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Petre Țuțea (1902–1991): the Urban Hermit of Romanian Spirituality

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Introduction

The postcommunist countries of Eastern Europe have an opportunity to take a new way towards the political, economic and social reforms which are vital for establishing liberal democracy. The end of the Cold War and the relaxation of tension between the United States and the former USSR may nevertheless facilitate a revival of nationalist intransigence in countries which are politically and economically unpredictable. To a great extent, actual or potential interethnic conflict in formerly communist countries is religiously motivated. It is therefore a worthwhile enterprise to apply interdisciplinary scholarship to a particular interface: that between national identity and the Christian tolerance which developed among some Eastern European peoples during their exposure to the inhumanities of Nazi and then Marxist-Leninist ideology.

The purpose of this study is to examine some of the parameters of the relationship between nationalism and Orthodox Christianity in contemporary Romania, with special reference to the life and works of the Romanian Christian mystic and teacher Petre Țuțea (1902–1991). Țuțea provides a paradigm for the way in which a nationalist thinker can encounter the whole spectrum of political attitudes, from Marxist socialism to elitist nationalism, and can eventually turn to Christian tolerance in communist prisons by experiencing the hesychast spiritual way of lay monks.

The study begins with a brief general introduction to the history of church and state in Romania. It continues with a biographical account of Petre Țuțea's spiritual life and religious thought, focusing on his seminal work *Omul: Tratat de Antropologie Creștină* (*The Human Being: a Treatise on Christian Anthropology*). Finally, the study points out the importance of Țuțea's message in the aftermath of the collapse of communism in Romania and Eastern Europe and his significance as a living example of spirituality at the beginning of a new millennium.

Historical Background

State versus Communism

As the only Latin nation which is predominantly Orthodox, the Romanians play a particular role in the Balkans. In Romania, curiously enough, 'there has never been a formal act of separation between church and state',¹ even under the communist

authorities. As an island of Latin Orthodoxy almost entirely surrounded by a Slavic sea, Romania was perhaps the first European country to offer direct opposition to atheist Marxist-Leninist expansion after the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia in October 1917. In 1919, after repelling an attack by the Hungarian army, the Romanian royal army participated in the suppression of the Soviet Republic which had been proclaimed in Hungary² under the leadership of the Comintern agent Béla Kun. Following the signing of the Nazi–Soviet non-aggression pact just before the outbreak of the Second World War and despite its declared neutrality, Romania was forced to enter the war first against the USSR and then against Germany after various of its territories had been seized under a Soviet ultimatum and the Vienna Diktat of 1940. Romania then experienced serious precommunist political unrest. Its democratic institutions were abolished at the time of the Soviet takeover in August 1944. Under Soviet occupation Romania was subjected to a particularly perverse form of communism.³

Christianity versus Communism

Under Soviet influence after the Second World War cities were created artificially by destroying traditional rural communities and by imprisoning the peasantry. Structures were set up to prevent Christians from observing Christian traditions and to promote their continuing inoculation with the so-called values of the atheist *homo sovieticus*. Ceaușescu's 'systemisation' policy then proposed the destruction of more than half of Romania's villages to make way for 550 'agro-industrial towns'. The results of this experiment took different forms in different people depending on the individual's ability to resist political temptations and to preserve Christian national identity. For some, identification with the power of the state was particularly meaningful; for others, faith in Orthodox moral values was supreme.

Some of the latter, especially intellectuals and peasants, remained morally robust under all circumstances. As an irony of history, the harsh conditions that were created enabled them to discover the lifestyle of the Christian Fathers of the fourth century and the fertility of the 'desert of God'. From the end of the third century AD in Egypt people began to abandon their villages for a monastic life in the desert. Their act of *anachoresis* or withdrawal from worldly life led to the building of Christian communities in the wilderness. According to Derwas Chitty,⁴ the monks gradually populated the desert and turned it into a paradoxical city: citizenship was defined by their affiliation to the Christian faith rather than to the Roman state.

Despite the mass extermination of the national Christian opposition and brain-washing through communist propaganda, Romanian Christianity was able to flourish where the tradition of spiritual direction and fatherhood was maintained. Disciples were initiated by sharing the personal experience of people subjected to psychological threat and physical torture rather than by collective missionary worship. The ideological reaction induced in those who had lost everything materially, or who had experienced a sense of loss through the application of absolutist materialist doctrines, often had a paradoxical effect: it unconsciously prepared the younger generation for the rediscovery of traditional Christian values. As a modern extension of the paradox of early Christian monasticism, in Romania under the communist dictatorship many political dissidents who had spent years under house arrest in the cities of the proletariat would turn themselves into urban hesychasts.

Hesychasm versus Prison

In the Septuagint '*hesychia*' refers both to outward peace and to inner stillness reflecting faith and submission to God's will. In early sources *hesychia* describes the external state of the monk living as a hermit; it is closely associated with the monk's cell.⁵ Meanwhile St John Climacus describes the spiritual meaning of *hesychia*: 'stillness of soul is the accurate knowledge of one's thoughts and is an unassailable mind ... The cell of a hesychast is the body that surrounds him, and within him is the dwelling place of knowledge.'⁶

The lay hermits or 'white monks' embodied the hesychast tradition of Mount Athos, which was based on the ideal of unceasing prayer and marked by a particular kind of Orthodox spirituality. In the apostolic age it was the martyr who was considered the true imitator of Christ, the champion of the Christian life combating the forces of evil represented by the state and idolatry in all its forms. As the Church achieved toleration in the Roman world the 'white monks' illustrated the substitution of slow and 'white martyrdom' for sacrificial or 'red martyrdom'.⁷ It was Clement of Alexandria who shifted the emphasis in the search for perfection 'from the sacrifice of life for Christ, to a life of sacrifice for Christ'.⁸ The lay hermits were neither living in nor part of a monastic community. They were not ordained priests but inwardly followed the Orthodox way, taking quite literally the words of Jesus: 'Come with me by yourselves to some desert place where you can rest quietly' (Mark 6:31).

The Romanian hesychasts of the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries were in some sense modern successors of the Desert Fathers of Egypt in that they approached God by devoting themselves to a *pneumatophore*, a bearer of the Holy Spirit. The most famous of the medieval Romanian 'white monks' was perhaps Daniel the Hermit. The voivode of Moldavia Stephen the Great (1457–1504) used to consult him before the battles in which he scored brilliant victories against the Ottomans who were advancing towards Europe after the fall of Constantinople.⁹

The word 'desert' literally means 'unhabitable place',¹⁰ and such were the communist prisons and the communist 'cities of the working class'. In that sort of ontological reclusion, through martyrdom and externally imposed anchoritism, a *sui generis* form of Christian monasticism was born in communist Romania, outside the authority of the officially recognised national Orthodox Church which had a close relationship with the communist government.¹¹

Introduction to Țuțea's Biography

The communist regime impeded vertical social mobility in order to consolidate mass uniformity. Absolute external power paradoxically gave rise to a desire for solitude, inner exile and daily martyrdom of conscience in people who had been relegated to the social underground. Just like the 'white monks', some of these 'solitaries' made use of their separation from society to find both a path for their own salvation and a way of transmitting their vision of this spiritual path from generation to generation through master–disciple relationships.

Petre Țuțea's *metanoia* (repentance/conversion) and his inner turning to God constitute the spiritual journey of one of the most intellectually skilled and erudite Romanian scholars of this century.¹² Țuțea's 'way of a pilgrim' objectively reaches a certain conception of the primacy of the spiritual, understood as the primacy of the pneumatic and charismatic elements over the hierarchical and institutional.¹³ Both Țuțea's writings and his mystical experience as shared with his disciples exemplify,

at an individual level, how genuine faith and a propensity towards *imitatio Christi* can transcend both the sporadic persecution of the Church and even its dependence on and collaboration with an antichristian state. On 22 December 1989 a former dissident speaking on liberated Romanian television began his statement with the significant words: 'God has turned his face toward Romania.'¹⁴ Țuțea's paradigmatic conversion showed how the inspired individual can turn into an intermediary who reconciles the children of God to God.

As a consequence of communist censorship and the cult of personality only a few people knew of Petre Țuțea, at one time Romania's leading economist, who influenced the strategy of the Romanian military economy during the Second World War. After the revolution, during the neocommunist restoration that followed, until his death in 1991, meetings with Țuțea proved premonitory. The same spirit that led Țuțea to declare that the evidence of God's love for the Romanians is in their power to endure the test of bolshevism still moves many of those whose minds were freed and whose souls were uplifted by experiencing his zeal for Christian justice.

Childhood and Early Years

Petre Țuțea was born into a well-established Romanian Orthodox family in the ancient village of Boteni, in Muscel county, on 6 October 1902. Both his father and his grandfather had been parish priests in the same village. His mother was a simple country woman and Țuțea was very proud of her. He used to call her 'the country woman from Boteni'. His father and mother brought up their son Petre with his three brothers and four sisters in that primordial way of agricultural life that is ruled by the seasons rather than the clock. His father's Orthodox ministry reflected the slow pace of rural life characterised by people's dependence on the seasons and the weather and their continual struggle for survival. Petre shared with the peasants the difficulties of village life and considered them his equals as brothers and sisters.

The spiritual dimension of Țuțea's upbringing was thus defined by Orthodox tradition. Another inevitable influence in his early education was the dominant idea in nineteenth-century Romania, nationalism.¹⁵

Throughout the Middle Ages Romania as we know it today was split into the three principalities of Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania. In the eleventh century Transylvania came under Hungarian rule; in 1699 it passed under the rule of the Austrian Empire. Wallachia and Moldavia were under Turkish suzerainty for centuries. The three Romanian principalities were only briefly united by Michael the Brave (1593–1601). Romanians therefore projected into the future their ideal of setting up an independent state rather than deriving it from a historical medieval unitary state as did the Bulgarians or the Serbs.

The Romanian nationalism that emerged before 1800 was characterised by a cultural regeneration in all three Romanian principalities. In Transylvania, for example, where the Romanians, though a majority of the population, were predominantly peasants, and thus formed the lowest stratum of society,¹⁶ nationalism was inspired by the discovery of the distinguished cultural and linguistic heritage of this Romanian ethnic majority. Scholars' arguments about history found their way into political works such as *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* of 1791, the petition of the representatives of the Romanian people of Transylvania to the Habsburg Emperor Leopold in which they claimed equality of rights with the other privileged 'nations' and representation in the Diet in direct relation to the number of taxpayers.

In the aftermath of the Crimean War an independent Romanian state had been an

attractive prospect to Britain and France because it could become a 'useful buffer between Russia, Austria and Turkey and between Russia and the Dardanelles'.¹⁷ Following the Paris Convention, the United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia were set up in 1859. The making of the Romanian national unitary state was completed in 1918, when the three Romanian principalities united as Greater Romania. As one would naturally expect, Țuțea as a teenager shared in the experience of national fervour during these formative years of Romanian independence.

University Years and Țuțea's Formation as an Economist

In 1926 Țuțea graduated in law at the University of Cluj in Transylvania but never practised as a lawyer. He went on to pursue doctoral studies at the same university, completing his dissertation in administrative law in 1929. That was the year of his collaboration on the weekly magazine *Chemarea Tinerimei Române* (*The Call of Romanian Youth*) during which he showed his ideological affinities with the National Peasant Party. This party had been created in 1926 by the union of Iuliu Maniu's Romanian National Party of Transylvania with the Peasant Party which Ion Mihalache had founded in 1918 in the 'Old Kingdom' (Wallachia and Moldavia). There was no mature socialist party in the Greater Romania created in 1918, and Țuțea looked to the National Peasant Party to protect the interests of the working class in industry, agriculture and trade.¹⁸ In this period Țuțea demonstrated his ideological sympathy for genuine collectivism rather than the communist-inspired urbanisation the future was to bring.

In 1932 and 1933, while developing his ideas about the peasant working class, Țuțea was writing for the pro-socialist paper *Stînga* (*Left Wing*). His essays would focus on topics such as democracy, justice, peasants' debts, constitutionalism, the economics of bolshevism, the legal system under a parliamentary regime and university life. In his article 'Proprietatea individuală' ('Individual Property') Țuțea develops a critique of capitalism and Fichte's concept of the self-sufficient state and argues for a planned economy at the European level,¹⁹ thus anticipating the idea of the European Economic Community.

Post-doctoral Studies in Berlin

In 1934–5, through the support of former prime minister Alexandru Vaida-Voievod, Țuțea was able to pursue further postdoctoral studies in political sciences at Humboldt University in Berlin while working at the Romanian embassy there as a commercial attaché. In Berlin Țuțea studied with the German economist Werner Sombart at the time of the publication of Sombart's *Deutscher Sozialismus* (*German Socialism*, 1934), succinctly defined by its author as anticapitalism. At the same time, Sombart rejected Marxism as corrupted socialism. He sided with the victims of rapid industrial development in Germany, and argued in favour of artisan industry and peasant farming. Sombart's views seem to have had a considerable influence on Țuțea, especially his concept of a 'German Socialism' as equally distant from Marxist Socialism and large-scale industrial capitalism: 'Nothing is farther from German Socialism than a proletarian culture. We desire a gradation based on affluence and have also a thought for the cultured prosperity of the few. We wish to extend the number of the well-to-do.'²⁰

Sombart contrasted the Marxist doctrine of class struggle with the 'true religion' of the Christian-Social movement which, he hoped, would be effective in lessening mis-

trust of the ruling class on the part of workers and the middle classes after the defeat of the German empire in the First World War, and in opening the way to Christianisation of the proletariat.²¹ Sombart's approach to religion perhaps had a decisive influence upon Țuțea's rejection of the Marxist-communist utopia in favour of a more conservative vision of social and economic life. From the mid-1930s, like Sombart, Țuțea would attack Marxism publicly and offer God and the nation in its place. His longing for a new morality involved a rejection of the intellectual nihilism and sterility of bourgeois life in the Berlin circles which he frequented.

At the same time, Țuțea began to realise the true nature and the immensity of the transformation for which he longed. As in Sombart's case, Țuțea's repudiation of Marx made his search for an ideology for the underprivileged of an increasingly industrialised society much more difficult. His stamina was especially manifest in his superabundant capacity for self-discipline and accumulation of knowledge through frenetic intellectual work. 'I am studying for myself,' wrote Țuțea from Berlin to a Bucharest friend in a letter dated 23 April 1934.²²

In Berlin he came into direct contact with the Nietzschean thesis about the death of God, the moral God of Christian tradition, and also with Gabriel Marcel's theological apology of human love as an implicit affirmation of immortality. Țuțea's shift from law and politics to religious themes was clearly facilitated by such writers as Sombart's friend, Max Scheler. Scheler made use of Nietzsche's concept of 'resentment', but without the antichristian polemic: it is the bourgeois who is characterised by 'resentment' – of status, historical difference and tradition. Scheler wanted to establish a European orientation toward 'solidarity', by means of a religious renaissance, as a way of navigating between capitalism and communism.²³

Țuțea also attended lectures given by German philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Nicolai Hartmann. Heidegger's preoccupation with speculation on Being (*Seynsspekulation*) contrasted with Țuțea's persistent concern with the theology of Christian dogma and experiential spirituality.²⁴ Țuțea's encounter with Hartmann was an important formative intellectual factor. Hartmann had studied medicine before approaching philosophy and his concept of 'aporetics', from the Greek '*aporia*', 'dead end', connected the history of philosophy with that of science. Hartmann's aporetics, defined as 'the analysis of problems as such',²⁵ stimulated Țuțea's interest both in presocratic Greek philosophers and in logical paradoxes. Hartmann was concerned with investigating the degree to which problems are logically insoluble. On the basis of Hartmann's theories, Țuțea was to develop a critique of the concept of insoluble problems involving the invocation of the nonrational and supra-rational which will always be beyond the field of natural logical comprehension. Țuțea was later to entitle the first volume of his major work of Christian anthropology *Problemele, sau Cartea întrebărilor* (*Problems, or the Book of Questions*). Here the undemonstrability of logical axioms is seen as a reflection of the transcendent unity on which they depend rather than as an intuition of *homo sapiens*.²⁶

Țuțea as a Political Economist

After the German experience Țuțea returned to Romania to become a respected economic negotiator, especially in Moscow and Berlin. After his visit to Moscow in 1940–1, and in particular to the central antireligious museum which was housed in a convent church,²⁷ Țuțea's political views gained firmness: 'To have left-wing sympathies when you are thirty is just being generous,' he later remarked. 'To remain left-

oriented after another thirty years, one must be insane.²⁸ This turning point had been anticipated in *Manifestul Revoluției Naționale* (*The National Revolution Manifesto*), coedited by Țuțea in 1935,²⁹ a rather conservative political programme the aim of which was to enable Romania to become a fully-fledged political nation with a stable state.

From January to April 1938 Țuțea contributed articles to a well-known column on political economy in *Cuvântul* (*The Word*), edited by his mentor Nae Ionescu. Ionescu was a charismatic university lecturer in logic and metaphysics whose concept of *trăirism* (or ‘experientialism’) became the model for young intellectuals in Romania and a boost for the Orthodox faith. More than an existentialist concept, Ionescu’s ‘lived experience’ stressed the realism of ‘inner spiritual life’. Like his mentor, Țuțea saw mystical love both as an individual mirroring of divine *kenosis* (self-emptying love) and as a collective instrument of Absolute knowledge which can happen only on the religious plane.³⁰

In his articles in *Cuvântul* Țuțea promoted a policy based on preserving traditional Romanian values. This policy was possible because of the 1921 Agrarian Law, which had put an end to the great estates and had made Romania a nation of small landowners. Țuțea supported so-called ‘anarchic liberalism’ as the ideal form of economic organisation in small communities;³¹ his conception resembled that of Adam Smith, which involved free trade and privatisation.

During the Second World War Țuțea was director of the Romanian Ministry of Economy and one of Romania’s leading economists. When war broke out Romania was left at the mercy of Hitler and Stalin, who had agreed as early as August 1939 to divide Eastern Europe into spheres of influence. Romania was forced to enter the war against both the Soviet Union and Germany when they sought to divide its territories in 1940.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s many of the young thinkers who had taken a traditionalist and antiwestern position on the political right had to leave Romania. Among them were: Eugene Ionescu, who was to become a member of the French Academy; Emil Cioran, Țuțea’s friend, today acknowledged as one of this century’s greatest French moralists; and Mircea Eliade, who was to gain international renown as a professor of the history of religions at the University of Chicago. Despite temptations to pursue an academic career abroad, however, Țuțea chose to serve the Ministry of Economy. On 12 April 1948 he was imprisoned for the first time under the communist government.³²

During all these years, while his political views were evolving, Țuțea always remained a practising Christian, perhaps taking Holy Communion at Christmas and Easter. His so-called ‘reconversion’ was actually a clarification and confirmation of his genuinely Orthodox nature and differed from, for example, Sergei Bulgakov’s move to the Church from a position of religious scepticism.³³

Postwar Detention Years and Christian Illumination

Between 1944 and 1958 the Red Army imposed a tight communist regime on a fiercely anticommunist country which until then had barely had a communist party.³⁴ After the abdication of King Michael in 1947 the so-called ‘people’s tribunals’ which had been created in 1944 to put war criminals on trial turned out to be useful instruments for disposing of any and all opponents.³⁵ From 1948 to 1953 Țuțea was imprisoned as a political dissident. After the Hungarian revolution in 1956 he was again imprisoned until 1964 for ‘machination against the social order’. It was in some of

the most antichristian of Romanian prisons that Țuțea, the eldest son of an Orthodox priest who had been supposed to inherit the parish from his father, turned decisively to his religious roots and manifested himself as a representative of Orthodox spirituality. Țuțea's proverbial generosity had always been part of his remarkable personality and worked unconsciously as a directive force bringing him back to the very basics of his Orthodox origins. A remarkable prisoner, when living in isolation he used the pipes in his cell to tap out services and Bible lessons in Morse code to the other inmates. As a dormitory companion of erudite Romanian academics in seclusion, he deepened his knowledge of biblical Latin, Greek and Hebrew. The political prisoners used to consider themselves as 'living manuscripts', while calling the prison the 'Great University'. Some of the significant anecdotes of their seclusion are strikingly similar to those recorded in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. Strangely enough, they used ironically to call their daily prison records *Apophthegmata Patrum Rediviva*.

Reeducation Experience

In 1949, at the Ocnele Mari labour camp, Țuțea was included in the 'preparatory psychology group' of political prisoners who were to be 'reeducated' through torture. The aim of this so-called reeducation was to replace the victims' identity with that of their executioners. The 'new men' were intended to become 'torționari': their psychology was 'subjected to torsion' until they should confess to, and repent of, crimes they had never committed – crimes which in fact they themselves had been subjected to. The process displayed a sadistic ability on the part of the torturers to induce psychopathology in their most courageous opponents.³⁶

Amongst so much suffering, Țuțea discovered his inspirational preaching vocation. With his fellows morally and physically dying around him, he offered his own life to God. When his young friends were exposed to extreme torture Țuțea actually used to encourage them to consider their deprivation as voluntary fasting and to declare a hunger strike. At the same time he would give them lectures on topics linking theology and faith with culture and philosophy. Two of his favourite themes were 'suicide and sacrifice in the Bible' and 'inspiration and adventure in Shakespearean plays'. Țuțea did not regard accounts of suicide in the Hebrew scriptures as models for pious imitation. He considered suicide a violation of the inherent sanctity and wholeness of the human body. Producing Shakespeare's plays, he argued, was a continuous process of 'discovering' Christian values beyond the moral message of his tragedies.

It was at Aiud prison in the early 1960s that Petre Țuțea became a representative of Orthodox martyrdom in communist lands. Those who had undergone 'reeducation' (brainwashing) were required to make a public confession of their past errors. Țuțea's 'reeducation confession' was a three-hour speech on the subject 'Plato and Jesus Christ: reflections on Christianity as consolatory religion'. Apparently the prison governor asked Țuțea to redictate the speech for his own private records and told him that he would no longer regard him as an 'enemy of the people'. The priests in detention, who all listened to Țuțea's public confession, decided to elect him Metropolitan of Aiud Prison without any preliminary ordination.³⁷ Țuțea refused humbly, but from then on the prison inmates and even some of the guards would ask to see him for personal confession and counsel. Țuțea believed that pastoral guidance to overachievers had been given by the Apostle Paul, who reminded his hostile Corinthian flock that all historical achievements must be viewed soteriologically (1 Cor. 6:9–10).

Rediscovering Hesychasm

Paradoxically, Țuțea's spiritual experience was facilitated by his time of imprisonment. It was his extraordinary intellectual abilities which had made him an obvious target for communist purging of intellectuals; but it was something beyond these intellectual powers that helped him survive the visible world in order to take the spiritual way of perfection: 'If you want to be perfect ... come and follow me' (Mt 19:21). For Țuțea, 'suffering in silence is the soul's sublime way to redemption', and 'prayer and kneeling are two halves of a whole, because God will not have us love him if we do not humble ourselves before him.'³⁸

In Aiud prison hundreds of inmates shared a single dormitory. In the community so formed the company of political dissidents helped Țuțea deepen his spirituality and biblical knowledge. The prison turned out to be for Țuțea a 'university open to God' where he sought to break down the walls separating the church from the world. There he met Father Dumitru Stăniloae, professor at the Theological Faculty of Sibiu and at the Theological Institute of Bucharest, who by 1948 had translated the first three volumes of the Romanian version of the *Philokalia*, the compendium of patristic writings on prayer and hesychasm. Together with him Țuțea discovered the truth which had been formulated by another Orthodox lay thinker, Nicolas Cabasilas, that prayer and meditation on a spiritual level make laymen and priests equal to those who live in solitude.³⁹ Both Țuțea and Stăniloae were highly educated but valued what they had learned from traditional village life.

After Prison, 1964–1989

Țuțea was released from prison in 1964, at a time when the initially Stalinist regime headed by Gheorghiu-Dej had distanced itself from Moscow and was promising Romanian autonomy. Gheorghiu-Dej died suddenly in March 1965 after he had designated the young Nicolae Ceaușescu as the next leader of the Communist Party. Ceaușescu would continue to develop Gheorghiu-Dej's independent foreign policy, initially also showing signs of liberalisation in domestic policy. From his release from prison until December 1989, Țuțea nevertheless lived under either house arrest or city arrest in Bucharest in a room no larger than a monk's cell, with built-in microphones behind the walls which were monitored by Securitate officers day and night for almost thirty years. During the year before his death (on 3 December 1991) Țuțea was cared for in the 'Christiana' Orthodox Hospital in Bucharest.

In October 1965 Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the president of India who was an activist for peace and human rights, paid an official visit to Romania. He urged Ceaușescu to change his policy of violating the human rights of former prisoners of conscience. From March 1967 Țuțea was, against his will, designated to receive a nominal pension from the Ministry of Health and Social Security. In July 1968, following a decision of the Romanian Writers' Union which had perhaps taken into account Țuțea's phenomenal influence in underground intellectual circles, he was granted pensionary writer status despite not having had any book published.⁴⁰ Țuțea used to joke about this, saying that his 'books' had been recorded on tape by Securitate agents and that he was therefore *de jure* a member of the Writers' Union. One of these agents came to see Țuțea after the 1989 Revolution to tell him he had been converted to Christianity while listening to Țuțea's secretly recorded tapes. Țuțea's amazing courage as well as his self-denying modesty, shared with the many pilgrims who visited him in his guarded eighth-floor flat in Bucharest, perhaps

inspired some of the events of December 1989.

Before 1989 Țuțea could publish only under a pseudonym or under the threat of censorship. The last of his essays to be published during the communist era was a memorandum of his meeting with the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brâncuși back in 1938. Țuțea dictated this piece of work to me in 1983, but the full version was published under his real name only in 1987 in *Arta*, the magazine of the Romanian Fine Arts Union. The text is significant not only for the prechristian and Orthodox synthesis it develops in the light of Brâncuși's thinking, but also because it sets forth Țuțea's aesthetic and religious *credo*. It is a dialogue about the spiritual light as originating in prehistory and fully revealed under the sign of Christianity.⁴¹

After the Romanian Revolution of December 1989

Țuțea's ability to convey the implicit theology of his spirituality through explicit interpretation had deep roots in his dialogic nature and inclination for Luther-like 'table talk'. Țuțea had a singular talent for preaching 'at the table', to every kind of audience and in the most unusual circumstances. As an illustration we may cite the occasion in 1990 when Țuțea underwent an abdominal operation during which he delivered a dissertation about the eulogistic works of Bossuet and Pascal as compared with the oral texts of the early Christian monks.

Between 1989 and 1991 interviews with Țuțea were published in almost all the important Romanian newspapers. He appeared on television and broadcast on the radio. In December 1989 Țuțea was received by the then vice-president of the newly-established Provisional Council of the National Salvation Front. In January 1990 the Romanian minister of culture wrote an essay-portrait dedicated to Țuțea.⁴² Some of his manuscripts, which had been confiscated by Securitate agents, were returned to his disciples, who started publishing them. Țuțea was awarded honorary membership of the Society of Romanian Writers in spite of (or perhaps because of) the fact that he had had no book published under communism. A Bucharest–Paris dialogue between Țuțea and Emil Cioran, the outstanding French moralist, was then the theme of a television documentary which has been much discussed in both countries.⁴³ Țuțea's book on Mircea Eliade⁴⁴ was published serially by a monthly magazine in Transylvania. Romanians in exile have organised Țuțea conferences; in response to these Țuțea simply commented: 'Exaggeration is the hallmark of the insignificant.'

Introduction to Țuțea's Works

The Treatise on Christian Anthropology

Perhaps as a result of his time in prison Țuțea began to suffer from Parkinson's disease. It was excruciatingly difficult for him to write his treatise on Christian anthropology, his major work, of which the first two (of five) volumes have now been published and are arousing increasing interest today among theologians (see appended Bibliography).

Țuțea's Christian anthropology comprises a collection of aphorisms to be fixed in the minds of certain disciples who will then convey them to others. Țuțea's laconic, almost elliptical style with its fine irony was appropriate to an almost Jansenist practice of bringing theological debates into the 'salon' if not into the high street. The remarkable freshness and spontaneity of his style reflect his long familiarity with philosophical and theological concepts. Țuțea is at all times an original thinker, and

even when challenging philosophical systems such as Kant's or Hegel's he gives the feeling that he is rewriting philosophy or theology in the way Pascal reinvented the 32 propositions of Euclid.

There are five themes which are especially prominent in Țuțea's exposition of Christian anthropology. Reference to them here will give the reader some sense of the free yet incisive nature of his reflection. These references are neither exhaustive nor analytical but will, I hope, enhance the overall purpose of this paper, to provide an introduction to this remarkable Orthodox thinker and lay monk.

1. The first important theme is the relationship between *theology* and *reality*. Țuțea's treatise on Christian anthropology begins with and centres on the definition of theology. This links it with the implicit Pauline definition of reality as the realm of the hidden wisdom of God which 'never entered into the mind of man' (I Cor 2:9). Țuțea describes the human situation as being determined by an individual's relationship with the Divinity, the cosmos, others and the self; it is 'a vision that is theocentric, cosmocentric, sociocentric, and anthropocentric'. In Țuțea's view, only the first of these relationships binds us to the world of the Real. Each of the other three relationships reflects the human being endlessly questioning and seeking in a cosmos which contains his own finality. Țuțea considers that 'theology is knowledge of the real; of Divinity revealed by God's manifestation of himself, as God become human, and as Trinity, handed on by sacred history and holy tradition.'⁴⁵ The Romanian thinker mystically contrasts the 'reality' of 'things which eye never saw, and ear never heard' with 'appearance' which, for him, describes the empirical world. Accordingly, the positivist approach would illegitimately oppose the 'real' to the 'immaterial and ideal', which cannot be linked with the transcendent nature of the Word of God.

Țuțea's evident hostility towards systematic attempts to fix the world by means of specific definitions indicates the antiphilosophical nature of his thinking. He asserts that no truth emerges from the relationship between human beings and the empirical world. The autonomous human being is therefore imprisoned in a world of questioning and seeking, relativising things and turning them into problems whose answers, although convenient, are arbitrary. Țuțea's position is, in this respect, very close to that of the chief exponent of fourteenth-century hesychasm, the Greek theologian Gregory Palamas. In his first *Triad* in defence of the hesychasts Palamas quotes the Greek proverb 'every word clashes with another' ('*logos logou palaiei*'), by which he means that any argument advanced based on human reason can be answered by another argument; one cannot find the final answer on the level of philosophical argumentation, but only on the level of spiritual experience.⁴⁶

2. When posing the question of the relationship between *grace* and *human understanding* Țuțea clearly concedes that the experience of grace is not under a human being's control, although its immanent manifestations are projected into creeds and confessions. Țuțea emphasises the priority of church authority over free experience. For him, Scripture cannot be conceived outside the framework of the Church, which organises spiritual life and prevents anarchy in the world. Both the Church and the interpretation of Scripture are in dynamic polarity with the Word of God, which equally transcends and pervades the scriptural texts.

While arguing that God's existence cannot be established or discounted on the basis of rational argument, Țuțea considers faith to be neither rational nor logical, although it seems to be intellectually comprehensible. Nor is faith irrational or even emotional. As a gift from God, faith has to be received responsibly rather than accidentally. For Țuțea faith is therefore a given mystery and an attribute of grace resting

on our readiness to receive it: 'those who receive grace are rescued from the unrest of the questioning world by God who is almighty and loving ... the existence of sinful human beings cannot be explained after the coming of the saviour which this sin has occasioned.'⁴⁷

3. Țuțea's mystical view of knowledge is the starting point for contrasting *science* and *truth* in terms of their relationship to *eucharist* and *revelation*. For him science in a positivist sense 'is made up of transient useful facts and convenient mental assumptions'.⁴⁸ Science, Țuțea says, is based on continuous approximation, while a single truth follows necessarily from the real unity of life and world.⁴⁹ This is why Țuțea deplores the contemporary loss of faith in future life – the consequence of a false idea of science and its ability to answer all questions.

On the other hand, Țuțea clearly states that philosophy in no way leads to salvation. For him, philosophy is a mental commodity which gives guidance only in the world of time and space and in human relations. When separated from the Real, the so-called autonomous human being can find only utilitarian explanations and intellectual axiomatic illusions, wanderings among aporias. As I have already shown, Țuțea defines aporias in Nicolai Hartmann's terms; that is, as problems insoluble by the means available. He regards Hartmann's aporetics as one of the main methods of philosophical inquiry. However, unlike Hartmann, Țuțea considers aporias and antinomies (in the Kantian sense) as provisional impasses of the autonomous human being, rather than as by definition insoluble.

Țuțea's reluctance to employ philosophical theories to prove both God's knowable nature and the intrinsic limits of human knowledge of God does not amount to philosophical scepticism. On the contrary, Țuțea thinks that one should joyfully prepare oneself for meeting God. Secular existence is, as it were, one's lifelong initiation into one's lasting and revelatory eucharist; one can spend a lifetime becoming acquainted with the idea of God, yet not 'encounter' him. The time and place of any encounter with God cannot be calculated or predicted by human beings, including the saints. The knowledge of God for which we strive is given to us only as a revelational gift. In Țuțea's view the study of history – whether undertaken by laymen or by priests – will not necessarily end in revelation: the Truth can only be received as a gift whether it is sought for or not.⁵⁰

Like Mircea Eliade in his view of the human condition, Țuțea draws a line between authentic being and non-being as defined by the process of becoming. The state of continuous approximating at the juncture of being and becoming is nevertheless seen by Țuțea as drawing implicitly on apophatic theology which holds that God is more than and beyond any language. Against Eliade, Țuțea argues that the sacred cannot be reached hermeneutically. Țuțea considers that language, whether symbolic or not, can be nothing but a vehicle for grace. No language could set up a sacred scenario capable of raising an individual's religious and social status to a new ontological plane. According to Țuțea, even Eliade's phenomenological approach, involving symbolic, multiple meanings of myths and rites, cannot transcend the historic and profane limits of those who reconstruct symbolic sacred space.⁵¹

Țuțea is in agreement with Eliade's assertion that every hierophany is an existential awakening that defines a person as religious. This is possible only by revelation or during the Christian liturgy, Țuțea says. He nevertheless dismisses Eliade's humanism, which goes beyond Plato and the recovery of classical Greek texts; for Țuțea thinks that Eliade's concept of the sacred is conceived intentionally at a human level which is essentially profane. Such a concept cannot establish the content of religion unless grace is involved. The Christian canons do not imply historic incom-

pleteness unable to provide the foundation of real knowledge. Conceived outside the Christian mystical view of the human being, the history of religion illustrates an epistemological adventure unable to find a hierarchy, or to establish a primacy among various religions.

Țuțea stresses that Christian priests are not mystagogues; they do not interpret mysteries. It is only pagan priests who interpret the world in a mythological way. Țuțea considers that Christian priests communicate mysteries ritually together with the community of believers during the eucharist. They do not undertake a symbolic initiation into sacred mysteries. Țuțea interprets Eliade's concept of *anamnesis* liturgically, as salvific through the eucharist, rather than as a process of mythic remembering through narration and the performance of ritual. Replacing consciousness of guilt with confession, for example, Țuțea associates the disclosure of thoughts with the beginning of mystical healing.

Țuțea considers that outside the eucharist, things, nature and even culture are ultimately silent and opaque. He approaches theological hermeneutics not only as a conceptual exercise based on revealed premises but also, and primarily, as an explanation of true Christian experience. Țuțea does not equate inspiration with revelation, as the active presence of the Divine, but considers both of them as having a transcendent root. He thinks that both inspiration and the sacred punctuate history and can be identified soteriologically. The totality of these punctuations traces the 'way of God', imperfectly reflected in the 'way of man'.

4. Țuțea also contrasts *interpretation* and *dogma*. 'Mystically, human beings experience the world of Christian dogma, while historically they experience the world of laws, ways of life, cycles (which are either repetitive, according to Vico, or non-repetitive, according to Spranger), and appearances. Secular language and the relative nature of human interpretations of divine symbolism keep human inquiry captive in a world of convenient fictions.'⁵² Moreover, since secular symbols and language are temporally and spatially variable, it is only by situating them within a religious context, i.e. the eucharist, that their functions can be mystically fulfilled rather than historically discovered.

For Țuțea, truth is essentially rooted in the individual's relationship with Jesus Christ. Because truth is dogmatic it is something which encounters us and which is therefore mediated through Christian worship. Țuțea deplors the influence of the Renaissance, which in his view resulted in the replacement of human adoration of God with anthropocentric moralising. While refuting both historical pragmatism and biblical idealism, Țuțea shows that the active participation of the laity in the church is just as charismatic as that of the clergy. Rejecting any form of esoteric mysticism, Țuțea affirms, in the hesychast tradition, that the goal of deification or *theosis* of man in Christ is offered to all members of the church rather than to 'special mystics'.

5. Țuțea's Christocentric ontology is based on two apparently opposed concepts: *freedom* and *dogma*. His vision of human freedom, which he defines as 'submission to mystical dogma',⁵³ has sometimes been taken as antihuman rather than as a critique of the dehumanisation involved in secularism. Similarly, his reflections on the weakening authority of the Church, which he links with the growth of humanism, have sometimes been interpreted as a hardline Orthodoxy. In his Christian anthropology, Țuțea never ceases to protest against the view that conventional logic represents the limits of so-called autonomous man. According to Țuțea's triangle of values and relationships between God, nature and man, the God revealed to us by the biblical prophets is irreducible to the logical categories of the intellect.

Dogma is mystery revealed ... I regard freedom as dogmatically having two bases: one here, in the Christian temple, where the Trinity, through the liturgy, envelops the priest who is a consecrator of the eucharist rather than a mystagogue; and the other somewhere beyond, in the invisible world described by St Paul the Apostle, where freedom is absolute.⁵⁴

We have been reviewing just some of the key issues which in my view serve as an introduction to Țuțea's thought. His writings seek to address them in greater depth. Of the five volumes of Țuțea's treatise on Christian anthropology only two have been published since his death (see Bibliography). Parkinson's disease made it extremely difficult for him to finish his treatise. The writing and dictating of the last three volumes was part of Țuțea's 'white martyrdom'. *Stilurile (Styles)*, the third volume of the anthropology, was almost entirely completed; the fourth and fifth volumes, *Disciplinele minții omenеști (The Disciplines of the Human Mind)* and *Dogmele, sau Situaarea spiritului în imperiul certitudinii (Dogmas, or the Place of Spirit in the Realm of Certitude)*, are fragmentary. Their publication will perhaps arouse enthusiasm among theologians. We should nevertheless take into account the fact that Țuțea was not able to review his last writings. Central ideas are reused or even reformulated by Țuțea in these volumes and other interviews. The repetition of ideas is part of the oral structure of Țuțea's anthropology and often becomes a prayer-like refrain running through all five volumes. These thematic repetitions give Țuțea's writing a sort of liturgical character; like any Orthodox liturgy, Țuțea's liturgy is long enough to require both dedication and discernment of spirit from its reader. I hope that my modest introduction will serve as a spur for deeper theological reflection on Țuțea's writings, and for new translations of his works.

Main Themes of Țuțea's Life and Work

Liberal Orthodoxy

Țuțea's understanding of contemporary Romanian nationalism is that it is a Christian reaction to Romania's experience under communist dictatorship and atheist propaganda. Nationalism in Romania today, then, should perhaps be viewed not so much as a cause for concern but rather as one of the few phenomena that might enable Romanians to rediscover their great spiritual tradition and peacefully reestablish a sense of collective identity. Țuțea's concept of Christian nationhood came from his belief that religious self-esteem is rooted in the very spiritual foundations of Romanian life and must be thought of as one of the manifestations of the divine. The religious revival prompted by the collapse of communism is nationalist inasmuch as the Romanian Orthodox Church is a national church; these are grounds for regarding Christian nationalism as a cohesive force for constructive unity rather than as a cause of aggressive instability.

In this context, Țuțea's reflections on the Pauline 'discernment of spirits'⁵⁵ are appropriate to current ethical concerns. Țuțea understands 'ethnic discretion' as the ability of a nation to distinguish speech inspired by God from that inspired by the devil. A new vision of the universal order is coming into being based on the encouraging data of science and technology, Țuțea notes. The concentration of great energy in small spaces has become possible due to the progress of science. Small nations can have, at least theoretically, access to nuclear and non-strategic capabilities on a large scale which give them not only a destructive power but also a prodigious pacifying potential at the negotiating table. This fact allows us to consider as false the positions

of so-called 'great ones' or military superpowers and to regard with irony their foolish conceit. In this context, Țuțea ingeniously connects Christian dogma with political doctrine: 'Vigorous nations act as if they were eternal, even when their theoretical self-consciousness would not allow this.'⁵⁶ Elsewhere Țuțea writes:

Science, art, and philosophy are called to deny the pride which is harmful on the ethical-social and political level, and sterile on the spiritual level. I have learned that Heidegger asserted that the Romanian people could play an important part in this context. This conviction of the famous thinker derived from what he knew of the promising spiritual traditions which are projections of the great interior force of our nation. This force will also be demonstrated in the future in great creativity as a result of its irrepressible genius, in a climate of complete freedom ... An outstanding spiritual culture deprived of a material base saddens us because of our financial impotence and makes an authoritarian regime much more difficult to bear than if we were at a lower spiritual level ... So, the historical development of free peoples is guaranteed by the level of their theoretical and technical consciousness. This concept must be transformed into an article of faith. Only so can it become effective. If in the realm of art pessimism gives greater subtlety and softness, in science, technology, and above all in politics it constitutes an absolute nonsense.⁵⁷

Țuțea also suggests that in the process of replacing the state by the market in the formerly communist countries of Eastern Europe, society must be completely reconstructed upon Christian principles rather than modified by adding Christian ingredients to secularised and weakened markets, nations and states. According to Țuțea, a European commonwealth governed by limited tariff controls on international trade should remain close to the Greek (and Orthodox) concept of *koinonia*, or community of sharing, based on the generosity of, and initially supervised by, the wealthy states and international companies. In Țuțea's view such a welfare community could preserve the national identity of states while correcting their economic individualism, which is based on competition between national economies. Țuțea's vision of a continental and global economy is centred on the idea that the economic order itself is part of a divine plan which is to be fulfilled by the people of God. Although secular in essence, Cartesianism and the French Revolution are seen by Țuțea as having stimulated a Christian awakening in the European context which emphasised the concept of solidarity at the individual and the ethnic level. Țuțea considers that a new economic order will succeed in Europe only if state intervention is used to mitigate responsibly the materialistic and secularising effects of free-market economies.⁵⁸

Țuțea has an optimistic view of the compatibility between Orthodox Christianity and liberalism. His conviction is that the beneficial influence of the nation's largest church on Romanian society consists in developing the sense of personal freedom as achieved in solidarity and community. The self-transcendence that makes solidarity possible encourages the sense that individuals are equal in the sight of God. Such human equality within the divine order which subordinates mankind to God is in Țuțea's view a precondition for any Christian community which is essentially a community of freedom. A personal sense of community is a prerequisite for maximising the natural liberty of individuals while they achieve essential social interaction. As naturally relational, the self can most effectively secure its private interests only by going beyond itself into spiritual community where, Țuțea explains, the self finds its eternal significance: 'Christianity appeared in history, yet is eternal. Eternity

descended in time and space ... Although historic, liberalism is constant in universal history. One cannot go beyond liberalism because that would mean a collective sterilisation of the human personality.⁵⁹ In Țuțea's view a liberalism which does not involve turning to one's neighbour in love always leads to intolerant nationalism, which inevitably results in irrational xenophobia. Țuțea nevertheless stresses the aristocratic components of liberalism and opposes them to the principles of democracy concerned with quantity rather than quality.⁶⁰ He also rejects the social uniformity which results from the triumph of the collectivist principle over the individual. He speaks approvingly of the entrepreneur as the founder of modern civilisation but criticises contemporary liberal systems for their inability to prevent capitalist competition, with its materialistic emphasis, from creating a class of socially underprivileged people.⁶¹

Țuțea's liberal Orthodoxy does not subordinate the individual to either the state or the masses. He recommends that every individual periodically review his or her life as if rendering account to God for his or her actions within the community. Each individual creative act of this kind contains an element of confession which enhances a sense of one's own identity and that of the nation and is also pleasing to God. This is why any spiritual dialogue should be initiated by means of disclosing thoughts, in a descriptive rather than explanatory way, as in the literature of the Desert.⁶²

Revival of Spiritual Tradition and Political Controversy

Țuțea's political and spiritual journey as a lay monk points to an alternative to the nationalist-atheist ideology which is still in force after the demise of the Soviet bloc. In many of the formerly communist countries the rehabilitation of dissident thinkers and artists has to be understood less as genuine rehabilitation, however, than as a function of political uncertainty.⁶³ More than ten books by Țuțea have been published since his death. These books are rather difficult to digest, which makes them susceptible to party political reading. Țuțea's detractors have already started attacking his prewar juvenile Marxism and his extreme nationalist views from the time before his conversion in the catacombs of the communist prisons. Țuțea's sayings are either deliberately edited to suit the political programmes of the parties in conflict or simply misinterpreted.

Țuțea's theological references draw upon Roman Catholic sources – Thomas Aquinas, Augustine – and even Protestant mystics. Even if Țuțea prefers to humble himself with reverence in front of a praying country priest through whom one can find the Divine Absolute ... he seems to have ignored the Fathers of the Eastern Church.⁶⁴

Țuțea's writings show that this is a valid observation. The apparent paradox of Țuțea as a representative of Orthodox spirituality who often quotes non-Orthodox authors is nevertheless elucidated by Țuțea's own sincerity and generosity in Christ, which defy any anticumenical position. Țuțea's approach to Christianity has the inclusive value of ultimate confession in which love for and thanksgiving to God prevail over theoretical controversies.

Freedom as Monastic Counter-culture

Țuțea's central view of freedom as joy fulfilled in obeying divine dogma is a continuation of the monastic claim that spiritual authority is supreme. In the third century,

Antony of Egypt gave away his possessions and retreated into the desert, and devoted his life to ascetism, attracting disciples who set up the first Christian monastic community. St Antony the Great was seeking to respond to Jesus' command 'Come, follow me.' These same fundamentally simple words stand behind Țuțea's attempt to establish a quasi-monastic counter-culture.⁶⁵

Țuțea consciously engaged in a *'viva voce'* mission which defied the written character of the history of culture. He realised that antichristian censorship and political oppression return periodically and must be overcome each time anew by the oral counter-culture which has been recounting Jesus' message since the beginning of the Christian era. Țuțea always acknowledged with reverence the difficulties which must have been encountered by those inspired to compose the Gospel texts.

Țuțea's life and works are within the Orthodox tradition which sees monasticism as a way of self-motivated, inspirational and non-intrusive mission. 'The man blesses the place,' says a Romanian proverb, and not vice versa. The monk does not come out into society, but individuals are encouraged to go to the monastery.

Țuțea at the Beginning of a New Millennium

The new political freedom following the collapse of communism in Romania gave more people access to Țuțea's writings. They have already attracted much interest among theologians, politicians, economists, artists and people who in general want to think for themselves. The younger generation in the Romanian Orthodox Church has embraced Țuțea as a spiritual leader even though he was never ordained, like many elders in the Egyptian desert, including Antony the Great. All these people and generations to come have still to discover deeper meanings within Țuțea's life and works, which will in turn strengthen the capacity of the lay intelligentsia to rebuild religious liberty and life in Romania.

Țuțea's Socratic life and his method of spiritual direction have brought up to date the similar techniques of St John Climacus and St Simeon the New Theologian. His model of moral health based on the sacrificial consciousness of salvation in Christ has certain affinities with St John Climacus' *Ladder of Divine Ascent* and certainly requires further scholarly study. His approach to an understanding of the pathology of the contemporary spirit in the context of the qualities of Christian perfection as described in the Beatitudes obviously challenges those scholars who would classify happiness as a psychiatric disorder.⁶⁶

Țuțea's defence of Christian truth anticipates the inevitable dismantling of the old communist structures and ideology. His life provides an ontological model for the way in which access to the truth of our own history should enable us to see clearly that what a few destructive people wish to achieve – however attractive their ideologies or promises might sound – is nothing other than the confusion and lack of faith which always result from the ignorance of an entire society. The Bible, argues Țuțea, is the supreme authority to be consulted in the hope of building a healthier future for our children and ourselves. If you leave aside the ultimate questions and answers of the Bible, you will succeed in building only a hell of cynicism, aggressiveness, destructive arrogance and stupidity. These strong convictions are doubtless responsible for the fact that Țuțea remained a dissident even after the 1989 Romanian revolution.

During the prolonged occupation of University Square in Bucharest in the spring and summer of 1990, until its suppression by the miners, many of the students and young intellectuals came to see Țuțea for spiritual guidance and political advice. Two

weeks before the bloody end to this passive demonstration Țuțea made his position clear in an article published in the newspaper *România liberă* with the significant title ‘The Masses Can Be Deceived in History’.⁶⁷ He laid stress on the inspirational power of the boos and catcalls of the crowd which led to the fall of Ceaușescu’s dictatorship – before the revolution was hijacked by a clique of reformist communist conspirators.⁶⁸

Petre Țuțea’s spiritual repentance bears witness to an exemplary life lived in accordance with Christian calling and faith. His life and teaching occupy a significant place in the long history of Romanian Orthodox resistance to the antichristian denial of the soul.

Conclusions

What, in the end, is the message for us of Țuțea’s life and works? I began this paper with a sketch of Țuțea’s life, which resembled that of a hesychast and spanned most of this century. I argued that his spiritual journey provides a paradigm for the way in which nationalist thinking can encounter the entire spectrum of political attitudes, from communism to national socialism, and in the end receive illumination from Orthodox Christianity as a religion of intercommunity healing and fulfilment for mankind as a whole. I then discussed Țuțea’s treatise on Christian anthropology in the light of his view that theology is meaningful only if it is a corollary of faith. I showed that Țuțea’s Christian realism lies at the root of his anthropology, which focuses on the relationship between the human being, God and nature. In this respect Țuțea’s approach is distinct both from Christian anthropological concerns of the first millennium of the Church — concerns to do with defining such concepts as Trinity, Christ and knowledge of God — and from modern Christian anthropology, which addresses the subject of the human being as an independent part of theology. I also argued that Țuțea’s Christian anthropology arose out of the present need for the Church to address questions posed by contemporary people, who are becoming more and more independent of the life of the Church. I discussed Țuțea’s view of the compatibility between Christian nationalism and liberalism in the context of his personal experience.

We may conclude that Petre Țuțea’s theological contribution to the Romanian Orthodox Church today is manifold. Firstly, his contribution to the reconnection of Christian dogma with living lay spirituality is remarkable: it involved setting up a monastic type of counter-culture in opposition to the prevalent materialistic ideology in one of the most dogmatic communist countries in the world. Secondly, historically speaking, and despite his rejection of any form of systematic philosophy, his contribution paradoxically represents the first systematic attempt to examine Christian anthropology from a Romanian Orthodox point of view. Thirdly, in the postcommunist era, Țuțea’s idea of liberal Orthodoxy and his critique of modern capitalism should be considered as underlining an alternative to radical nationalism in Eastern Europe. Last but not least, Țuțea’s teaching about personal salvation on behalf of a nation is relevant to contemporary concerns. His vision of the *eschaton* (God’s final Order) as being historically achievable only if and when human beings respond to the moral call of The Sermon on the Mount certainly deserves renewed consideration.

Țuțea’s criticisms of both systematic and symbolic thinking provide the basis from which his Christian anthropology proceeds. The advantage of his approach is that it starts from his empirical and intellectual experience rather than from abstract ideas. Țuțea thought of himself as a mystic, that is to say as a spiritual man who has a per-

sonal knowledge of God attained through personal experience. He never gave details of this experience. In his last interviews he spoke of himself ironically as an unfulfilled man. He considered himself to be much less than a saint, but he found immense joy in transcending self to serve others. When I last met the late Emil Cioran in Paris in 1992, he characterised Țuțea simply: 'I cannot imagine Țuțea unhappy. Moreover, he had the gift of making you feel happy too.'

Țuțea's treatise on Christian anthropology is a window which opens into the theological synthesis he offered: a synthesis of the absolute and the relative, the monistic and pluralistic, the secular and the divine, the political and the religious. These polarities should be further explored in the light of his other works which are mentioned in the bibliography. Țuțea's work should also be fully assessed as part of a contemporary current in European thought that has been open to interdisciplinary discussions on the relation between economics, sociology, politics and theology. Finally, his basic premise should be explored, a premise based on the spirit of Orthodox tolerance and discretion which has marked Romanian spirituality for centuries, that until we are emptied of this world's demands we cannot be filled with God.

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⁵⁵ 'Discernment of spirits' is a concept frequently used by contemporary writers on spirituality. Its immediate source is the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius Loyola, which contain a few pages usually entitled 'Rules for the Discernment of Spirits,' but the term itself is Pauline: in I Cor 12:10, where St Paul is listing 'spiritual gifts', the discernment of spirits (*diakriseis pneumatōn*) is among them. St Athanasius used the phrase *charisma diakriseos pneumatōn* in his *Vita Antonii* to give account of the perfection of St Antony of Egypt (251?–356). For a more comprehensive discussion of the concept see Joseph T. Lienhard, 'Discernment of spirits in the early church', Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica*, vol. 17, part 2 (Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1982), pp. 519–22.

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Appendix: Introduction to the First Volume of Petre Țuțea's Treatise on Christian Anthropology

Theology is knowledge of the real, of Divinity revealed by God's manifestation of himself, as God become human, and as Trinity, handed on by sacred history and holy tradition.

There is only one single Truth. Many truths mean no truth. A single truth follows

necessarily from the real unity of life and the world.

The knowledge of a human being, considered as autonomous, is made up of transient useful facts and convenient mental assumptions, of axioms and invariants.

Hieratic art is an imperfect reflection of Transcendence.

Art intended to give pleasure represents natural human inclinations, making use of forms which appear and disappear, giving only transient satisfaction.

There is no such thing as artistic catharsis, in the Aristotelian sense, but only ritual catharsis. 'Artistic ethics' is arbitrarily normative, deriving from human decisions; but human beings cannot create a real moral order, but only a legal, variable order, which changes according to human needs.

Human beings, considered as autonomous, can form opinions which may be useful, pleasing, convenient, gratuitous or mistaken.

I; I and you; I and the world; subject–object; here and there; truth and error; doubt and certainty; dogma and norm; sign and thing; question and answer; searching and receiving; life and death; immortality and absolute death; creation and imitation; happiness and unhappiness; salvation and damnation.

Those who receive grace are rescued from the tensions of the questioning world by God, who is almighty and loving. Basically, here in this world, the imperfect human being experiences the polarity of sacred–satanic, moving between Augustine's two cities, the city of God and the earthly city, or that of the devil. Why? We do not know. Since original sin is the '*felix culpa*' (St Augustine), the existence of sinful human beings cannot be explained after the coming of the Saviour which this sin has occasioned. Human beings on their own level 'know by unknowing' – the Socratic-Christian view. At this level truth, the good and the beautiful are illusory. *Homo stultus* ('the stupid human being') has lost, because of pride, the likeness he received from God, swamped by pride and things, renouncing 'the assistance of the Divine Guide'.

(Text of 'Appendix' translated from the Romanian by Hugh Wybrev and Alexandru Popescu)