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The Sophian Perspective on Existence - Theological and Ethical Values
in the Work of Ioan Alexandru
(SUMMARY)

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Keywords: Ioan Alexandru, Sophianic literature, Sofia, sophiology, ethical, theological, topos, village, wilderness, homeland.

Topicality of the theme. As a complex being, man lives in a society that has an impact on him from all points of view, and therefore an interrelation of the different areas of existence and knowledge of the individual is self-evident. The writer is not an isolated entity in an ivory tower, he is part and result of moral, historical and philosophical phenomenology, and research into literary works requires a study of the context in which they emerged, for 'moral or aesthetic issues are particularly suited to interdisciplinary treatment. At the same time, interdisciplinarity is a logical consequence of integrating all types of content in the perspective of lifelong learning"¹.

Literary criticism approaches literary works from a synchronic or diachronic perspective, or by reference to the writer's biography. However, it is necessary "to have more of a reciprocal interaction instead of unilateral inputs - inputs"². It is therefore useful to conduct inter-, pluri- and trans-disciplinary research on the themes addressed by relating them to other disciplines in order to achieve a unified understanding.

In his 1825 Discourse on the Unity of the Sciences, the French historian Jules Michelet said: "Wise Antiquity has taught us that the Muses are sisters... Knowledge is one: languages, literature, history, physics, mathematics, philosophy, branches of learning that seem distant are in fact close together, or rather, they combine to form a system, which, because of our limitations, we perceive in succession as distinct parts. But there will come a day when we will try to perceive the impressive harmony of science."³

Is it possible to talk about a link between literature and religion, about religious literature? There is an intrinsic link between literature and religion, an ethical dimension that every literary text possesses. T.S. Eliot⁴ believes that a literary work should be seen as a work of the imagination, but it should also be considered from an ethical and theological point of view. This is important in our

¹ UNESCO, *Reunion sur la methodologie de la reforma des programmes scolaires*, Doc. Ed. 76/Conf. 640/3, 1976, p. 18.

² Colpaert, J., *Editorial: Transdisciplinarity*, Computer Assisted Language Learning, Vol. 17, No. 5, p. 459–472, 2004, p. 470.

³ Michelet, 1825 cit. in. Văideanu, G., *Educația la frontiera dintre milenii*, Ed. Politică, București, 1988, p. 247.

⁴ T.S. Eliot, - *Literatură și religie* în <http://www.literaryjewels.com/search?q=eliot+religion>, accessed at 01. 06. 2013.

age, when there is no full agreement on ethical and theological values in literary works. T.S. Eliot, however, believes that there is a relationship between literature and theology, and consequently he has problematized the application of the religious factor in literary criticism. In surveying the literature of the world - especially English literature - Eliot concludes that there are three types of religious literature: religious literature possessing literary qualities, devotional poetry, and the works of authors who wish to convey the cause of religion. He deplors the irrationality that underlies the separation of literature from its religious analysis, and speaks of an evident secularization in the way a reader reads a literary text - without concern for the effect it has on one's behavior. Nuancing his research, Eugen Dorcescu distinguishes between the religious and the mystical: "religious poetry ("religio, religionis" = belief in supernatural forces and their worship) is linked to a particular form of a religion (as an institution) and expresses its symbols, rituals, outward manifestations. Religious poetry is the ritual-mediated experience of mystery. Mystical poetry ("mysticus" = hidden, mystical) expresses the substance of the intimate relationship between the individual spirit and the universal Spirit, between the human being and its Creator. Mystical poetry is the direct experience of mystery"⁵. What gives value to religious lyric is not so much the subject matter, but the resistance to an aesthetic reading, the particularity of an ideological path, the authenticity of experience, the originality of expression and expressiveness.

The common factor between religion and literature is behaviour. Religion imposes on us ethics, judgement - self-criticism and criticism of others. Literature in turn has an effect on our behaviour. Whatever the author's intentions, his works affect us as whole human beings. Even if we read a literary work for aesthetic purposes only (keeping our moral judgement in another register), it affects us as human beings, whether we intend it to or not. Modern readers have lost their religious values. The knowledge gained from the reception of a literary work is not complete, but reflects the writer's way of capturing existence and the reader's understanding of it. Often the difficulty lies in selecting a few books from the multitude of existing ones.

Importance of theme. In the paper "The Sophian Perspective - Theological and Ethical Values in the Work of Ioan Alexandru" we set out to carry out an interdisciplinary study of Ioan Alexandru's

⁵ Eugen Dorcescu, *Poezia mistico-religioasă. Structură și interpretare* în <https://caietedesudest.wordpress.com/eseu/eugen-dorcescu-poezia-mistico-religioasa-structura-si-interpretare/>, accessed at 12.08.2020.

work, integrating it with Sophianic lyric. We have used the term *Sophianic lyric*, within the coordinates established by Romanian theology, but also taking into account the presentation of other conceptions on the issue of Sophia. When we talk about Sophian lyric, about the Sophian perspective on existence, we have in mind some landmarks: 1. For the poet, the world is a manifestation of divine love; 2. The literary work is an expression of the writer's love for the world, capturing its beauty and grandeur, and gratitude for the awareness of his mission; 3. Poetry, as a means of expression, has at its disposal means of expressiveness that at the same time encipher and decipher the poet's conception of the world.

Ioan Alexandru's work is under the sign of an intrinsic religiosity, and the connection between his literature and religion is theorized by the writer himself. He says: "Where there is piety, the word is no longer an abstraction, but life incarnate"⁶, and without religious feeling "there is no poetry", because to write means "to be in a state of joy and gratitude"⁷. He considered the poet to be a spiritual messenger, a herald of the Word: "he is neither demiurge nor genius (though with a special gift), but a servant of Tou Logou - servant of the Logos"⁸. Thus, the role of the poet is "to make people better and closer to each other"⁹.

Stage of research. Ioan Alexandru's work is based on a biblical vein, and an analysis of it without recourse to the texts of Holy Scripture (especially if we refer to the volumes of verse of the last two stages) is incomplete. In the last century, the grid of reception of the writer has been rather sketchy, as he has been studied mainly by literary critics without theological training. Some change can be observed in the hermeneutics of the literary text in the last 20 years, when an attempt has been made to reposition the work of Ioan Alexandru through the efforts of scholars in training.¹⁰ In the history of Romanian literature and in literary dictionaries, Ioan Alexandru's name is placed alongside the other representatives of the 60' generation. Literary critic Alex Ștefănescu observes that the poet was appreciated at the time when his first volume of poetry appeared: "people called

⁶ Ioan Alexandru - *Bucuria creației*, în „Luceafărul”, XVIII, nr. 33, 16 august 1975, p. 1.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 7.

⁸ Ioan Alexandru - *Iubirea de Patrie*, vol. II, Ed. Eminescu, București, 1985, p. 38.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Here are the doctoral works: in 2008 „Dinamica imaginației simbolice în poezia lui Ioan Alexandru” de Natalia-Asinefta Topârceanu (Pascu) at University „1 Decembrie 1918” from Alba Iulia and in 2013 „Ioan Alexandru (monografie critică)” - at University „Lucian Blaga” from Sibiu by the Greek-Catholic professor and priest Aurel Hancu, published a year later with the same title, at Ed. Sfântul Ierarh Nicolae, Brăila, 2014. The book is structured in chapters and follows biography, work, critical reception, convergences with Lucian Blaga, topicality of the work and critical appreciation.. In 2017 another doctoral thesis appears – „Poezia arhetipului și ritualul imnic” at Western University from Timișoara, write by Popescu (Angeru) Luciana, divided into four chapters.

him 'a new Eminescu'. This was not an exaggeration, judging by the data at the time. His boundless devotion to poetry, his interest in the study of philosophy and ancient languages such as Elina and Hebrew, his ability to deeply intuit the Romanian spirit with a religious vibration, and a certain 'homme revolté' attitude, typical of great creators, justified the most optimistic predictions"¹¹. Although he sympathizes with the poetry of the first volumes of verse, in which he identifies hints of Sergei Esenin and Nicolae Labis (in the volumes *How can I tell you* and *Life for the time being*), the imminence of poetry is not to the liking of the literary critic who considers that the poet "is content with a mechanics of joy, productive and harmonizing"¹².

If we refer to the reprinting of the poet's work, we note that in 2014 Nicolae Băciuş¹³ published an anthology of texts written by Ioan Alexandru, and in 2015 a representative edition (in two volumes) of the writer's work¹⁴ was printed by the Timisoara critic and literary historian Alexandru Ruja. The edition begins with an introductory study of about 100 pages by literary critic Eugen Simion - a minimal monograph in which Ioan Alexandru's life and work are presented and his poems are analyzed from a diachronic perspective. Eugen Simion (like Ion Bălu¹⁵) notes the existence of two phases in Ioan Alexandru's lyricism: the lyricism before Hymns and that after Hymns of Joy, when "he takes the path of Hymns, that of a poetry with a strong and hidden traditionalist-religious background, under the influence of Blaga, but also of his philosophical readings, and of his Christian experience"¹⁶. The presentation is made by volume, in chronological order.

Important for understanding the socio-historical and literary context in which Ioan Alexandru worked are also the epistolary texts: the correspondence with Father Justinian Chira, published in 2001¹⁷; the correspondence with Father (now Bishop) Calinic Argatu¹⁸ or the sentimental presentation by Ion Cocora¹⁹. I have taken these into account, as well as the way in which they have been analyzed in various journals²⁰.

¹¹ Alex Ştefănescu, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane 1941-2000*, Ed. Maşina de scris, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 485-486.

¹² Ibidem, p. 489.

¹³ Nicolae Băciuş - *Întoarcerea lui Ioan Alexandru*, Ed. Nico, Târgu Mureş, 2014.

¹⁴ *Ioan Alexandru. Opere* (vol. I + vol. II), Academia Română, Ed. Fundația națională pentru știință și artă, 2015, 3220 p.

¹⁵ Ion Bălu, *Ioan Alexandru – monografie, antologie comentată, receptare critică*, Ed. Aula, Oradea, 2001.

¹⁶ Eugen Simion în *Ioan Alexandru. Opere* (vol. I + vol. II), ed. cit., p. 23.

¹⁷ Ioan Alexandru și Justinian Chira, *Scrisori*, Ed. Lumea credinței, Baia Mare, 2001.

¹⁸ Calinic Argatu, *Frate Calinic... Ioan Alexandru către Calinic Argeşeanul. Viața din cărți, scrisori și dosare secrete*, edited by, introductory study and notes by Adrian Alui Gheorghe, Ed. Școala Ardeleană, Cluj-Napoca, 2021.

¹⁹ *Amintirea poetului*, sentimental edition composed by Ion Cocora, Ed. Palimpsest, Bucureşti, 2003.

²⁰ Ioan Petraş, *Elemente filocalice în corespondența lui Ioan Alexandru cu Justinian Chira*, în „Mișcarea literară”,

Among the testimonies of contemporaries we mention the confessional essay about Ioan Alexandru²¹, published in 2015 by Dan C. Mihăilescu, with the title *What can you do to me if I love you!?* The biographical aspects that brought the two men together led to an understanding beyond the canons of criticism, as the author notes the difficulty of receiving and understanding texts that were a discordant note in the Romanian lyrical landscape of the period 1960-1989: "Of course, the world of literary criticism - almost one hundred percent aestheticizing, rationalist-Enlightenment, atheist, agnostic, religiously ignorant or mephitic in principle towards everything that was called "metaphysical hypostasis" at the time - was caught on the wrong foot."²²

The hermeneutics of the Alexandrian literary text can be divided into two categories: pre-1989 criticism (militantly communist, appreciating the diffuse metaphysical thrill, the unusual thematic associations) and post-1990 criticism (not constrained by ideological issues), but this is an ineffective formal delimitation, since in both cases it is important to identify which reception grid each person uses.

In *General Dictionary of Romanian Literature. A-B*, character descriptions "in the portrait tradition of Goga are noted in the Hymns, but the tone of the desultory romance is lifted into the purest blue and amplified polyphonically into a shattering elegy that turns unexpectedly into heavy lamentation and metaphysical celebration"²³ (as in the poem *The Hymn of John of Wood* from *The Hymns of Joy*).

In *Analytical Dictionary of Romanian Literary Works. Definitive edition. N-Z* attempts to classify the poet in a certain literary trend, identifying expressionist, traditionalist and neo-traditionalist accents²⁴. At the same time, after the volume *Customs of the Wilderness* it is considered that the poetry becomes "more 'abstract', with essentially religious themes, relating its imaginary universe to the 'biblical allegory', shaping it according to a meaning that forces the 'concrete' to be structured

Bistrița, anul X, 2011, nr. 3 (39), p. 10 – 15; Marcel I. Malanca, *Satul, reper al devenirii umane în corespondența Arhiepiscopului Justinian Chira cu poetul Ioan Alexandru* în „Studia Universitatis Septentrionis. Theologia Orthodoxa”, Nr. 1 (18) / 2019, p. 307-324, available online at <https://www.cceol.com/search/article-detail?id=921232> Ioan Pinteă, *Scrisorile de la Rohia*. *Elemente filocalice în corespondența lui Ioan Alexandru cu Justinian Chira* by Ioan Petraș in „Mișcarea literară”, an X, nr. 3 (39), 2011, Bistrița, http://miscarealiterara.ro/imagini/ml3_11.pdf (accesat în 13.08.2020).

²¹ Dan C. Mihăilescu, *Ce-mi puteți face dacă vă iubesc!?*, Confessive essay about Ioan Alexandru, Ed. Humanitas, București, 2015.

²² Ibidem, p. 76.

²³ *Dicționarul General al Literaturii Române. A-B*, general coordinator Eugen Simion, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, București 2004, p. 104.

²⁴ *Dicționar analitic de opere literare românești. Ediție definitivă. N-Z*, vol. II, I. Pop, Ion (coord.), Ed. Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2007.

under the tutelage of an idea, appearing as a parable"²⁵. Ion Pop in the volume *Ritual Existence. Despre poezia lui Ioan Alexandru* (On the Poetry of Ioan Alexandru) brings together several articles he has written over time (older and newer) about the poet and the role of his poetry, about its place in the Romanian literary landscape, noting the existence of neo-traditionalism in Ioan Alexandru's poetry²⁶. We also intend to take into account and analyze other more recent studies and articles²⁷.

Although an orthodox Christian author, Ioan Alexandru has not been thoroughly studied from this perspective. Although a good orator, his interviews and speeches, both literary and political, have barely been posted on the internet²⁸ and transcribed²⁹, but have not been analyzed. Also, his correspondence³⁰ has been little, insufficiently addressed³¹.

The objectives of the present research. What was new in the work *The Sophian Perspective on Existence - Theological and Ethical Values in the Work of Ioan Alexandru*? The innovation

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 1057.

²⁶ Ion Pop, *Existența rituală. Despre poezia lui Ioan Alexandru*, Ed. Școala Ardeleană, Cluj-Napoca, 2020.

²⁷ For example: Achim, Prof. Univ. Dr. George - *Ioan Alexandru – poetica imnelor*, în „Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Philologica”, Nr. 1 / 2018, p. 142-147, aici p. 142, article available online at <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=7515>. Bantoș, Ana - *Ioan Alexandru. Particularități ale redefinirii lirismului românesc postbelic*, în „Limba română”, Nr. 3, Anul XXVII, 2017, Chișinău, p. 76-80. The article is also available online at <https://limbaromana.md/index.php?go=articol&n=3397>. Buziași, Ion - *Ioan Alexandru – Poetul inmograf*, in rev. „Vatra”, nr. 4+5 / 2018, Târgu Mureș, p. 96-99. The article is also available online at <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=778825>. Buzilă, Boris - *Ioan Alexandru, mărturisitorul* *Fragmente inedite din Jurnalul memorialistului* în „Tabor” Revistă de cultură și spiritualitate românească, Nr. 9 / 2017, p.43-46, article available online at <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=903088>. Cioata, Valeria - *Mystic Elements In The Poetry Of Ioan Alexandru*, Journal of Romanian Literary Studies, nr. 08 / 2016, p. 650-658, article available online at <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=457647>. Draica, Valeria - *Tradiția și evlavie în creația lui Ioan Alexandru*, în „Limba Română”, Chișinău, anul XXIV, 2014, nr. 2. Mariș, Ioan, Prof. Dr. – *Ioan Alexandru – Poet al Logosului intrupat în istorie* în „Îndrumătorul bisericesc”, anul 149, Tiparul Tipografiei Eparhiale, Sibiu, 2001. Nicolescu, Costion - *Ioan Alexandru – vulturul iotic al poeziei românești*, în „Tabor”, revistă de cultură și spiritualitate românească, Cluj-Napoca, anul V, 2012, ianuarie, nr. 10. Pop, Ion - „Imnele” lui *Ioan Alexandru*, în „Viața românească”, București, 2014, nr. 5 – 6. Rachieru, Adrian Dinu - *Ioan Alexandru, un poet „transfigurat”*, „Contemporanul”, Ideea europeană, anul XXII, Nr. 11, noiembrie 2011. Ștefănescu, Alex - *La o nouă lectură: Ioan Alexandru*, în „România literară”, București, 2002, nr. 9. Vieru, Cristian - *Ioan Alexandru – Pământ transfigurat*, in „Mișcarea literară”, Anul X, nr. 3 (39), 2011, Bistrița, p. 2-3. Vlăduț, Dumitru - *Ioan Alexandru în ediție critică*, in „Arca”, Arad, 2016, nr. 10-11-12 (about Ioan Alexandru, *Opere*, I (1702 p.) – II (1516 p.), Academia Română, Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă, București, 2015. Selected and set text, notes, commentaries, variants, chronology and indexes of Alexandru Ruja. *Introducere* de Eugen Simion).

²⁸ They appear on <https://grupulioanalexandru.webs.com/>

²⁹ As part of the project that started in 2016 through the blog <https://ioansalexandru.wordpress.com/>

³⁰ *Ioan Alexandru - Justinian Chira. SCRISORI*, Baia Mare, 2001, 320 p.

³¹ *Elemente filocalice în corespondența lui Ioan Alexandru cu Justinian Chira* de Ioan Petraș în „Mișcarea literară”, an X, nr. 3 (39), 2011, Bistrița, p. 10-15 at http://miscarealiterara.ro/imagini/ml3_11.pdf (accessed in 13.08.2020) or *Scrisorile de la Rohia* by Ioan Pinteș in „Mișcarea literară”, an X, nr. 3 (39), 2011, Bistrița, p. 16-17 în http://miscarealiterara.ro/imagini/ml3_11.pdf (accessed in 13.08.2020).

consisted in a rearrangement and reinterpretation through the moral and critical grid of Ioan Alexandru's work, on the one hand, and on the other hand the innovation was the integration of Ioan Alexandru's lyricism into Sophianic lyricism, as we have called deeply orthodox and autochthonized / autochthonizing literary creations. We did not intend to produce a monograph - as has been done before, but a repositioning in the grid of Christian Orthodox modernity.

Theoretical objective: to study the correlation between literature and morality through an applied study of the work of Ioan Alexandru.

Practical-applicative objective: Implementation of studies from various fields (morality, literature, philosophy) in the realization of a structured inter-, pluri- and transdisciplinary dialogue.

Research methodology. Thus, we aimed to answer the question: To what extent do literature and Christian-Orthodox moral values converge in the work of Ioan Alexandru?

Our *hypothesis* is that if integrated approaches are used in the study of Ioan Alexandru's work, then it will be observed that the writer has a Christian/Sophic/ethical perspective on existence. In support of this general hypothesis, two operational hypotheses have been formulated:

1. If we use the theological grid in the reception of the religious literary text, then we reach a deep understanding of the meanings of the work.
2. If we study the content and the writer's mode of expression, then we observe that the literary work is the expression of moral facts.

Thesis structure. To begin with, the thesis contains a brief biography of Ioan Alexandru, and among the general information, I have included data taken from several files in the CNSAS archives, from which it emerges that Ioan Alexandru was followed both in his public and private life and that several attempts were made to discredit him, since he had links with many Orthodox clergymen and hierarchs, facts which were contrary to the thematic directions of the Communist regime.

In chapter one we have identified Old Testament and neotestamental sources in which references to Sofia appear and we have presented the conception of Sofia in Russian theology and in the Romanian area, a choice based on the principle of synchronicity (late 19th century and 20th century). The Sofianic in Russian theology has several meanings. Vladimir Soloviov emphasises the theanthropy of created existence, the divine purpose of human being, but proposes an erotic vision of Sophia. Another exponent of "Russian sophiological existentialism" is Sergei Bulgakov. Always conscious of the teachings drawn from the Scriptures, the Russian theologian critically

analyses reality, history and the destiny of modern man. The liturgical perspective of his sophiology is emphasised by Andrew Louth, who notes the bipolarity of Sophia, being turned towards God and the world. At the center of Bulgarian sophiology is the image of the staircase linking heaven and earth, Sofia being seen as that intermediary reality between divinity and His creation, a common staircase. Pavel Florenski brings Sofia closer to the divinity and feels the speculative need for a bridge, a passage, a link between the Trinitarian Divinity and the world as a totality of creatures. He also shows an intellectualization of the symbolism of Sophia, the true Wisdom being the Logos and Sophia - the wisdom of the creature. We can identify in Florensky a cosmic sophiology (through the personal experience of the connection between God and creation/creature) and a soteriological sophiology (through those who participate in the work of salvation in the Church).

Lucian Blaga makes a philosophy of Orthodox culture, detaches himself from the Russian theologians' vision of Sophia and takes from their theories only an eminently Orthodox image: the image of the "bridge". From his perspective, Sophianism represents the "stylistic matrix of Orthodoxy"³² and the Sophian perspective can be a neutral way of approaching both Orthodox theology, Orthodox philosophy and secular philosophy. Therefore, using philosophical, not dogmatic, criteria, he believes that a common denominator can be reached on common ground.

In Romanian theology, Father Dumitru Stăniloae, speaking of the work of Nichifor Crainic, considers that his understanding of Sophia is compatible with the Orthodox faith, seeing the uncreated Sophia as "the eternal thought of God" with regard to the world, a thought that encompasses the unitary and harmonious multiplicity of the ideas of all beings. The created Sophia is the beauty that emerges from what belongs to the universe and is poured out upon creatures, the "sophian beauty" defining the saved creature in the light of heavenly glory. Thus, the conception of Sophia in Romanian theology is quite different from the conception of Russian theologians, an aspect also noted by Picu Ocoleanu. Nichifor Crainic, speaking of the divine, sophianic beauty of the world, identifies it with love. Since God is love, man's tendency is to reach out to the supreme love and hence the soteriological role of beauty. This link between Sophia - beauty - love is the essence of the Romanian vision of Sophia, and in man's drive towards the state of salvation it becomes synonymous with the individual's spiritual ascent into the plenitude of Sophian beauty, which explains Dostoevsky's words: 'beauty will save the world'.

³² Lucian Blaga, *Perspectiva sofianică*, în *Trilogia culturii*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2011, p. 218.

In the second chapter, we have identified some coordinates of religious/Sophianic lyricism in Ioan Alexandru and presented possible problems generated by its semantics. That part of literature that deals with religious themes and motifs, in which the image of divinity appears, is transferred by literary critics to a semi-obscure area: religious literature. We start from the idea that the term religious literature is a general term, not a specific, precise one, since it is also used to describe ancient literary creations that are closely linked to liturgical, cultic manifestations. On the other hand, literary works cannot be called mystical (as has been mistakenly thought) if they do not reveal states and experiences that highlight the content of faith, from which inner changes can emerge as direct results of the revelation expressed in the work. Therefore, we will present and argue what is the role of the poet and poetry, from the perspective of Ioan Alexandru, highlighting the theological and ethical values of creation.

Starting from the Sophianic perspective on Christian existence, as explained in the first chapter, we have traced some coordinates of Sophianic lyricism, revealed in the work of Ioan Alexandru, starting from the idea that it represents a communication of man about God, implying an opening towards divinity, in the ascending journey of man towards salvation and a revelation of the "uncreated Sophia" through the "created Sophia", by understanding the Christian aspects revealed in the immediate mundane reality. This bipolarity corroborates two modes of expression: the transcendent, divinity "descends", and the transfigured cosmos "ascends", seeking communion with divinity. This openness has several consequences: a. The open work appears as a structural model of the process of signification translated into metaphors, into poetry; b. Through the word of poetry, the Word / Logos is revealed, and ordinary language becomes grammar, the language of the hymn; c. The poetic word conveys the beauty of what is seen.

We notice in Ioan Alexandru an integrating, sacramental vision of the world, the poet metamorphosing through faith and love the whole of nature, which becomes an earth transfigured in the Church, in a Eucharistic communion. Through this integration of the universe into a cosmic Liturgy, an opening is achieved that reveals the meaning of creation in union with the divinity. With liturgical communion in mind, we have analyzed the way in which several literary motifs appear and their biblical relevance: the motif of the pristine font, the altar, the chalice motif, the bread and wine motif, the lily motif, the motif of the slain lamb, the dove or dove motif. I have noticed that the revelation is autochthonized by the national - Christian - specificity. We are talking here about a convergence between dogma and kerygma, i.e. about the reception of the divine

message in its eternal aspect (in a diachronic perspective) and in its actuality (in a synchronic perspective). The communication of the divine is eternal, unchanged by the historical context (diachronic, "through time") and must be adapted to each historical epoch, so that the essential information can be correctly received by each generation (synchronic, "with time"). In this and the following chapters, the literary analysis has focused on two levels: 1. We have presented in detail texts that we considered representative of the proposed theme. 2. We identified themes and drew general lines of analysis.

The third chapter was devoted to the Sophian analysis of the critical reception of the poet, in order to show that the grid of analysis we have proposed is not a "canonical" one (accepted by most known literary critics), but there have been scholars who have made interpretations from a Christian perspective. Many views, often contrary, have been considered, which I have systematized and argued their viability or countered. In the first three volumes of verse, the poet reveals the need for confession, the search for expression, celebrating Dionysian frenzy, detachment from matter. In the volume *How shall I tell you* he searches for the right expression and "sings" the joy of discovering the world, the nostalgia of the deserted village, with obvious echoes of the Old Testament and the New Testament or of Nicolae Labis, Hölderlin and Rainer Maria Rilke. Life so far is more under the influence of Lucian Blaga and corresponds to a lyrical maturation. The volume *The Questionable Inferno* (1966) corresponds to a crisis between creation and conscience, the poet assumes a tragic guilt ("Before I was born I was guilty / but it was too late to make anything right" in *Oedipus*). It is the consciousness of ancestral sin and the belief in the possibility of salvation through the suffering of bearing the cross in the spirit of an Edenic communion, tragically ironized in the poem *Man*. The poems in the volume *The Waste Land* (1969) capture an initiatory and symbolic process of life after death. The attitude in *Hymns* is different from that in the earlier stages. The poet becomes an initiate, a priest on the altar of the Logos, officiating in the service of the Word a ceremony of words. From now on, everyday language becomes grammar, the language of the hymn, the language in which the Word proclaims itself. The confessional element disappears, biblical, mythological and historical experiences predominate, so that the "hymns" reflect the history of the Romanians and the history of salvation.

If the lyricism up to the *Hymns* is generally well received by literary critics, as the seven volumes appear, the critical reception notices monotony, rhetoric and does not appreciate the religiosity, dogmatism, catechetical character and prophetic dimension of the work. Although there

is an opening up of the Christian lyrical universe, there is a "closure" of reception. This is why I have presented the opinions of some well-known literary critics and explained why they are partly correct or incorrect. We consider it important that, being grouped in seven volumes (to which the seven Lauds refer), the *Hymns* constitute a single song in which the poet praises God, addresses a song of praise to the Logos incarnate in history and in which he places before the divinity persons and personalities with an important role in personal and national history, transfigured in the rhetoric of artistic creation. In this way, they also represent a form of expression as a resistance of Christian faith against ideological indoctrination.

In the fourth chapter we have identified some defining, sacred, favourite topos in the work of Ioan Alexandru: the wilderness, the village and the homeland / Patria.

The wilderness is that area which man, as a traveler through this ephemeral world, traverses on his way to salvation. In Alexandria's work, the wilderness has two main meanings: physical space and spiritual place. As a physical space, it represents the place of damnation, the area to which the sinner, the scapegoat, is sent, recovered by the presence of the Saviour and the temptation in the wilderness (Mt. 4:1, Mk. 1:13; Lk. 4:2). As a spiritual place, the symbolism of the wilderness is more complex: A space that emphasizes the departure from the original state of the protopaths and in which an attempt is made to recover it and the link with the divinity; a place of need, of difficulties, of purification, of sacrifice on the road to salvation; a place of immobility, of eternal existence, in which paradoxically time stops and continues its flow, "For in the wilderness everything flows / In the wilderness everything stays, in the wilderness / Everything becomes" (*Black Butterflies* in V. P). The wilderness is not detached from history, but its existence is integrated into the flow of terrestrial life. Thus it becomes the wilderness of personal history and the wilderness of universal history, which man traverses, the former being contained in the latter. The village motif is part of the theme of family and love and has several meanings, being understood as the place where the individual affirms his identity, the matrix of social-anthropological sophianism. The village represents the order of this world (tradition) from the micro-unity represented by the family to the communion of the faithful in the Church. Whether he speaks of those who are, or of those who are no longer, Ioan Alexandru follows the axis of the individual - family - village - Church - cemetery ("the nation under the country" - *The Colopotary*, in *I. T.*) in the spirit of tradition, understood as the succession of the generations of the living and the dead ("the grave of my grandfather, over the grave of my great-grandfather" - *As in Paradise*,

in *I. D.*). Spatial succession is doubled by temporal succession, both seen from an eschatological perspective.

As a place of individual and collective sacrifice, the village is the redeemed space. In a connotative sense, the image of the village is a representation of the earthly Paradise for those who "live only by the word" - *Peasants*, in *I. Ma.*), as a vehicle towards transcendence, as a Sophianic topos, a transfigured earth ("the icon of the other earth" - *Tradition*, in *I. I.*), spiritualized through the effort to restore communion with the divinity achieved by shedding the "garments of skin" ("they descended into the lexicon" *Origin*, in *I. T.*). The village for Ioan Alexandru is the place of origin, and "home" becomes "Sophia" holographically found in the microcosm.

The human existence founded in the family, in the village, is fully affirmed in the homeland. Etymologically, the term comes from (p)Father, so the inhabitants of the homeland are related to each other in being by participating in the life of the Logos. The term has two meanings: the earthly homeland and the heavenly homeland. The earthly homeland is defined as: topos of communion, place where we worship God, topos of anamnesis. It is based on the individual sacrifice and the collective sacrifice of the ancestors ("homeland of bones") who fought for its existence and integrity. The homeland, understood as the Kingdom of Heaven, is the one towards which the Christian is striving, the original, archetypal topos to which he wants to be integrated.

In conclusion, we believe that through our approach we have succeeded in showing that it is possible to speak of the existence of a Sophianic poetry and we have established its coordinates, including the lyric of Ioan Alexandru in this category. We have also pointed out that, as it emerges from Alexandrian work, the poet who is aware of the beauty of the seen world, of the presence of the created Sophia, as the exponent of a whole series of generations, in communion with others, becomes the poet-logophor, who can only find himself in the sacred topos (village, homeland) and who transposes in his work two spiritual axes based on the idea of the hierophyte: national history and the history of salvation, Christian spirituality. From this hypostasis he places himself under the ascendancy of the Logos and puts before Him creation transfigured by his sacrificial love.

To sum up, in the paper "The Sophian Perspective on Existence - Theological and Ethical Values in the Work of Ioan Alexandru" we have established correlations between literature and moral theology, with Ioan Alexandru's work as a unifying element. From the very beginning, we have noticed a possible deficiency in the reception, starting from the title, in the possibility of questions concerning the transmission of revelations of Sophia in Alexandrian lyric. By defining and

exemplifying the concept of "Sophianic lyric" throughout the work, starting from the Christian-Orthodox foundation of Romanian theologians, we believe that fears have already been dispelled. The type of lyric we have analyzed does not presuppose a mystical vision, a mystical Sophianic hierophanies, but the awareness of the eternal presence of divine wisdom and beauty in things and their transfiguration into opera in a demiurgic lyrical attempt to redeem materiality fallen through/into sin.

Why did we choose Ioan Alexandru to exemplify Sophian lyric? It could be said, perhaps, that there are other poets better suited to illustrate this concept through their work. Yes, there are. I did not choose Ioan Alexandru because he captures in his verses the general essence of lyricism, but because he captures the path towards it, the problematizations of man, of the Christian, and because he reflects in his work the Romanian topos. He is the poet who seeks, who travels the road to the encounter with divinity, which he sees in everything that is related to the immediate reality, which unites the Romanian provinces under the sign of the cross.

Sophianic lyric has, par excellence, a moral dimension, it incipits the elements of Christian faith (of a rural Christianity) through the use of theological metaphor and deciphers the soteriological meaning of existence through the interdependence between beauty revealed in things and love. The beauty of the seen world within the limits of a traditional Christian way of life and the transfiguration towards salvation are the landmarks of this lyric. Ioan Alexandru's work is Sophianic and can only be properly understood through the Christian hermeneutical grid, through an integrated approach of the different fields of knowledge. This is why we have carried out an interdisciplinary research, based on elements of theology and literature, integrating philosophical concepts.