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About the Oath in Thalia and Melpomene's House

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Abstract: This article brings up to date the ceremony of assuming the teacher's oath, ceremony used to be done during the educational system along the middle of the 19th century, until the first half of the 20th century. We consider that it has been essential to transliterate two oaths (one of Mihai Eminescu, the other of Antonie Cirillo), each of them belonging to one of the two centuries, to demonstrate the perpetuation of this ceremony during almost seven decades, its coerciveness to fullfil being not only a simple solemn demonstration, but something that emerges from responsibility and consciousness of eternal values.

Key words: oath, teacher, conservatoire

It is generally important that those who practice a profession dedicated to noble ideals, of high morality, should say an oath. It represents the supreme form of devotion of the one who swears, appealing to absolute values of ethical morality, values sworn to be fulfilled.

According to the definition found in *The Exegetic Dictionary of Rumanian*, the oath is: "1. Affirmation, promise, solemn promise made by a person (often through a certain formula in which divinity is invoked) to tell the truth about certain facts; 2. Solemn commitment, usually expressed by certain formula, whereby someone commits himself to do his duty (to the people, to the state etc.); 3. Promise, firm promise to do something."¹

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¹ Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică „Iorgu Iordan”, *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române* (ediția a II-a, revăzută și adăugită), București, Editura Univers Enciclopedic Gold, 2009, our translation

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The oath is seen as a bridge between eternal values, between remarkable predecessors loyal to their own oath, and the preservation of these values, leaning the conscience to endlessly fight with human ills: selfishness, hatred, envy, favouritism. The evolution of human society has imposed this formula of responsibility and awareness of the values that someone is committed to defend, willing to preserve and develop the progress, promoting people who meet the conditions and also the qualities of the provision of the oath.

The importance of the oath has been invoked since ancient times, people being certain that the person who is included in a particular social or professional group is even more bounded with that group and they will protect its principles by taking an oath.

Any oath is, to the same extent, a solemn act of faith, held in a festive setting, having the importance of a ceremony. Saying an oath requires a certain context, the one of graduating studies or the integration in a professional category, and always claims an auditorium, witnesses of the event and its sacredness.

Even if the initial formulas unequivocally invoked the divinity, the evolution of society, having many forms of expression, give the possibility to circumvent the reference to divinity and sacredness, making room for the expressions regarding absolute human qualities as honour and conscience.

In our modern society, an oath is sworn by graduates of upper education (theologians, physicians, pharmacists) or those invested in public functions (presidents, dignitaries, lawyers), in the service of the marriage, in the army etc. But, in the second half of the 19th century, there were also other professional categories that could not exert their profession in the absence of the oath.

Among them there were the teachers too.

The moment **The Law for the Appointment of Teachers of Gymnasiums, High Schools and Vocational Schools** entered into force, in 1879, developed by the liberal minister Gheorghe Chițu, the first important change in education, which, besides the fact that it stipulated teachers could

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be appointed on vacant positions only following national contests for examinations of both specialized disciplines and pedagogical knowledge, improved the fact that no lectureship could be occupied unless an oath was taken, the teacher's oath.

Unfortunately, not many such testimonies of faith and devotion have been preserved until today – or perhaps they have not yet seen the light of the day – but, from what we know, there are some of an overwhelming, almost mystical importance.

We refer to the vows taken by Mihai Eminescu as a director of the Library of the Iași University², on August 30th, 1874, when the poet took his oath in the Auditorium of Iași University, in front of the chancellor Ștefan Micle, and, on September 1st, he took over the director position, which he would hold until July 1st, 1875.

The oath was as follows:

“I swear in the name of God and declare on my honour and my conscience; Faith to the Romanian ruler Carol the First and the constitution of my country;

I will religiously fulfill my debts to my service;

I will enforce the laws and comply with the laws in all and for all;

Without passion, without hate, without favour, without discrimination, without direct or indirect interest.

So help me God.

Mihaiu Eminescu

The present oath was taken in the presence of the subscribed

A. Iconom

Provost of the Iași University

today, on August 30, year one thousand eight hundred seventy-four

The oath of the present was assumed in the Auditorium of the Jassy University,

Chancellor,

Ștefan Micle”

²<http://bibliotecaovidius.blogspot.com/2017/01/juramantul-depus-de-mihai-eminescu-la.html> ; <http://www.bcu-iasi.ro/noutati-eminescu-165>, our translation

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It is for the first time that the poet sworn this oath and we knew that, on October 1st, 1884, he would make a second one, as a librarian, this time the witnesses being D. Garofeanu, consultant lawyer, and Nicolae Culianu, chancellor, in the same place and with the same formula.

We wanted to restore the text of the oath submitted by Mihai Eminescu because, in our research about The Iași Music and Dramatic Arts Conservatoire, we discovered that this custom of saying an oath used to be done when someone assumed leading the professional department across the conservatory.

The Conservatoires of Music and Dramatic Arts of Iași, Bucharest, and Cluj were included (until **The University Autonomy Law**, voted in Senate, on the 30th of June, 1931, the President of the Senate being Mihail Sadoveanu) among Secondary Schools or Special Schools, not having the status of higher education, as The Iași University Library had. However, this oath was also taken when taking over the function of a teacher of a class within the Conservatoire. This fact has been certified by the presence in the holdings of The Music and Dramatic Arts Academy belonging to The Iași Branch Office of The National Archives of Romania of a handwritten document containing the oath of Antonie Cirillo, who taught the Class of horn, whirlwind and trombone of the Iași Music Conservatoire.³ The oath is signed by Antonie Cirillo, R. D. Iordăchescu, member of the Direction of the Music and Dramatic Arts Conservatoire and the principal Enrico Mezzetti. The document is dated on January 15, 1906. We find in this document the same formula as the one in the oaths taken by Mihai Eminescu:

“I swear in the name of God and declare on my honour and conscience;

Faith to His Majesty Carol the First, King of Romania and to my constitution;

I will religiously fulfill the debts to my service;

I will enforce the laws and comply with the laws in all and for all;

³ Direcția Județeană a Arhivelor Naționale Iași, Fondul Academiei de Muzică și Artă Dramatică „George Enescu” Iași, Dosar 10/1906, p. 7, our translation

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Without hate, without favour, without passion, without discrimination, without interest in one person, without direct or indirect interest.

So help me God.

January 15, 1906

Teacher of the class of horn, whirlwind and trombone

Cirillo Antonie

This oath was spoken in my presence

R. D. Iordăchescu

The Direction of The Iași Music and Dramatic Arts Conservatoire

This oath was assumed by the teacher of the class of horn, whirlwind and trombone

Today, January 15, 1906

Principal

Enrico Mezzetti”

Enrico Mezzetti was at the time one of the famous personalities of the Romanian music life and one of the honourable professors of the Iași Conservatoire. He was the student of the well-known composer Gavriil Musicescu and he pursued his studies in Bologna. When he returned to the country, he was appointed teacher of canto and piano at the Conservatoire. He was a teacher for 36 years and he was the first who organised whole series of seasons of public symphonic concerts, beginning with 1905. This was also the year when he was first appointed as principal of the Iași Music and Dramatic Arts Conservatoire. His professionalism, seriousness and pedagogical vision (he was involved in committees amending the theatre regulations and the ones regarding the music and dramatic arts) led him to value the quality of the teacher by saying an oath.

The festive place of the deposition of an oath may not have today, for us, the greatness and the importance of a solemn ceremony, but if we remember the conditions under which the Iași Conservatoire courses were held and especially the shortcomings of the lack of space, the chancellery became an inalienable, memorable place for all who would have been sworn there. The current stage of our study about the Iași Music and Dramatic Arts

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Conservatoire and the Iași National Theatre has not yet revealed the existence of a second similar document. During the events of World War I, when the place of the Iași Conservatoire was commandeered by the French Legation, but also those that succeeded it, when the place was found in an advanced state of degradation, the impossibility to be used entirely, the requests to the Ministry for burning some of the documents from the archive in the absence of storage space, all of these facts led to the disappearance of most of the conservatoire's archive.

This document, found in the Iași Branch Office of The National Archives of Romania, the holdings of The George Enescu Music and Dramatic Arts Academy, reminds us of the dimension of the assignment assumed by the ones involved. Otherwise we notice the mystical connotation, taking the Trinity as a witness: God, the honour and conscience of the person who assumed the oath. In the first part of the last century, the Romanian society was ruled by deeply assumed religious values, rules which shaped and defined immutable virtues. The oath is usually made with the invocation of the name of God in order to strengthen the declared truth or to take a promise. Thus, the one who swears bows to God's judgment, otherwise the breaking of vows, the perjury, will draw the opprobrium of the community, the penalty being, in fact, a moral one.

All of these become the imagine of the non-negotiable principles and values of the university universe, an invitation to meditate, to revalue the way the intellectual elite has reported back to its socio-professional position, to its role and its mission.

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