

TUDOR VIANU: THE REFUSAL OF THE LUDIC IN STYLISTIC RESEARCH



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Abstract: *This paper examines Tudor Vianu's conception of stylistics as a discipline grounded in humanistic and ethical values rather than in the playful or purely aesthetic dimensions of artistic creation. By analyzing Vianu's theoretical writings, as well as his critical interpretations in *Arta prozatorilor români*, the study highlights his consistent rejection of arbitrariness and formal experimentation detached from moral significance. Tudor Vianu defines style as the form in which a spiritual attitude is expressed, emphasizing order, unity, and intellectual responsibility in both art and its interpretation. The article argues that his approach to stylistics represents a synthesis of aesthetic and ethical principles, transforming artistic expression into a mode of knowledge and a manifestation of moral consciousness.*

Keywords: stylistics, ludic dimension, Tudor Vianu, humanism, artistic expression

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The Fundamentals of Tudor Vianu's Stylistics

A leading figure in interwar Romanian culture, Tudor Vianu is distinguished by his vast body of work, which lies at the intersection of philosophy, aesthetics, literary criticism, stylistics, and cultural theory. In an era marked by tension between modernism and humanist tradition, T. Vianu stands out as a spirit of balance and rationality, reaffirming the moral and cognitive value of art. In a period of cultural effervescence, the author of *Aesthetics* established the coordinates of areas of research that had been little explored in Romania until his studies. These were aesthetics and stylistics, areas he approached with the meticulousness of an explorer determined to map with surgical precision the new territory that appeared before his eyes. Responsible and aware of the importance of his endeavor, T. Vianu excludes, at least apparently, any element of the ludic from his research.

The presence of the irrational in the world (and works of art are part of this realm) should not demoralize the initiatives of reason. The fact that the literary phenomenon is perhaps irreducible in its ultimate depth should not prevent us from reducing it as much as we can. (Vianu 2010: 12).

This quote, selected from *Arta prozatorilor români* (*The Art of Romanian Prose Writers*), is more than a justification of the method used in the aforementioned volume. It represents T. Vianu's constant attitude in life, culture, and his research work. Regardless of the field he approached, the poet, literary historian, aesthetician, moralist, stylist, comparatist, and professor, T. Vianu maintained the same positions of humanism of classical origin and dimension, for which the universe represents a reducible mystery, a material organized by the human spirit, by its reason defined by order and balance.

His stylistic concept, formulated in works such as *Probleme de stil și artă literară* (*Problems of Style and Literary Art*), *Problemele metaforei și alte studii de stilistică* (*Problems of Metaphor and Other Studies in Stylistics*), *Arta prozatorilor români* (*The Art of Romanian Prose Writers*), *Estetica* (*Aesthetics*), is based on the idea that style is not a mere embellishment of expression, but a manifestation of spiritual personality and a form of moral order. Among all the fields of research addressed by the author of the first treatise on aesthetics in Romanian culture, stylistics most clearly denotes the need for discipline, rigor, and accuracy that "sometimes unsettles the conscience of literary critics" (Vianu 2010: 11).

In this context, what we might call the „refusal of the ludic” appears as a fundamental attitude in T. Vianu's thinking, defining his position towards the aestheticizing and formalist tendencies of the era. For him, art is not reduced to the gratuitous play of forms or pure aesthetic pleasure, but implies a spiritual responsibility and participation in the order of values. The refusal of the ludic thus expresses an axiological option: the rejection of aesthetic autonomy in favor of an integrative vision, in which beauty remains in solidarity with goodness and truth. Marin Bucur rightly considers that through his stylistic work, the author of *Aesthetics*, who was the first in Romania to teach a university course on the philosophy of culture, contributed to the promotion of beauty through research and applied study of the text (Biberi 1966: 254). Moreover, he

made beauty and goodness, as two of the highest aspirations of the human condition, an ideal, and in its name he educated, alongside the great men of culture who served higher education in his time, all those who today understand and feel literature (Bucur in Vianu 1965: 12).

This position places T. Vianu close to an ethical aesthetic, in which the artistic act is inseparable from its moral significance. Unlike modern aestheticians of artistic gratuitousness - from Croce to Valéry - for whom creation is a game of free spirit,

Vianu advocates for an art of balance and measure, rooted in reason and culture. Style, in this perspective, becomes a way of ordering the world and expressing the spirit in an intelligible form, not a field for playful experimentation. Therefore, the analysis of playfulness in T. Vianu's stylistic conception allows us to understand more deeply the humanism that runs through his entire work. In an era of modernist ruptures and aesthetic relativism, T. Vianu proposes a model of responsible art that does not renounce beauty, but subordinates it to truth and inner balance. This article aims to examine the theoretical foundations and implications of this attitude, placing it in the broader context of interwar culture and stylistic attitude, as defined by the author of *Arta prozatorilor români*.

Tudor Vianu's entire aesthetic and theoretical conception is articulated around a humanism of form and value, which places art in the sphere of spiritual responsibility. The author of *Arta prozatorilor români* does not view style as a mere formal peculiarity of language, but as an expression of man's moral and cultural personality, a way in which the spirit manifests itself in order and meaning. Eloquent in this regard is the article *Atitudinea stilistică (The Stylistic Attitude)*, included in the volume *Studii de stilistică (Studies in Stylistics)*, edited by Sorin Alexandrescu and published in 1968. Thus, the humanistic dimension constitutes the theoretical core of the author's stylistics in *Aesthetics* and recovers the rationalist and ethical tradition of European culture, giving aesthetics a normative function. In this context, the rejection of the ludic elements does not appear as a denial of creativity, but as a limitation of aesthetic gratuitousness in the name of truth and inner balance. T. Vianu thus proposes a model of art that goes beyond formal play and opens up to knowledge, culture, and morality.

Tudor Vianu's Approach to Stylistics

Understanding the rejection of the playful dimension in Tudor Vianu's aesthetics and stylistics requires, first of all, clarification of the theoretical framework in which his thinking about art and expression was formed. The stylistic concept does not appear as an isolated system, but as the result of a complex intellectual evolution, situated at the confluence of the philosophy of values, German idealistic aesthetics, and the European humanist tradition. An analysis of the formation of this concept allows us to understand how the author of *Arta prozatorilor români* came to consider style as an expression of a moral and spiritual order, rather than as a product of play or formal chance.

Tudor Vianu's interest in the study of style originated during his intellectual formation, more precisely during his doctoral studies in Germany. His contact with the German academic environment, deeply marked by the philosophy of values and idealistic aesthetics, provided the young researcher with the theoretical framework for understanding artistic language as a form of expression of the spirit. In this context,

Marin Bucur rightly observes that Vianu's doctoral thesis - *The Problem of Valorisation in Schiller's Poetics* (1924) - "is fundamentally a work of stylistics" (Bucur in Vianu 1965: 9).

T. Vianu's focus on the study of style and the development of a stylistics with a philosophical vocation represents one of his most significant contributions to Romanian and European literary theory in the first half of the 20th century. His interest in stylistics did not arise from a purely linguistic or literary concern, but from a need to understand artistic expression in relation to personality and spiritual values. Therefore, his approach to stylistics comes from the direction of cultural philosophy and aesthetics, not from philology in the narrow sense.

During the interwar period, stylistics was a rapidly developing field, situated between linguistics, aesthetics, and psychology. The works of Charles Bally, disciple of Ferdinand de Saussure, and Karl Vossler had a major influence on the young T. Vianu. However, his thinking did not passively adopt these models, but integrated them into his own humanistic and rationalist vision. While Bally emphasized the affectivity of expression and Vossler privileged the spiritual dimension of language, T. Vianu sought a synthesis between expression, reason, and value. In *Probleme de stil și artă literară*, Vianu systematically formulated for the first time the principles of a value-based stylistics, in which artistic expression is interpreted as a reflection of a moral and cultural order. For him, style is "the expression of personality in language", but this expression is neither accidental nor playful; it presupposes a discipline of the spirit and an awareness of the values that order the creative act. Hence his constant rejection of aesthetic conceptions that reduce art to formal experimentation or the autonomous play of language. Thus, T. Vianu's approach to stylistics is defined by an axiological integration: he transforms the study of style from a technical analysis into an anthropology of expression, that is, into a reflection on how humans manifest themselves as moral and cultural beings through language. In this sense, stylistics becomes for Vianu a science of the spirit, situated at the intersection of aesthetics and ethics.

Compared to contemporary trends in linguistics, T. Vianu's approach is deeply normative. It is not limited to describing means of expression, but seeks to determine the criteria of value that give a style the quality of being authentic, meaningful, and beautiful. At a time when modern art tended towards fragmentation, irony and playfulness, Vianu proposed a re-founding of expression based on rational and ethical values. For him, the stylistic act is not a formal exercise, but a form of expressive morality - a way in which the spirit becomes visible in order, clarity and balance. This position explains why, in his view, the ludic - understood as absolute freedom of form - is rejected: not because art cannot be free, but because true freedom is exercised within the limits of value. Therefore, Tudor Vianu's approach to stylistics is not a simple extension of his aesthetic concerns, but an attempt to establish a

discipline of expression capable of unifying the aesthetic, ethical, and intellectual dimensions of creation. In this sense, Vianu is not only a theorist of style, but a philosopher of expression, for whom the study of artistic language becomes a meditation on the human condition and the meaning of culture.

Sorin Alexandrescu identifies "classicism of attitude" as a trait of the personality of the author of *Arta prozatorilor români*, which subsequently extended to all areas of his activity, with a particular emphasis on stylistics, as this

most acutely denotes the need for discipline, rigor, and objectivity of the scholar, eager to subject the unsettling fluidity of reality to a classifying and comprehensive reason that is precise and playful, almost impersonal in its movement (Alexandrescu in Vianu 1968: 3).

The first systematic elaboration of the concept of style can be found in T. Vianu's chapter on Style in *Aesthetics*. Style is defined as "the unity of aesthetic structure in a group of works related to their agent, be it the individual artist, the nation, the era, or the cultural circle" (Vianu 1996: 142). The definition highlights the relational and integrative nature of style, conceived not as ornamentation or formal idiolect, but as a principle of spiritual coherence. The stylist also emphasizes that:

unity and originality are the two most particular ideas that merge in the concept of style. Therefore, the mixture of disparate and unassimilated things, confusion and anarchy are devoid of style (Vianu 1996:142).

In this sense, style does not express the arbitrary freedom of form, but the harmony between diversity and order, between individual expression and universal coherence. The rejection of confusion and unassimilated mixture reveals the ethical dimension of the author's conception of aesthetics: for him, style is a form of spiritual order, a discipline of expression that rejects playful chaos and formal gratuitousness. Through this definition, Vianu approaches the classical ideal of measure and balance, but reactivates it in modern terms, integrating it into a general theory of values. Style thus becomes a category of the spirit, situated between the aesthetic and the moral, between creative freedom and rational rigor - the place where artistic expression is transformed into a manifestation of culture.

In his study *Research on Literary Language and Style in the Period 1944–1959*, Tudor Vianu analyzes the causes that led to the relatively late emergence of stylistics as a distinct branch of linguistics. He observes that, for a long time, linguists focused on the historical development of language, on the phonetic, morphological, and lexical transformations that can be traced over time. This diachronic orientation, dominant in the 19th and early 20th centuries, stemmed from the influence of comparative linguistics, which was particularly interested in the origin and evolution of Indo-European languages. In this context, the expressive dimension of language was neglected for a long time. Tudor Vianu shows that it was only when linguistics turned

its attention to the study of living language and the communicative and expressive functions of language that the theoretical framework necessary for the emergence of stylistics was created.

It was only at the beginning of the 20th century, with the redefinition of the concept of style, that a convergence between the evolution of language science and interest in expressiveness took place. The new theoretical framework allowed language to be understood not only as a system of rules, but also as a means of expressing subjectivity. In this context, Vianu asserts that style can be studied through linguistic means and adopts the definition of stylistics as a linguistic discipline with aesthetic implications, situated at the border between linguistics and aesthetics. Tudor Vianu's approach to stylistics is therefore based on linguistics, but with a profound aesthetic orientation. As early as his article *Limba literară* (*Literary Language*, published in *Masca timpului*, 1926), Vianu advocates a realistic conception of literary language, considering that the language of characters must reflect their social and psychological condition. He emphasizes that fidelity to the human and social reality of the era is also manifested at the linguistic level, through the adaptation of speech to the character's typology and environment.

During this period, the stylist's notation still has an intuitive and impressionistic character (although the critic later vehemently rejects impressionism as a method of analysis), relying on aesthetic sensitivity and cultural observation rather than a systematic method of language analysis. Tudor Vianu relies more on value judgments and artistic perception of expression than on rigorous instruments of linguistic analysis. However, this stage prepares the ground for the further development of his thinking, which, in about fifteen years, will take the form of a scientific and methodical approach to literary language and style, integrating modern analytical tools and paving the way for a comprehensive stylistics, situated between linguistics and aesthetics.

Defining and Redefining the Concept of Style

In Tudor Vianu's thinking, the definition of the concept of style reaches theoretical maturity in *Aesthetics*, a work in which the author brings together and systematizes the ideas previously formulated in *Problems of Style and Literary Art*. The chapter on style is one of the central points of the volume, as it marks the moment when the stylist transforms stylistics from a descriptive discipline into a philosophical-aesthetic one, anchored in the theory of values and in the general conception of culture. For T. Vianu, style is not a simple ornament of language or a technical category of art, but a form of manifestation of the human spirit. Through this definition, he shifts the emphasis from the level of individual expression to that of spiritual coherence: style is not only a personal trait, but also an expression of cultural unity. It can belong to an author, an era, or an entire civilization, to the extent that these

instances manifest a recognizable aesthetic structure, governed by the same order of values. By opposing the "mixture of disparate things", T. Vianu implicitly delimits a rejection of aesthetic ludic, understood as an arbitrary mixture of forms, conventions, and effects lacking unity (Vianu 1996: 142). For him, art is not a formal game, but an order of meaning, a construction that expresses the inner balance of the creator. In this sense, *Aesthetics* confirms the humanistic orientation of his thinking: the artistic act becomes a form of spiritual self-discipline, and style - the expression of this discipline.

The concept of style, in T. Vianu's view, has a dual nature: on the one hand, it is an aesthetic category (the formal organization of the work), and on the other hand, it is an ethical category (a measure of inner order). This way of thinking brings together classical rationalism and modern sensibility, offering a dynamic and comprehensive definition of style as an expression of spiritual personality within cultural values. By extending the notion of style from the individual to the collective level - artist, era, nation, civilization - the stylist anticipates a cultural perspective on aesthetics, close to the philosophy of German culture. In this interpretation, style becomes a form of spiritual life, an expression of the unity between the individual and the community, between creation and tradition.

At the end of the chapter on style, T. Vianu emphasizes that artistic value cannot be separated from the coherence of expression, and that coherence always implies reason, measure, and responsibility. Therefore, his aesthetics reject the playful temptation of experimentation and the pleasure of formal play, affirming instead an ethic of expression. In this vision, style becomes the meeting place between beauty and goodness, between creative freedom and moral order - that is, the highest expression of human culture.

As we have already seen, in his analysis of the concept of style, the writer pays special attention to the balance between the individual and historical dimensions of artistic expression. After defining style, he adds a fundamental nuance: "True style is one in which individual originality harmonizes with that of time and society" (Vianu, 1996, p. 143). This statement marks a subtle but significant change in the perspective of the author of *Aesthetics*. If up to this point the emphasis had been on the universal and ordering dimension of style, now the idea of style as a synthesis between the individual and the collective, between the creative freedom of the artist and the spiritual structure of his era, appears clearly defined. Therefore, T. Vianu understands style as a form of mediation between personality and context, between the singularity of expression and cultural solidarity.

The notion of "individual originality" will become, in his later writings, a focal point of his reflection on art. Vianu will focus on the individual writer as the bearer of a unique stylistic vocation, in which not only the temperament but also the moral and spiritual structure of the creator is expressed and in studies that follow the direction

opened up by *Aesthetics - Style and Destiny, Poetic State and Poetic Form, Problems of Metaphor*, the idea of style is refined and takes on existential significance.

In *Style and Destiny*, the writer investigates the relationship between the artist's personality and the stylistic configuration of the work, arguing that the creator's destiny is reflected in the form of his expression. Style is therefore not a mere aesthetic result, but a projection of inner destiny: expression becomes the way in which man asserts himself in the world and orders his experience. This perspective highlights the anthropological dimension of style, seen as an expression of a consciousness that seeks meaning and balance.

In *Problemele metaforei*, Vianu explores one of the most subtle dimensions of style - metaphor as an act of interpreting reality. For him, metaphor is not a simple rhetorical device, but a form of poetic thought, a way of revealing profound relationships between the spirit and the world. Following José Ortega Y Gasset, Tudor Vianu considers that metaphor represents "an essential means of knowledge" (Vianu 1957: 44). This view confirms that, in the Romanian researcher's system, style is not a means of analyzing language, but a method of knowledge, an instrument through which the unity between reason and sensitivity is expressed.

It is easy to see that in his writings following *Aesthetics*, Tudor Vianu develops a humanism of expression, in which style becomes the meeting place between individual personality and the spirit of the age, between creative freedom and the order of values. While in *Aesthetics* the emphasis was on the normative and collective dimension of style, in his later studies he turns his attention to the creative subject, to the drama and vocation of those who seek to transform inner experience into artistic form. Through this evolution, T. Vianu does not abandon the principle of order, but humanises it: true aesthetic coherence is not achieved through formal conformism, but through the harmony between the individual and universal spirit. In this sense, style becomes a central category of culture, defining not only the way in which one writes, but also the way in which man understands himself as a creative being.

The stylistics course taught by Tudor Vianu at the University of Bucharest between 1942 and 1943 represents an essential stage in the formation and consolidation of his conception of artistic language. This course can be considered an attempt at synthesising the method, as it brings together the observations, principles and theoretical insights acquired throughout his career as a critic and aesthetician. Although it was not published in its entirety at the time, the course material had a profound influence on the study of literary language in Romania. The main merit of this course lies in the fact that it anticipates, in nuce, almost all the directions of research that T. Vianu would later develop in the field of stylistics. In this context, the writer also attempts to strike a balance between the linguistic and aesthetic approaches, asserting the need for stylistic analysis not to be limited to the description of forms, but to pursue their spiritual and cultural meanings. The stylistics course thus

becomes a methodological reference point, heralding the maturation of his thinking and paving the way for his later studies devoted to literary language, expression, and artistic value.

In 1955, the stylist published his study *Cercetarea stilului (The Study of Style)*, a text that marked the moment of theoretical maturity in his reflection on artistic language. In this work, T. Vianu revisits and systematises a series of older ideas, already outlined in his course on stylistics, including the concept of "word zones" - the distinction between the intellectual core, i.e. the logical meaning, and the expressive notes, i.e. the affective and aesthetic values attached to meaning. This perspective confirms his constant interest in the unity between thought and expression, between the communicative and aesthetic functions of language. A defining moment of the study is the formulation of the first principle of stylistic research, according to which: "the particularities of expression that it studies are not simple facts of observation, but facts of appreciation, values" (Vianu, 1968: 42). The author emphasizes that stylistics is not reduced to a mechanical description of linguistic structures, but involves an axiological dimension - each particularity of expression has an aesthetic, spiritual, or cultural value. Consequently, the study of style involves a critical and aesthetic evaluation of the means of expression, not just a simple inventory of them. The stylist thus advocates a real, objective understanding of literary works, based on a rigorous analysis of language, as opposed to impressionistic criticism, based on subjective impressions and emotional reactions. Tudor Vianu rejects both excessive formalism and psychological exaggerations, proposing a balanced method in which aesthetic interpretation is based on concrete linguistic data. In this sense, the study *Cercetarea stilului* is one of his most important contributions to the foundation of a stylistics capable of combining the analytical rigour of linguistics with the depth of aesthetic appreciation.

It is easy to see that Tudor Vianu's vision of style is characterized by an obvious synthesis, resulting from the convergence of three major fields of culture: linguistics, aesthetics, and the philosophy of value. In his view, stylistics is not an isolated discipline, but a frontier science that combines the objective analysis of language with the subjective interpretation of the values expressed through it. Thus, style becomes a point of confluence between the structure of language and the expression of the human spirit. Through this integrative perspective, Vianu goes beyond the limits of the two dominant trends of the time: on the one hand, linguistic formalism, which studied only the mechanisms of expression, and on the other hand, critical impressionism, which focused on the reader's emotional reaction. Instead of these unilateral approaches, he proposes a synthetic method, in which linguistic facts are viewed simultaneously as forms and values.

Tudor Vianu and the rejection of the ludic

The concept of style, in which individual freedom is harmonized with the order of cultural values, organically anticipates Tudor Vianu's critical attitude towards the ludic dimension of art. If in *Aesthetics* and in his later studies style appears as an expression of spiritual discipline and creative responsibility, then opposition to aesthetic playfulness is no longer a mere theoretical reaction but, rather, a logical consequence of a system of thought based on the idea of unity, measure, and moral meaning of expression. In this context, the rejection of gratuitous formal play becomes an affirmation of an ethic of art, in which beauty is not separated from goodness, and the act of creation is defined by gravity and awareness of value. In the writer's theoretical system, stylistics is not a science of expressive play, but a form of knowledge of the spirit through language. The rejection of the ludic therefore concerns not only the content of art, but also the method of approaching it. For T. Vianu, stylistic research must remain faithful to an ideal of rational order, conceptual clarity, and interpretive responsibility, avoiding the temptation of hermeneutic play or critical relativism. In the context of interwar culture, this attitude constitutes a distinct position from the orientations that dominated European literary criticism. If modern aesthetics tended to transform the analysis of style into a game of interpretative variations, Vianu restores its axiological and cognitive character. In his view, the study of style cannot be reduced to a mechanical description of figures of speech, nor can it become a free exercise of critical subjectivity: it must express an order of the spirit, a reflection on the values that structure artistic expression.

For the author of *Arta prozatorilor români*, interpretation must follow the logic of the spiritual order revealed by the text, rather than substituting it with the play of critical subjectivity. It excludes any playful conception of artistic language, because it reduces style to its axiological essence: the expression of a coherent spiritual position. Hence the rejection of playfulness in stylistic research - the rejection of the idea that style analysis is a space of freedom without rules or arbitrary invention. This position is constantly manifested in his theoretical and critical writings. In *Style and Destiny*, he emphasizes that the researcher does not have the right to treat the work as an experimental object, but must penetrate the spiritual intimacy of the form, respecting the structure of meaning of the text. In the same spirit, the studies *Poetic State and Poetic Form* and *The Problems of Metaphor* confirm the choice of a stylistics of rigor and intellectual responsibility, in which interpretation becomes a means of knowledge, not a game.

The rejection of the ludic in stylistic research can also be explained by T. Vianu's philosophical background. Educated in the climate of German thought, he associates cultural science with the ethical seriousness of the research spirit, which orders the world through concepts and values. Like Wilhelm Dilthey, for whom the study of art was a form of understanding life, the Romanian author conceives of style

analysis as a hermeneutics of order, not as an aesthetics of play. Consequently, in his case, the expression "rejection of the ludic" takes on the meaning of rejecting interpretive relativism and affirming the normativity of value.

This perspective places him in opposition to aesthetic theories that exalt the autonomy of language or the playful nature of creation - from the modernist conception of "art for art's sake" to the aesthetics of play formulated by Johan Huizinga in *Homo ludens*. While Huizinga sees play as the origin of all forms of culture, Vianu argues that true culture requires transcending play through consciousness and discipline. Artistic creation, like its study, finds its meaning not in absolute formal freedom, but in the search for unity and meaning. Through this attitude, Tudor Vianu constructs a veritable ethic of stylistic research. The act of interpretation is not a free exercise of taste or imagination, but a form of intellectual responsibility towards the meaning of the work. The rejection of playfulness means, in essence, assuming the cultural seriousness of the critical act: recognizing that art, as an expression of the spirit, cannot be understood through play, but through the effort of reason and cultural empathy. Therefore, Tudor Vianu's stylistic research becomes a model of hermeneutics, based on the belief that all artistic expression is organized around a central value - that of spiritual order. In this order, the interpreter does not play, but seeks meaning; he does not improvise, but understands. The rejection of the ludic elements is, therefore, the expression of a mature critical consciousness, which transforms the study of style into a form of knowledge of the human and an act of fidelity to culture.

In *Arta prozatorilor români*, Tudor Vianu offers one of the most representative applications of his stylistic principles, demonstrating that the rejection of playfulness does not only concern the theory of expression, but also the interpretation of the aesthetic and moral behavior of literary characters. Analyzing Camil Petrescu's novel *Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de război* (*The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War*), the stylist observes, with critical finesse, certain moments in which the attitude of the characters, especially Ela's, descends from the register of psychological and spiritual gravity to one of frivolous play.

The episode in which Ela, not understanding the philosophical concepts explained to her by Ștefan, in a gesture of childish exuberance, throws down pillows at him, is interpreted by Vianu as an "eclipse of good taste", a stylistic and moral crack in the construction of the novel. (Vianu 2010: 404). For him, this scene is a dissonance of tone, a deviation from the spiritual unity of the work. In a novel based on introspection, lucidity, and intellectual drama, the introduction of a moment of gratuitous play alters the expressive coherence and seriousness of the experience. With this observation, T. Vianu confirms his constant rejection of playfulness: for him, the artistic act - whether it be creation or representation - must remain faithful to ethical and aesthetic standards. Playfulness, manifested through frivolous gestures,

emotional levity, or ironic detachment, contradicts the demand for spiritual authenticity that defines, in his view, true art. This position derives from a more general principle of T. Vianu's thinking: authentic beauty is inseparable from good taste, and good taste, in turn, is the expression of a moral and intellectual order. Ela's gesture, seemingly banal and domestic, becomes a sign of inner imbalance and superficiality, a form of degradation of the existential style. Through this reading, the stylist reaffirms his conception that art must express the seriousness of spiritual life, not the ephemeral play of emotions. His attitude towards the scene in Camil Petrescu's novel is not only an aesthetic reaction, but also a statement of principle: in the universe of culture, play becomes problematic when it suspends meaning, when it destroys the order and coherence of form. Consequently, Tudor Vianu's rejection of playfulness manifests itself here as a double critical attitude: theoretical - in the sense of rejecting formal gratuitousness - and hermeneutical - in the sense of rejecting gestures without spiritual value. He thus transforms stylistic analysis into a form of ethical and aesthetic judgment, faithful to his ideal of culture as an expression of the gravity and dignity of the spirit.

Overall, Tudor Vianu's rejection of the ludic proves to be more than an aesthetic choice: it is the expression of a unified vision of culture and art, based on the idea of rigor, moderation, and spiritual responsibility. Whether he defines style as "the form in which a spiritual attitude is expressed" or analyzes a literary scene such as that in *Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de război*, T. Vianu remains faithful to the same principle: art cannot be a game without consequences, and its study cannot be an arbitrary exercise. He rejects playfulness where it dissolves the coherence of expression or degrades good taste, because behind every form of artistic expression he seeks the order of the spirit, the authenticity of experience, and the moral meaning of beauty. As a natural consequence, the rejection of playfulness becomes, on a theoretical and critical level, a form of fidelity to the dignity of culture: for Tudor Vianu, the seriousness of expression does not mean austerity, but respect for the act of knowledge through art. This conception opens the way to the ethical dimension of artistic expression, where aesthetics and morality come together under the sign of the same exigency - that of inner unity and spiritual truth.

In Tudor Vianu's thinking, the aesthetic dimension cannot be separated from the ethical one. The artistic act, like stylistic research, implies a spiritual responsibility: form becomes the expression of a consciousness, and beauty - the manifestation of the moral order of the spirit. Authentic beauty means order, and order implies a value choice, an inner discipline of creation. This conception gives style an implicit ethical function: it is not just a mode of expression, but a way in which man affirms his dignity and balance. In opposition to the playful and relativistic tendencies of modernity, T. Vianu proposes a vision of art as a form of knowledge and morality, in which the seriousness of expression does not exclude sensitivity, but ennoble it through clarity

and meaning. Therefore, the writer's rejection of the ludic becomes the expression of a humanistic belief: that art and culture must remain spaces of lucidity, truth, and respect for value. In this perspective, aesthetics does not oppose ethics, but continues it - as a higher form of the spirit's responsibility to the world.

Nicolae Manolescu speaks of a "sadness of erudition" in Vianu, given that he displays an obvious inclination toward generality and makes an "erudite detour" around texts (2015: 805). Manolescu's formulation subtly captures the melancholic balance between intellectual rigor and the need for human understanding that defines his entire critical and theoretical work. (Manolescu 2015:805). This "sadness" expresses an acute awareness of the limits of reason in the face of the mystery of art and life. Vianu is clearly a spirit of synthesis and generality: in everything he writes, he seeks the unifying principle, the connection between the facts of culture, the common pattern of values. Instead of sticking to a specific analysis of the literary text, T. Vianu tends to discover its universal meaning, framing it within a system of aesthetic or moral thought. Hence this movement of thought that surrounds the literary work with a vast network of concepts, analogies, and references, without leaving it entirely, but also without dwelling on concrete details. For the author of *Arta prozatorilor români*, the literary text is not only an object of analysis, but a pretext for reflection on value, on the destiny of the spirit, and on culture as a whole. "Sadness", a dimension of depth, thus comes from the tension between the desire to understand everything rationally and the awareness of the impossibility of exhausting the meaning of a work of art.

Tudor Vianu's stylistic concept is based on a humanistic vision of art, in which artistic expression becomes the visible form of an inner and moral order. For the author of *Arta prozatorilor români*, creation and aesthetic research cannot be reduced to the play of forms or playful spontaneity, because they require rigor, clarity, and spiritual responsibility. From this perspective, art is a form of human knowledge through language, and style is the manifestation of the balance between creative freedom and the discipline of value. In this way, his aesthetics propose a culture of expressive gravity, in which beauty is identified with truth and the dignity of the spirit. The relevance of the Romanian stylist's conception lies in the model of balance it offers between analysis and judgment, between freedom of interpretation and respect for meaning. In an intellectual context often dominated by relativism or fragmentarism, Tudor Vianu's thinking remains a benchmark of unity between ethics and aesthetics, reaffirming the role of art and culture as forms of moral and spiritual knowledge.

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