life of philosopher Ioan Miclea”, *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 141-161.

although I am sure he knew well they were smoking. We never felt fear but a sort of responsibility to be at the height at which they had lived their lives.

My grandma cooked divinely and my grandpa liked to drink a glass of good wine that came from the Tarnaveni vineyards, so our meals were tasty and merry with all of us enjoying their presence and the conversations.

At 73, he discovered that he had cancer. It was, for sure, a result of his long-term illness, and he decided not to take any treatment. Nobody could argue with him, and finally, it was the right decision as he lived another seven years almost free from pain and health problems. In August 1982 he visited us in Braşov and we accompanied him home. He was so joyful that I had no presentiment that I was seeing him for the last time. In a few days, the terminal phase of his illness began. Strangely, enough, he disappeared from our life without any huge shock, his death meant for him only regaining a happier space where I am sure he could develop all those fantastic talents and skills that were obscured by the time he had lived on earth.

Just a day or two before dying he said that the worst things in the world were Ceauşescu and cancer, making his daughters laugh at his joke for the last time. He wanted to drink a teaspoon of wine and after thanking Dorina he was gone.

It was strange that I never had the feeling that he left us, in a very material way he was in every one of us, but his legacy was much more than his DNA. It was his whole life during which he fought for the church and built with Dorina, his family.

At his funeral participated almost a hundred priests from all over the country. At every corner, there were men from Securitate watching that gathering they feared most in the world. I spoke a few words, not about the priest or the philosopher but about my grandpa who raised me in what I became.

After the funerals, Granny came to Braşov for a period and when she went back, she found behind her door two comrades from Securitate. It was the last search in a long row, and as my grandfather predicted many ‘comrades’ from Securitate were out of jobs once he died. As we could notice when we received his records from Securitate, some officers had as their only job supervising him.

My grandmother accepted his death with immense dignity, she was sad but not desperate, and in a way, her second life began at his end. She outlived him with 22 years and for once she only did as she wanted. She visited Paris, and continued her life, surrounded by friends and family. She was there when my son, Sebastian Ioan was born.

I am sure that she had a lot of stories to tell Nitzu when they reunited in heavens, in 2004.

It is so weird as now I am older than any of them when they became my grandparents in 1959. Besides my love and admiration, I have one regret—this

Lino BIANCO

exceptional man had never attained his potential as he would have done in freedom, without that horrible, hideous, gruesome and abominable communism. My grandfather, unfortunately, lived like an exquisite flower blooming only in a greenhouse, never to know the promising heights of the open sky. Nevertheless, his life was an example of fulfilled duty in the material world and spiritual happiness in all the spaces that our eyes cannot see. And I really hope that my sweet granny is teaching some angels to speak French.

“Transcending pain: A glimpse into the life of philosopher Ioan Miclea”, *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 141-161.