

# The European Dimensions of the Transylvanian Humanist Scholar Timotei Cipariu

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## The Values of European Culture—the Foundation of the Transylvanian Scholar’s Training and Activity

**T**IMOTEI CIPARIU (1805–1887) is an erudite scholar, a person of culture with exceptional achievements in many fields (history, literature, linguistics, dialectology, philosophy, theology, ethics, economics, folklore, Oriental studies), inspired and guided by the humanist and rationalist values of Romanian and European culture. Placing himself in the avant-garde of the Romanian culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, together with G. Barițiu, S. Bărnuțiu, Ion Heliade Rădulescu, N. Bălcescu, M. Kogălniceanu, A. T. Laurian, the Transylvanian scholar was considered the most faithful follower of the teachings issued by the coryphaei of the Transylvanian School, starting with Samuil Micu, Gheorghe Șincai, and Petru Maior. As Ștefan Manciulea wrote, his complex and diversified work proves that he was one of the most bright and complex minds with which Blaj gifted the entire nation. Synthetically, Nicolae Iorga described him as “a profile of European humanist, descended from the legends on our land.”<sup>1</sup> He was a priest, canon, then chapter provost of the Greek Catholic diocese of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș, the director of the diocesan printing press, a founding member (1861) and then chairman (1877–1887) of the Association of the Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People (ASTRA), a member of the Romanian Literary Society, vice-chairman of the Romanian Academy, a member of the German Society of Oriental Studies, and a member of the Diet of Sibiu (1863–1864).

The erudite scholar was educated in Blaj, where he took all the existing educational levels (1816–1825), including the one year course in philosophy, and then he studied at the Theological Seminary. He worked as a teacher, and during 1854–1875 he was headmaster of the Gymnasium of Blaj. During 1828–1830 he taught philosophy, but the course in philosophy was cancelled due to the events caused by the 1848 Revolution and was resumed only starting with 1861. The defining feature of Cipariu’s life and career was his passion for self-learning, making him “the most knowledgeable autodidact in the Romanian culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>2</sup> He became an acknowledged bibliophile at national level, in the Europe and the Middle East, acquiring books, manuscripts, journals,

and various other publications in 12 foreign languages, European as well as Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, and Syrian. At the age of senescence, while drafting his memoirs, Cipariu remembered how his passion for reading and writing had been triggered ever since he was in his parents' house: "When I saw a book somewhere, my soul was burning to get it and to read it. That ardor and unsaid pleasure for books remained a burning presence during my entire life."<sup>3</sup>

Devoted to study, to knowledge, to the discovery of novelty and to creation, the Transylvanian scientist had notable achievements in various complementary fields, such as publishing, scholarly research, literary and philosophical creation, education, without forgetting the political and cultural activity dedicated to the emancipation of the Romanian people according to the principles of the natural law and to the values of civilized Europe.

As a publicist and editor, he founded and supported the magazines *Organul luminărei* (The Organ of Enlightenment) (1847–1848), *Organul național* (The National Organ) (1848), *Învățătorul poporului* (The People's Teacher) (1848), and the *Arhivă pentru filologie și istoria* (The Philological and Historical Archive) (1867–1870, 1872), publications which aimed to properly advise and guide the people through the contents of the published articles and information. Afterwards, he contributed articles to the *Foaie literară* (Literary Paper), *Gazeta de Transilvania* (The Transylvanian Gazette), *Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură* (Newspaper for Mind, Heart and Literature), *Familia* (The Family), *Concordia*, etc.

As a scientist, Cipariu was motivated by the strong will and wish to see his countrymen, the tormented Romanian nation of Transylvania, happier and more active in a democratic constitutional state, holders of political, social and economic rights, equal to the other nations of the Habsburg Empire. For him, the knowledge of Romanian and European national history, the languages as a binder of peoples and communities, the emergence of the literary and unitary Romanian language, the blossoming of literature and culture, the development of education and of learning, of industry and trade, were the goals and the means for national emancipation, for achieving the highest level of civilization. All these fields became the privileged subject of his scientific research. The published works<sup>4</sup> abundantly highlight the extent of his concerns and the recognized value of the results of his research in the Europe of his time. In this regard, he was praised as the "father of Romanian philology," "great scholar the field of languages," "erudite translator," "founder of the Romanian philosophical terminology," "original and great figure of Romanian philology," and "the greatest Romanian Orientalist of the time."

Politically, his activity as a patriotic militant was guided by the Kantian enlightening, the democratic ideology of the 1848 movement, which he embraced from the vantage point of the philosophy of natural rights and with a deep faith in the universal and inalienable rights of man and of peoples. He participated from such a position to the achievement of the program of the 1848 Revolution, being appreciated as a balanced and agile political activist, the most diplomatic and tactful of the revolutionary leaders. He was the first secretary of the Blaj Assembly, a member of the Committee of Reconciliation of the Romanians' Assembly of September 1848. He conceived and drafted important documents on the social and political rights which Romanians had claimed for themselves and submitted to the emperor in Vienna. He spoke in public reunions, he held

speeches in the Transylvanian Diet in Sibiu, thus also militating for justice, freedom and equality for all the nationalities of Transylvania.

The Transylvanian scholar's entire work and activity was oriented towards the values of European culture, starting with those consecrated by the evolution of the classical Greek and Roman civilization, continuing with the Renaissance and the modern era. The principles underpinning his research and published works are of the humanist-rationalist type; the scholar's deep political and philosophical credo is of illuminist inspiration. In this regard, he said in a speech held in 1859 that "justice and truth can never be split one from the other. And without the knowledge of truth, without justice, without fear of God, man is not human, but a beast. Without the light of truth, the world is nothing else but a frightening cave."<sup>5</sup> In another speech, held in 1863 during the session of the Transylvanian Diet of Sibiu, he expressed the belief that the progress of the country depended on the place taken by "the ideas of civilization, justice, freedom and humanity, which represent the character of the great glorious eras and towards which the entire mankind runs with all its strength, like aiming to reach a supreme goal for that goal is holy and eternal as it expresses the wish of the human heart and the postulate of reason."<sup>6</sup>

When it comes to the driving force behind the Transylvanian scientist's motivation and beliefs which generated the unceasing and perseverant efforts in scientific research, in philosophical reflections, or in the activity of the political militant and educator of the Romanian nation, the answer could be found in the investigation and analysis of the nature of his patriotic consciousness, in his European and universal culture. In what concerns the last one, Cipariu made the distinction between the cultured and civilized peoples—at the highest level of culture, of living and of humanity—and the peoples lagging far behind, among which there was also the Romanian nation of Transylvania. In front of the European political and socioeconomic realities of his time, especially of the sociopolitical reality of the Habsburg Empire, Cipariu experienced feelings of pain and revolt, expressed in political and publicist reactions which were both skillful and effective. Lucian Blaga explained the stubbornness, the obstinacy in the fight for freedom and equity of the generation of the 1848 Revolution by blaming it on their faith and vision: "A faith which can only be found in the apostles' deeds. For them, the books were the bricks for erecting the world; and they felt they were called upon to play a part in the construction of the Romanian world, which was left behind somewhere in the beginning of the times."<sup>7</sup> They were motivated to achieve, starting almost from nothing, that which Romanian history had been neglecting for a thousand years.

## Philosophy, a "Divine Science"

**A**S AN erudite scholar, as a professor and publicist, as a political militant and promoter of Romanian culture, the Transylvanian scholar paid particular attention to the study and capitalization of philosophy which he regarded as having great significance for both individual and cultural development; he assessed it synthetically as having the role of a "divine science."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the vast philosophical culture of the Blaj thinker, based on the study of the works of some of the greatest philosophers of mankind,

from Aristotle and Plato to Kant, Goethe and Feuerbach, from Horace and Cicero to Voltaire, Rousseau and Schiller, guided not only his scientific, didactic, literary and poetic creation, but also his actions and practical attitudes, particularly those undertaken as a political militant. The public speeches delivered on various occasions possess a philosophical color, express a rationalist view on man, society and the world as a whole.

Professor Cipariu taught philosophy, inspired by the German classical philosophy; he reintroduced philosophy as a teaching subject at the Gymnasium of Blaj after the abusive elimination of the discipline from the curriculum in the years of the 1848 Revolution. He was a translator of philosophical papers and contributed to the development of the philosophical language by introducing Latin-Romance neologisms in the period of evolution of the Romanian language to a supra-dialectal literary language, able to communicate the most diverse ideas and philosophical nuances. The largest part of the philosophical terminology introduced by Cipariu became usual in the later philosophical discourse and it is used even in our days. He translated *Elements of Philosophy* by Wilhelm Traugott Krug (2 vols., 1861, 1863). He was interested by the scientific discoveries of his time, especially in those from fields such as physics, astronomy, geology which he employed in his writings, being remarked as a brilliant thinker of the rationalist-humanist kind, an adept of the European Enlightenment, especially of that of Kantian inspiration.

The philosophical problems analyzed by Cipariu are aimed at the world as whole, at man and at knowledge, culture and values, justice and morality. Solving these issues is part of the system of European culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and bears strong imprints of the traditions of the Romanian philosophical thinking.

Ontologically, Cipariu sees the worlds, the universe, on a deistic basis, as the work of divine creation, constituting the unlimited environment where man and society evolve. His philosophical concepts and main ideas reflect the most refined ideas emerged in the Western philosophical culture of his time, such as: the movement of the entire universe is an objective eternal reality; the immense diversity of the world's components and the co-existence of their mutual connections; the gradual development, without leaps, of the elements forming the world, including mankind, the sciences, culture, the economy and society. The course of development has a progressive direction so that "everywhere there is a progressive development. No party and no particular level of the development of the whole can be conceived in itself, without relation to what was before and to what is next."<sup>9</sup> The evolution of the world, the connections between its elements are regulated by objective, "immutable" laws.

As an enlightened philosopher, Cipariu was interested in knowledge, in the role of reason, of the rational mind. He considered that the development of the "power of the human mind" increases its capacity to reveal secrets from the depths of nature and of life. Being optimistic about the powers of reason and knowledge, the philosopher claims that only that knowledge relying on reason, on the "healthy mind," is real. The path to truth is the critical-rational examination of objects and events; genuine is only the knowledge accepted by the "court" of reason. The ideas opposed to truth pertain to superstitions, phantasms, preconceived ideas, tales and utopias. The last ones are the opposite of divine truth.

The creator gave man reason, a mind, endowing him with “free will,” with the capacity to choose, to decide the most proper way to reach happiness. Man’s fate is in his hands, and the mind is the main guide and judge. The true Christian is a wise person, constantly learning to use his own reason “which unceasingly searches for the truth: its thinking is enlightened in him, lives better through him.”<sup>10</sup> Reason is the one guiding his social life, the progress of culture and civilization. The essential role of reason in the life of man and of society is confirmed by their evolution towards more humanity, morality and respect for human dignity. The development of the sound mind is always the path to happiness, as “man’s higher happiness is united with his vaster reasoning.”<sup>11</sup>

The notion of man is very complex and extremely contradictory in itself, and therefore Cipariu wrote that “Man shows us so many different faces, and together with them so many opposite standings that, on the one hand, he seems to be a celestial being, and on the other, a genuine animal.”<sup>12</sup> Reason leads man and society to constant progress. As the mind develops, the peoples and the nations rise from darkness, move from the “barbaric and rude” society towards civilization, more humanity, justice and happiness. Remaining “dormant,” the darkness of illiteracy sentences men to slavery, to barbaric behavior, to the incapacity to express themselves freely. For free is only the person with a healthy mind, developing his reason and culture. There is a tight connection between the level of development of reason and that of freedom. Man’s greatness depends on the union between the mind and the free activity so that “in both beautiful associations relies the true human dignity.”<sup>13</sup> Inspired by Kantian philosophy, the Blaj thinker states that the healthy mind/reason has the capacity to issue laws meant to lead the will to action, and the power of action depends on the will.

The other facet of man—the man with a lost or unfulfilled reason, dominated by obscurantism and deprived of culture—generates a state of “inhumanity,” with impulses toward brutal and improper conduct; where there is no culture, violence, vices and misdeeds reign. History had seen such events, the dissolution of a community caused by the lack of culture, characterized by despotic and inhuman behavior. Considering the historical evolution of the ratio between barbarism and civilization, between illiteracy and humanity, Cipariu expresses optimism on mankind’s possibilities of advancement throughout the centuries and in the future. This is because human nature is given by its angelic face, man existing to accumulate more virtues and humanity. In its essence, human nature is good, the people are oriented towards the knowledge of their natural and imprescriptible rights. For the societies of the future, moral progress is going to be predicated on the culture, reason, and intellect possessed by their members.

The principles of Cipariu’s ethics relies on Christianity, on the biblical percept of loving your neighbor. In this regard, the scholar wrote: “the moral study certifies that the most pleasant virtue in God’s eyes is to love your neighbor . . . civility is a small exchange of sacrifices made with the purpose of being pleasant and useful to the others.”<sup>14</sup> By his nature, man is a social being, wishing to live in society; human happiness is to be acquired in a society characterized by superior “humanity,” by a strong will to comply with the principles of reason. The struggle of the person with himself is meant to increase the efforts to overcome himself and to achieve self-perfection.

Cipariu's philosophical ideas were inspired by the rationalist European culture of his time, being taken, processed, analyzed in a personal manner and adapted to the Transylvanian cultural traditions. The scholar's principal merit lies not so much in having translated the works of some important European philosophers, in having taught philosophy at a level comparable to that in the European universities, in having enriched the Romanian philosophical culture, but mostly in having acquired some perspectives and some philosophical principles which he capitalized upon in his struggle for the political and social rights of the Romanians within the Habsburg Empire, for the respect of human dignity, of human and national natural rights. His public discourse, his philosophical works, his published papers highlight his philosophical vision with regard to man, society and the world, which made possible his original argumentation and satisfied the requirements of logical coherence of the entire discourse.

The philosophy of natural rights, embraced by the European universities but practically ignored by the state chancelleries, was the guideline for his political and cultural activities. The fight for human and peoples' rights, for putting into practice the political and legal principles which prevailed in the European spirituality and culture, represented the deep vein of the Transylvanian scholar's personality and life. The maxim of his life and thinking is that the fundamental human rights must guide any political life, any kind of relations between men, peoples and nations.

## The Enlightened and Patriotic Militant

**T**HE TRANSYLVANIAN scholar carried out a complex, passionate and perseverant activity, not only in his didactic and publishing career but, equally, on the political and cultural levels, proving an apostolic kind of patriotism. He was motivated by his political credo and enlightening vision: peoples can emancipate themselves and achieve progress in the economic, social, cultural and political fields by way of education, literacy, by acquiring sciences, arts, literature. This is what he did, through constant work, during his entire life, militating for the "training of the mind and the heart of the Romanian people."<sup>15</sup>

Gifted with the capacity to analyze and compare the historical evolution of the peoples of Europe, Cipariu identified the existence of an unjust and precarious state of the Romanian nationality in Transylvania. Facing this reality, he expressed in his diary the deep emotional pain he felt: "When I think of the sad destiny of this people, my heart is breaking seeing how far behind it is compared to other nations . . . Before they were barbarians, and now we turn ourselves barbarians by them. I wonder if it is not the time to lift the darkness from the eyes of our spirit which, in the light of nowadays culture, cannot clear itself alone?"<sup>16</sup> The way to end the precarious state of the Romanian nation in the Habsburg Empire was to fight for freedom and equality for the Romanians, for political, religious rights and freedoms guaranteed by the imperial authorities and actually put into practice, not only promises or "just words." Not formally but naturally we owed it to ourselves "to mobilize all our strength and needs to take out the Romanian nation from this precarious state and to bring it on the normal path and in a legitimate position."<sup>17</sup>

Having a European vision on solving the political matters, the socioeconomic and religious injustice, the thinker was persuaded that the political changes were possible and that the Romanians' most ardent wish—to be acknowledged publicly as citizens with all rights and benefices, but also with obligations to the country—was to be achieved in gradual stages, according to the spirit of freedom emerging across Europe.

Being motivated by his democratic and political credo and by the modern political values of European culture, Cipariu dedicated his life, his teaching and publishing careers, his activities as a scientist and political militant to the achievement of the Romanians' political, social, and national rights, to the attempt to edify a social and political order in Transylvania according to the pattern provided by the cultured and civilized nations of Europe, and according to the natural rights of man and of peoples, which he deemed natural, imprescriptible and inalienable. The use of brutal power, barbaric actions, brutality, these had no place in political life. The political and constitutional order must rely on reason, on legitimate rights, on good cohabitation between individuals, nations and religions, without any discrimination.

In order to achieve the major political and cultural goals thus undertaken, Cipariu operated with a scholar's noblesse and authority on several levels. He got involved in the fight against the restricted use of the Romanian language in schools and in state institutions, against the creation of a Hungarian state likely to assimilate culturally and linguistically the Romanians, although they were the majority population in Transylvania. He carried out actions for the establishment of schools for all types of education, which were to be attended by the Romanian children and youths. He supported a lot of public initiatives for the establishment of universities, theaters, museums, publishing and printing houses in Romanian—as many as necessary in order to ensure equal rights for the majority population. As a gymnasium headmaster, he was concerned with girls' education, fighting against any discrimination between genders, aiming to combine education and the training of professional skills with moral development, contending that “the good behavior between peoples” is the superior result of civilization.

His activity and achievements in the cultural field served the same national political ideals. Besides the journals which he established and financed, Cipariu organized and founded the Society for a Romanian Theater Fund, he ran the commission responsible with establishing the Romanian official orthography in Transylvania (1860), he was a founding member and then chairman of the ASTRA, a member of the Romanian Literary Society (1866), and then he became a member of the Romanian Academy. During 1867–1872, he established and ran *The Philological and Historical Archive*, the first Romanian journal of philology; he put together a collection of books and manuscripts coming from the Romanian principalities, from all over Europe and from Asia Minor; he took steps for the establishment of the National Museum of History and of Natural Sciences in Blaj; he contributed to the development of the cultural exchanges with personalities from the entire Romanian area. By way of all these activities he contributed to the “awakening of the Romanian nation,” to the strengthening of the cultural and national awareness meant to increase the Romanians' solidarity and bring unity and coherence to the policies of the Romanians everywhere. Invited to Bucharest in 1867, on the occasion of the solemn inauguration of the Romanian Literary Society, he expressed a feeling of

satisfaction with all his accomplishments, arguing that “the national feeling awoke in all Romanians. The Romanian nation is now aware of its rightful place among the nations of Europe; it will take all proper steps to secure this position with dignity.”<sup>18</sup> It was only the beginning of our liberation, considered the author, but there would come a time when the Romanian country, the Romanian nation, and the Romanian language will have overcome all obstacles.

The powerful patriotism of the political and cultural militant stemmed from his feeling of respect for the history and the achievements of other peoples, ethnicities and religions. Patriotism implies unconditioned devotion and sacrifices for the country, for the community, and a country for all citizens, regardless on their ethnicity, gender, or religion.<sup>19</sup> The idea of patriotism is old and recognized by the civilized peoples, being consecrated by the glorious examples of history. The cause of the country cannot be split from the cause of the Romanian nation, just like a people’s freedom cannot be separated from other peoples’ rights and freedoms. The glorious age during which the thinker lived opened a wide path to the expression of the ideas of civilization, justice, freedom and humanity, as universal desiderata of mankind. Thus, the Romanian nation also had the duty to fight for its national and individual, civil and political rights, in keeping with the European public spirit, and mankind as a whole had the duty to protect any national and religious rights without any discrimination.<sup>20</sup>

## Instead of Conclusions

**A**PROMOTER OF European rationalism and humanism, which he adapted to the traditions and to the Romanian cultural context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Timotei Cipariu formulated his own outlook on man, society, history and the world as a whole, oriented towards the values of European culture, formed and consolidated during the last two millennia. His vast humanist historical, literary, scientific and philosophical culture and his knowledge of the peoples and civilization of the Europe of his time caused him strong feelings of discontent, of pain, and of revolt against the political, social and national injustice existing in Transylvania.

As a thinker and political militant, the Transylvanian scholar looked for the right, legitimate path, resonating with the European spirit of the time, towards a social and juridical, national and international order based on human and peoples’ rights, deemed to be natural, imprescriptible and inalienable rights. As a scholar, man of culture, publicist and eminent professor, he dedicated his life to the same purposes and values, proving his unflinching patriotism, humanism and civic involvement. That is why the famous European scholars who knew him (Adolf Mussafia, Rudolf Bergner, Theodor Mommsen, Mario Ruffini etc.) were astonished by the erudition, the outstanding oratorical skills, and the complexity of the cultural-scientific activity of the Blaj scholar. The scientific and philosophical work of the European Cipariu became integrated into the advanced European culture of his time, preserving its relevance until today.





## Notes

1. Eugen Simion, gen. ed., *Dicționarul general al literaturii române, C/D* (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 2004), 269.
2. Stela Toma, Foreword to Timotei Cipariu, *Scientia Litterarum*, ed. Stela Toma (Bucharest: Academia Română, Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă, Institutul de Istorie și Teorie Literară “G. Călinescu,” 2004), 4.
3. Timotei Cipariu, *Jurnal*, edition, foreword, notes and glossary by Maria Protase (Cluj: Dacia, 1972), 73.
4. The most important works signed by Cipariu are *Principia de limbă și de scriptură* (Blaj, 1847–1848; 1866); *Elemente de limba română după dialecte și monumente vechi* (Blaj, 1854); *Crestomașie sau Analecte literare din cărțile mai vechi și noue românești tipărite și manuscrise* (Blaj, 1858); *Gramateca limbei române* (2 vols., Blaj–Sibiu, 1869–1877).
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6. Timotei Cipariu, speech delivered during the meeting of the Transylvanian Diet, Sibiu, 26 Aug. 1863, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* 26, 70 (17 Aug. 1863): 277–278.
7. Lucian Blaga, *Isvoade: Eseuri, conferințe, articole*, eds. Dorli Blaga and Petre Nicolau, foreword by George Gană (Bucharest: Minerva, 1972), 181.
8. Timotei Cipariu, Foreword to *Elemente de filosofie* by W. T. Krug, vol. 1 (Blaj, 1861), 4.
9. Timotei Cipariu, “Lumea,” *Organul luminarei: Gazeta beserecesca, politica, e literaria* (Blaj) 1, 36 (6 Sept. 1847): 197.
10. Timotei Cipariu, “Icoana creștinului,” *Organul luminarei* 1, 23 (7 June 1847): 119.
11. Timotei Cipariu, “Omul,” *Organul luminarei* 1, 37 (13 Sept. 1847): 204.
12. Cipariu, *Scientia Litterarum*, 475.
13. Cipariu, “Omul,” *Organul luminarei* 1, 39 (27 Sept. 1847): 215.
14. Cipariu, *Scientia Litterarum*, 501.
15. Timotei Cipariu, “Programa,” *Organul luminarei* 1, 1 (4 Jan, 1847): 4.
16. Cipariu, *Jurnal*, 29–30.
17. Timotei Cipariu, speech to be delivered in the National Romanian Congress of the Great Principality of Transylvania which was held in Sibiu on 20–23 April 1862, in *Discursuri*, edition, anthology and glossary by Ștefan Manciușea and Ion Buzași, foreword and bibliography by Ion Buzași (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1984), 119.
18. Timotei Cipariu, speech on the occasion of the solemn inauguration of the Romanian Literary Society, which took place on 1/13 August 1867 at Bucharest, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* 30, 62 (21/9 Aug. 1867): 248.
19. Cipariu, *Discursuri*, 121.
20. *Ibid.*, 147.

### **Abstract**

#### The European Dimensions of the Transylvanian Humanist Scholar Timotei Cipariu

The paper analyzes Timotei Cipariu's original contribution to the Romanian Transylvanian humanities, philosophy and culture, as well as the political, social and cultural activity of this gifted activist and patriot. The pillar of his scientific work and of his political-democratic activism is Cipariu's intimate adhesion to the European values, accompanied by the faith in achieving the national and social justice generated by the establishment in society of that order which guarantees the unconditional respect of human and people's rights. Inspired by the realities and the traditions of Transylvanian culture, and by the culture of Europe, the work of the Transylvanian scholar became integrated into the international circuit of values, keeping its actuality and raising the interest of some professionals until our days.

### **Keywords**

humanist culture, philosophy, Timotei Cipariu, European values