Poetry and Philosophy in a Folk Quatrain Selected by Lucian Blaga

This study focuses on the variants and translations (in German and Spanish) of the first text included by Lucian Blaga in his Antologie de poezie populară (Antology of folk poetry, 1966). Here, God is depicted as having fallen asleep, his head resting on the roof of a monastery; he seems to be utterly unconcerned about the needs of men.

From 1930 on, Blaga refers to this text in several of his publications. In Spaţiu Mioritic (The Mioritic Space), he views it as proof that man does not doubt God’s presence in the world. In Luntrea lui Caron (Caron’s Boat), on the other hand, he associates this text with a legend according to which, at the beginning of the world, God placed the heavens in very close proximity to the earth. In his “vilenes and sinfulness”, man threw stones at the heavens or soiled them with dirt. Consequently, God lifted the heavens very high above the earth. In the same piece, Blaga opines that these texts may be rooted in the “secular disappointments” of the Romanian people and that they stand in contradiction to Christian doctrine. Furthermore, Blaga asserts that, were it not for the century-long struggle of the Romanian people for political rights, these two texts could have provided, in the century of lights, a basis for the development of a philosophical system similar to the philosophy that emerged in France during the same period. However, a strong rebuttal of Blaga’s assertions comes from none other than Benedict XVI. In his farewell address (2013), alluding to a well-known passage from the Gospel according to Matthew (8:24–27), the Holy Father states that, during his Pontificate, he “felt like St. Peter and the Apostles in the boat on the Sea of Galilee. The Lord has given us many days of sunshine and light breezes, days when fishing was plentiful, but also times when the water was rough and the winds against us, just as throughout the whole history of the Church, when the Lord seemed to be sleeping”.

Since Benedict XVI himself employs imagery identical to that found in Romanian folklore, it follows that Blaga’s assertions regarding the alleged lack of conformity between the text under consideration and Christian theology must be revised.