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About the Mechanistic-Scientist Origins of the First Theory of Poetry in the History of Romanian Literature: The Influence of Schopenhauer and Herbart on Titu Maiorescu

Abstract: In the present essay, I investigate the influence exerted by the German philosophers Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) on the first theory of poetry in the history of Romanian literature. It was launched by the literary critic Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917). In a study titled *Romanian Poetry. A Critical Inquiry* (1867), which is among the first Romanian works of literary criticism and the first one dedicated to poetry, Maiorescu introduces concepts and theories formulated by Herbart and Schopenhauer. He combines these theories in a particular way, with the intention of producing a theory of poetry that is as solid as possible. An important contribution made by Maiorescu to the theorization of poetry is the attempt to fortify or complete Schopenhauer's theory about the lyrical genre – an eminently idealistic one – with resources provided by the “realist” Herbart – one of the first thinkers who aimed at providing psychology with a scientific foundation. Herbart introduces, for example, concepts from the physics of that period (Newtonian mechanics, electricity, etc.) and from mathematics in order to define or quantify psychological experiences, which he seeks to describe as measurable entities, governed by laws just like other phenomena of the physical world. Thus, inspired by Schopenhauer to determine the “object” of poetry – namely “feeling” –, Maiorescu defines “feeling” in terms of Herbartian psychology: as an experience located in the “consciousness,” resulting from a “struggle” of “representations,” and which possesses an “intensity” that is superior to other experiences. Thus, the first theory on poetry in the history of Romanian criticism, one indebted to idealism and romantic poetics, also draws inspiration from *science*.

Keywords: theory of poetry, idealism, psychology, Newtonian mechanics, physics, sciences, representation (*Vorstellung*), sentiment (*Gefühl*), Arthur Schopenhauer, Johann Friedrich Herbart, Titu Maiorescu

In this essay, I investigate the influence exerted by the German philosophers Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) on the first theory of poetry in the history of Romanian literature. It was launched by literary critic Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917), who was educated in Vienna and

Berlin between 1850 and 1860 and became, upon his return to Romania, the founder of literary criticism in Romania and patron of the “Junimea” literary society in Iași/Jassy, former capital of Moldova.

Herbart's influence on the young Maiorescu is manifested in his doctoral thesis – *Das Verhältnis* –, defended at the University of Giessen in 1856, but also in his debut book, *Einiges Philosophische in gemeinfasslicher Form*, published in Berlin in 1860. Returning to Romania, Maiorescu published the study *Poezia română. Cercetare critică* [Romanian Poetry. A Critical Inquiry] in 1867, where, in the first part, he defines poetry as an art “called to ‘express beauty’” (It is, in fact, a definition of art itself, poetry being included herein only as a genre among all the other genres of the arts.) Moving on from the definition of poetry/art, Maiorescu goes on to define “beauty” in general. He can do so only by facing “beauty” against “truth,” the former comprising “ideas manifested in sensible matter,” or sensible ideas, not “only ideas,” as the latter does.¹

“Sensible matter” through which art/poetry would express “ideas” in themselves are, according to Maiorescu, the series of “images” generated in the “mind” of the hearer or that of the reader by the metaphors or figures of speech used by the artist/poet. I think that the concept of “sensible idea,” which is essential in defining “beauty” in Maiorescu's understanding and which his commentators have for a long time considered to build on G.W.F. Hegel's aesthetics, originates in Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, more precisely in the concept of “intuitive knowledge,” which is considered characteristic for art or the contemplation of “beauty,” and which is different from “abstract knowledge,” characteristic for science.² One plausible source is also the German philosopher Johann Friedrich Herbart, a popular academic authority in 1850s Vienna, who had

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- 1 Titu Maiorescu, *Poezia română. Cercetare critică de Titu Maiorescu, urmată de o alegere de poezii* (Iași: Edițiunea și Imprimeria Societății “Junimea,” 1867).; reproduced in Titu Maiorescu, *Opere. I. Critice*, ed. D. Vatamaniuc (București: Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă, 2005), 29. All future quotes from *Poezia română* [Romanian Poetry] refer to this edition.
 - 2 “Denn nur anschaulich wird die Idee erkannt: Erkenntniß der Idee ist aber der Zweck aller Kunst.” Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Erster Band, Drittes Buch, § 51 (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1859), 287.; “For the Idea can be known only through perception, but knowledge of the Idea is the aim of all art.” Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* [1859], vol. I, “Third Book,” § 51, translated by E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1966), 243.

inspired the young Maiorescu considerably and early on.³ With the notable exceptions represented by the thoroughly documented and professional studies signed by philosophers Mircea Florian (in the 1930s) and Liviu Rusu (in the 1970s) – these being the only two scholars, to my knowledge, who gave due importance to Herbart's influence on Maiorescu –, Hegel's impact on Maiorescu was not only overestimated, but even wrongly assumed. As far as I am concerned, I am in perfect agreement with Rusu regarding the almost zero impact exerted by Hegel on the philosophical-aesthetic conception of the young Maiorescu and regarding the crucial influence exerted, instead, on him by Herbart and Schopenhauer.⁴ Regarding Schopenhauer, I believe that not even Rusu was able to properly estimate the magnitude of the German philosopher's influence on Maiorescu. Furthermore, whereas Rusu chose to privilege certain aspects of Herbart's influence on the young Romanian philosopher, I put forward another perspective throughout this essay. One that is more focused on the way in which Herbart – an author not available in Romanian and only partially translated into other languages, therefore almost unknown to Maiorescu's Romanian interpreters – concretely proposed

3 For details regarding Herbart's domination in 1850s Vienna to the detriment of Hegel and the reasons behind it, see Wolfgang Huemer and Christoph Landerer, "Mathematics, Experience, and Laboratories: Herbart's and Brentano's role in the rise of scientific psychology," *History of the Human Sciences* 23, no. 3 (2010): 72–94; One explanation for promoting the – realist and "humanist" – Herbartian model would be the Habsburg authorities' interest for counteracting German idealism which, especially through Hegel, could fuel revolutionary philosophies: "In the Habsburg Empire, Herbartianism, fostered by state officials as an antidote to German Idealism, even held the powerful position of an (unofficial) *Staatsphilosophie* [state philosophy]." (74) Other details, which entail the great influence of the Catholic Church and especially its hostility towards so-called "progressive" philosophies, which are potentially revolutionary and generally toxic for "faith," are to be found in Footnote 21 of Huemer and Landerer's article: "The missing success of German Idealism in Austrian universities is, at least in part, due to the strong influence of the Roman Catholic Church. [...] William Johnston notes that in Austria the authorities were convinced 'that Hegel was dangerous to the faith.' [...] Compared to such incitements, the humanism of Herbart seemed safe indeed. It reinvigorated the apolitical, nonsectarian classicism of the late Goethe while inculcating a Biedermeier spirit of resignation." (90–91). William Johnston's work, quoted here, is *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 286.

4 See Liviu Rusu, *Scieri despre Titu Maiorescu* (București: Editura Cartea Românească, 1979).

to “scientize” psychology. That is, to rewrite it and base it on the terms and principles of mechanical physics and mathematics (algebra) associated with the formalization of investigations in physics. Including the ideas taken from Schopenhauer, I noticed that they are re-coded by the young Romanian critic through the filter of this new perspective on psychology borrowed from Herbart. Thus, on the idealism of Schopenhauer’s theory of poetry, Maiorescu has been superimposing Herbartian “realism” since the 1860s, for within the German philosophical tradition, Herbart shows rather a tendency towards realism. This tendency is clear if only by looking at Herbart’s conception of psychology, the science, according to him, of a “statics” and “mechanics” of “spirit” (in which context “spirit” can easily be reduced to brain matter and its actions).

Liviu Rusu has made a good synthesis of Herbart’s philosophy (with emphasis on the concepts of “relation”/*Verhältnis*, “contradiction”/*Widerspruch*, which were also imposed on Maiorescu early on), but he fails to notice that Herbart’s philosophy is also greatly influenced by the sciences of the time (chiefly by physics and especially by the branch of mechanics). Rusu’s perspective is focused strictly on philosophy and is limited, moreover, to discussing Herbart’s conception in the *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung in die Philosophie* [1813] and the influence exerted by this manual [Lehrbuch] on Maiorescu. For my part, I have chosen to take the discussion beyond the sphere of classical philosophy and its history and to trace the way in which Herbart and, through him, Maiorescu are increasingly drawn to explanations and theorizations inspired by Newtonian mechanics and other concepts and theories (which have themselves meanwhile become established) of modern science. To this end, I have followed not only Herbart’s philosophy textbook, but also his later, more original and ambitious works such as *Psychologie als Wissenschaft* (I-II; 1824–1825).

Schopenhauer and Herbart: The Primary Sources of Maiorescu’s Theory of Poetry

While in the first part of his 1867 study, Maiorescu defines poetry as a genre close to art, and art as “expression of beauty,” in the second part of the study he deals with the approach to poetry as a particular type of art (as literary genre). Poetry is presumably an art form or a literary genre whose “object” is “a feeling or a passion”: “the idea or object expressed through poetry is always a feeling or

a passion and never an exclusively intellectual undertaking or which belongs to the scientific realm, either in theory or in practical application.”⁵

Therefore, “sensible idea/sensibility” on the one hand, “sensation”/“feeling”/“sentiment” on the other: one relates to the “material condition” of poetry as art, the other to its “ideal” “condition,” dependent on the particular genre which it illustrates among the broader category of literary genres and the arts as a whole. “Feeling” is a concept that implies both sensitivity *qua* sensoriality or action of the senses, or knowledge through the senses, as well as affectivity, the sphere of affective experiences, feelings, emotions, and passions. But for Maiorescu, at least in his position as theoretician of poetry,⁶ “feeling” functions predominantly or only as a synonym for sentiment (“feeling”)⁷ and is based in the heart. Basically, “feeling” is “heart,” meaning “feeling”/affective sphere in general.⁸ It is one of the conceptions that underpin romanticism.

Both definitions given by Maiorescu in *Romanian Poetry. A Critical Inquiry* – the definition of beauty as a sensitized “idea” and the definition of poetry through its eminently affective “object,” sentiment – will exert a more or less explicit and long-lasting impact on Romanian poetry criticism of the twentieth century.

In order to obtain a more edifying perspective on Maiorescu’s way of theorizing poetry, it is necessary to investigate how he arrived at his convictions in

5 Titu Maiorescu, *Poezia română*, 34.

6 In *Einiges Philosophische in gemeinfasslicher Form*, Maiorescu had warned against confusing the two concepts.

7 “Feeling,” “sensitivity”/“sensibility,” “affectiveness,” “sentiment” are distinct notions for German philosophers, at least in the tradition stretching from Kant to Herbart. “Sensitivity”/“sensibility” refers first of all to knowledge through the senses, to sensoriality (to arrive, with Kant, at the postulation of *a priori* forms of sensibility: space and time; see also his concept of “transcendental aesthetics”). As for “feeling” and “disposition”/“mind”/“temper(ament)” (*Gefühl* and *Gemüth*), they function rather as phenomena superior to mere sensoriality – phenomena of greater complexity, as state of mind, affection, emotion, sentiment. For Maiorescu and even for his descendants (such as the “modernist” literary critic E. Lovinescu), “sensitivity”/“sensibility” and “feeling” still tend to circulate as synonyms. An explanation could be provided on philological-linguistic grounds: in the Romanian language, both “sensitivity” and “feeling” are derived from the word root “simț,” which blurs, for example, the distinction between the simple feeling-as-“sensation” (“simțire”) and the more complex feeling-as-“feeling” (“simțimint”) made in *Romanian Poetry. A Critical Inquiry*.

8 Maiorescu equated in his 1867 study “feeling” with “heart” and reason with “mind”/the brain according to a tradition that – as a late disciple of Herbart and his attempts to scientize psychology – he should have rather questioned.

Romanian Poetry. A Critical Inquiry, and especially on what the Romanian critics of the twentieth century more frequently retain from this study, namely the definition of poetry by its “object,” “feeling,” or “passion.”

Remote sources of Maiorescu’s theory regarding the “object” of poetry can be found in the dissociation of “faculties” in Kant’s three *Critiques* and even earlier in the eighteenth century, for instance in the approach to the lyric genre by the abbé Batteux⁹ (where poetry is described as an “imitation” of feelings).

But the immediate sources of Maiorescu’s thesis of the origin/“object” of poetry in “feeling” or “passion” are, in my opinion, the Schopenhauer–Herbart couple. These sources have been searched for a long time by Maiorescu’s commentators, but unsuccessfully and without an unassailable and ultimate proof, as long as it was only possible to gather a partially or even completely invalid set of evidence. Therefore, in what follows, I propose a foray into the theories and concepts of the two philosophers who very probably – quite certainly – influenced Maiorescu and which were not mentioned (sometimes not even suspected) by his interpreters.

The author of the influential *The World as Will and Representation* provides Maiorescu with the conviction that poetry as a literary genre – as lyric poetry (*die lyrische Poesie*) – is a universal mirror of the general human “feeling,” unalterable in time and space. In other words, lyric poetry is the reflection of the prototype, of the *idea per se*, of *universally human feeling* (*das Gefühl*), of everything that is not transitory, ephemeral, inessential from the standpoint of affectivity in man:¹⁰

“Yet in the lyrics of genuine poets is reflected the inner nature of the whole of mankind; and all that millions of past, present, and future human beings have found and will find in the same constantly recurring situations, finds in them its corresponding experience.

9 See *Les Beaux Arts réduits à un même principe* [1746].

10 Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Erster Band, Drittes Buch, § 51, 294. “Dennoch bildet in der lyrischen Poesie ächter Dichter sich das Innere der ganzen Menschheit ab, und Alles, was Millionen gewesener, seiender, künftiger Menschen, in den selben, weil stets wiederkehrenden, Lagen, empfunden haben und empfinden werden, findet darin seinen entsprechenden Ausdruck. Weil jene Lagen, durch die beständige Wiederkehr, eben wie die Menschheit selbst, als bleibende dastehen und stets die selben Empfindungen hervorrufen, bleiben die lyrischen Produkte ächter Dichter Jahrtausende hindurch richtig, wirksam und frisch. Ist doch überhaupt der Dichter der allgemeine Mensch: Alles, was irgend eines Menschen Herz bewegt hat, und was die menschliche Natur, in irgend einer Lage, aus sich hervortreibt, was irgendwo in einer Menschenbrust wohnt und brütet, – ist sein Thema und sein Stoff; wie daneben auch die ganze übrige Natur.”

Since these situations, by constant recurrence, exist as permanently as humanity itself, and always call up the same sensations, the lyrical productions of genuine poets remain true, effective, and fresh for the thousands of years. If, however, the poet is the universal man, then all that has ever moved a human heart, and all that human nature produces from itself in any situation, all that dwells and broods in any human breast – all these are his theme and material, and with these all the rest of nature as well.”¹¹

All this, states Schopenhauer, takes place under the conditions in which “poetry” *qua* literature, i.e., throughout all literary genres, acts as a revealer of the *idea of man*, of the *typically human* or of the *universally human*. Thus, “die Poesie” (poetry = literature) expresses “the truth [about man] in general” (“das im Allgemeine Wahre”) or “the truth of the Idea” (“die Wahrheit der Idee”), “truth” which would have a value superior to particular “truths,” which the discipline of “history” would account for:

“Our own experience is the indispensable condition for understanding poetry as well as history, for it is, so to speak, the dictionary of the language spoken by both. But history is related to poetry as portrait-painting to historical painting; the former gives us the true in the individual, the latter the true in the universal; the former has the truth of the phenomenon and can verify it therefrom; the latter has the truth of the Idea, to be found in no particular phenomenon, yet speaking from them all. The poet from deliberate choice presents us with significant characters in significant situations; the historian takes both as they come.”¹²

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- 11 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. I, “Third Book,” § 51, 249. Substantiated suppositions regarding Schopenhauer’s influence on Maiorescu were also made – among the rare commentators who paid attention to this influence on the young Maiorescu – by Liviu Rusu. However, his observations were kept at a conceptual level, comparing concepts and theories used by Maiorescu with those of Schopenhauer, i.e., they did not refer to the literal level of Maiorescu’s study. I have, however, remarked that an irrefutable proof exists – a textual one! – that Maiorescu was familiar with *The World as Will and Representation* even before he started working on *Romanian Poetry. A Critical Inquiry*. For the Romanian critic cites one of Voltaire’s quips in his study – albeit in an approximate form: thereby reproducing exactly the inaccurate way in which Schopenhauer mentions it in his book. More precisely, in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Zweiter Band, Ergänzungen zum dritten Buch, § 34 (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1859), 463.; For the English version, see *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. II, “Supplement to the Third Book,” § 34 (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1966), 408.
- 12 “Unumgänglich ist die eigene Erfahrung Bedingung zum Verständniß der Dichtkunst, wie der Geschichte: denn sie ist gleichsam das Wörterbuch der Sprache, welche beide reden. Geschichte aber verhält sich zur Poesie wie Porträtmalerei zur Historienmalerei: jene giebt das im Einzelnen, diese das im Allgemeinen Wahre: jene hat die Wahrheit der Erscheinung, und kann sie aus derselben beurkunden, diese hat die

Having said that, if I concur with Liviu Rusu in the overall belief that Schopenhauer had a major influence on Maiorescu in the conceptualization of poetry/art, this fact being visible since *Romanian Poetry. A Critical Inquiry*, as far as I'm concerned, I tend to believe that the greatest impact on Maiorescu's theory of poetry was, from Schopenhauer's work, the very fragment quoted above from *The World as Will and Representation* about lyric poetry as the art of expressing the idea-of-“feeling” or of universally human “feelings.”

On this Schopenhauerian foundation, which I have reasons to believe represents the basis of Maiorescu's theory in *Romanian Poetry. A Critical Inquiry* – a standard based on which the Romanian critic also decides that the “object” of poetry can only be “feeling” or “passion” –, Maiorescu superimposes theories contemporary to or even earlier than Schopenhauer's. For example, Herbart's theories (some dating from 1813, others later than Schopenhauer's opus, which appeared in a first edition in 1818) work for Maiorescu as necessary tools used to confirm and strengthen Schopenhauer's theory, especially the fragment quoted above about the idea of universally human feeling as the object of lyric poetry.

In agreement with Schopenhauer, for whom only art provides, through contemplation, access to the “idea” and its extraction from the realm of the “will,” Herbart defines, for example, also in the second decade of the nineteenth century, the work of art (but also the reception of natural beauty) as “rising above the ordinary” and as “interrupting the ordinary course of the psychological mechanism.” Investigating the preconditions of this phenomenon, Herbart decides that this interruption or suspension can only be achieved “through the excitation of the affects” – i.e., through actions of “feeling.” The very nature of literary genres (four of them, according to Herbart's conception: epic, lyrical, dramatic, and didactic), as well as the phenomenon of “purification” (*katharsis*) proper to art or the contemplation of beauty in a broader sense would depend on a typology of “affects” and, by extension, on a typology of affectivity.¹³ In any

Wahrheit der Idee, die in keiner einzelnen Erscheinung zu finden, dennoch aus allen spricht. Der Dichter stellt mit Wahl und Absicht bedeutende Charaktere in bedeutenden Situationen dar: der Historiker nimmt beide wie sie kommen.” Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Erster Band, Drittes Buch, § 51, 288; for the English version, see Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, “Third Book”, § 51, 244–245.

13 “Jedes Werk der schönen Natur und Kunst erhebt uns über das Gemeine; es unterbricht den gewöhnlichen Lauf des psychischen Mechanismus. Fragt man aber, wie derselbe könne unterbrochen werden: so ist die leichteste Antwort: durch Erregung von Affecten [my emphasis, T.D.]. Diese sind entweder deprimierend oder excitierend; überdies in

case, the lyrical genre is also defined by Herbart by the expression of “feeling” (*das Gefühl*): “In the epic, what captivates is the reflection of an event; in drama, sympathy for the characters/persons; in the lyrical [genre], the feeling the poet expresses.”¹⁴ That the lyrical genre would consist of “communicating feelings” is shown by Herbart later as well, as he is talking about how “lyricism conveys sentiment.”¹⁵ In this sense, lyricism is compared to music, which leads to the conclusion that expressing “feelings” is not a particularity of lyrical poetry: on

beyden Klassen noch äußerst mannigfaltig; sämmtlich aber vorübergehend, wodurch sie sich von dem durch sein Object vestgestellten ästhetischen Urtheil unterscheiden. In der That nun läßt sich bey den meisten ästhetischen Gegenständen die Spur erkennen, daß ihre Wirkung mit Erregung einer Art von Affecten begann; so ist die Poesie nach den Seiten des Tragischen und des Heitern, oft Komischen, auseinandergetreten, indem sie entweder deprimirend oder excitirend ins Gemüth eingreift. Nicht sicherer kann der ästhetische Gegenstand eingreifen, als indem er afficirt: nicht besser kann der Affect endigen, und von ihm das Gemüth sich *reinigen*, als durch Übergang in das zurückbleibende ästhetische Urtheil.” J.F. Herbart, *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung in die Philosophie* [1813], in J.F. Herbart, *Sämmtliche Werke*, Vierter Band, ed. Karl Kehrbach (Langensalza: Druck und Verlag von Hermann Beyer & Söhne, 1891), 113.

- 14 “Nach dem Vorstehenden kann es nicht befremden, wenn man die Kunstwerke auf eine Weise eingetheilt findet, die keine strenge Nothwendigkeit der Sonderung anzeigt, weil ihr keine wahrhaft ästhetischen Unterschiede zum Grunde liegen. Sehr bekannt ist die Eintheilung der Poesie in die epische, dramatische, lyrische und didaktische. In der epischen herrscht das Unterhaltende einer Begebenheit vor; in der dramatischen die Theilnahme für Personen; *in der lyrischen das Gefühl* [my emphasis, T.D.], welches der Dichter ausdrückt, in der didaktischen die Meinung, deren Gewicht er gelten macht. Man bemerkt bald, daß diese Unterschiede nicht der Poesie allein angehören; daß theils andere Künste, theils kunstlose Gegenstände daran Theil haben. Vom Homer kann man zum Ariost, vom Ariost zu arabischen Märchen, vom Märchen zu gewöhnlichen Romanen, ja zu bloßen Geschichten herabsteigen, und immer noch in der Sphäre des Unterhaltenden bleiben. Die Opernmusik, lyrisch im Einzelnen, ist unterhaltend im Ganzen; ein märchenhafter Text paßt ihr besser als ein ächt tragischer oder hochkomischer. Die Arabesken-Malerey ist ebenfalls unterhaltend; die Landschaftsgemälde sind es um so mehr, je mannigfaltiger das Auge in ihnen lustwandelt. Dagegen giebt es auch tragische Gemälde und Bildsäulen (z. B., den *Laokoon*); und komische (wie die hogarthischen); *es giebt viele lyrische, welche irgend eine Gemüthsbewegung darstellen* [my emphasis, T.D.]; es giebt didaktische, wohin die Portraits gehören.” Ibid., 141.
- 15 “das Lyrische die Empfindung mittheilt.” J.F. Herbart, *Kurze Encyklopädie der Philosophie* [1831], in J.F. Herbart, *Sämmtliche Werke*, Neunter Band, ed. Karl Kerbach (Langensalza: Verlag von Hermann Beyer & Söhne, 1897), 113.

the contrary, insists Herbart, "lyricism" is a common denominator of both arts, even if neither poetry nor music are reducible to "lyricism."¹⁶

On the other hand, however, by defining poetry – in its supra-generic meaning, synonymous with literature in a broader sense – by its "material" (*Stoff*), Herbart shows that the "material" of poetry (including all of its genres and which, therefore, is not limited to what Maiorescu will search for in *Romanian Poetry. A Critical Inquiry*) are "human relations" ("menschlichen Verhältnissen") of any kind. "Human relations" would also include moral, political, etc. relations, and poetry/literature is delegated the task of transposing these "relations" into a specific aesthetic regime: employing words in a representation that does not take into account any other purpose outside of it.¹⁷ It is a framework decisively disavowed by Maiorescu in *Romanian Poetry. A Critical Inquiry*. The Romanian critic seeks, on the contrary, the delimitation of poetry – through "feeling," seen as its only possible "object" – from the sphere of reason (which would include politics and morality), i.e., from the sphere of non-emotional reflection. The "object" of reason is

16 *Ibid.*, 118.

17 "Denn die Poesie, welche alles Aesthetische umfaßt, sofern es sich, ohne Rücksicht auf einen außer ihm liegenden Zweck, in Worten darstellen läßt, findet doch ganz vorzüglich *ihren Stoff in den menschlichen Verhältnissen* [my emphasis, T.D.]; auf welche sich die sittlichen Elemente beziehen. Allein in der Sphäre der Poesie erblickt man noch eine Menge anderer, dem täglichen Leben, den Betrachtungen über menschliche Schicksale, den politischen und religiösen Vorstellungsarten, der gesammten Natur abgewonnener Verhältnisse; welche bis jetzt weder bestimmt, noch aufgezählt sind; und sich daher nicht mit Genauigkeit anzeigen lassen" (J.F. Herbart, *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 125). In the first sentence of this quotation, the trace left by the famous Kantian definition of "beauty" inferred from his third "moment" is noticeable: "Schönheit ist Form der Zweckmäßigkeit eines Gegenstandes sofern sie, ohne Vorstellung eines Zwecks an ihm wahrgenommen wird." Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, § 17, ed. Karl Vörländer (Leipzig: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1922), 77. ("Beauty is the form of the purposiveness of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it without representation of an end." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 120.) Herbart's definition still remains somehow ambiguous, for the "material" he discusses here can be perceived both as poetry's "form" (dubbed "sensible matter" by Maiorescu), as well as its "object" or "foundation" (its "ideal" "condition," according to Maiorescu). Within the same work, Herbart also shows that "[t]he subject of poetry is man and his conception about nature." ("Gegenstand der Poesie ist der Mensch und seine Auffassung der Natur." J.F. Herbart, *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 126) – "the subject" corresponding here rather to Maiorescu's understanding of "object" of poetry.

thus *thought* in the broadest sense. Maiorescu will have made this decision being informed, however (as shown in *Einiges Philosophische in gemeinfasslicher Form*), of the fact that for Herbart, *aesthetics* is not a discipline/sphere independent of morality but, on the contrary, a super-category that includes moral beauty.¹⁸ But poetry, Herbart further pointed out – in a manner only now identical with the way in which the “Junimea” critic will separate poetry from morality and politics – would differ from morality not by the “object” but by the “manner of presenting moral elements.” Thus, morality is characterized by the fact that on its territory “practical ideas must be treated logically as concepts.” By comparison, poetry also receives a negative definition according to Herbart: as a field that is *not defined by the cultivation of a (relationship to) concepts*.¹⁹ In any case, this Herbartian definition of poetry as an art whose “material” is “human relations” in the broadest sense can be seen as falling in line with Schopenhauer’s definition of literary art in general as reflecting “human actions”²⁰ / “menschliches Handeln”

18 In *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung in die Philosophie*, Herbart puts the sensible beauty (of art) and the moral beauty (practical philosophy) under the common denominator of “aesthetics” as two twinned entities (see the third chapter of his book, “Einleitung in die Ästhetik; besonders in ihren wichtigsten Theil, die praktische Philosophie”).

19 “Die Poesie weicht übrigens in der Art, die sittlichen Elemente darzustellen, so äußerst weit ab von der Moral, welche die *Begriffe* als solche bearbeitet: daß man ungeachtet der Gemeinschaft beyder in Ansehung des Gebrauchs der praktischen Ideen, doch ihren Unterschied nicht weit zu suchen hat. Das Abstracte ist das gerade Widerspiel der Poesie [...]. Für die Moral müssen die praktischen Ideen als Begriffe logisch behandelt werden; und hiemit sowohl, als mit der Forderung eines vorwurfsfreyen Lebens, hängt die Sorge zusammen, nichts auszulassen, oder gering zu schätzen, was beytragen könne zu dem *Ganzen* des Lobes oder Tadels. Davon weiss die Poesie nichts; sie verlangt im Gebiete der Begriffe nichts zu erschöpfen oder zu vollenden. Oftmals hat sie genug an einer einzigen unter den praktischen Ideen, wenn es ihr nur gelingt, die übrigen in Schatten zu stellen” (J.F. Herbart, *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 125–126).

20 If anything is/can be “beautiful,” it cannot be equally beautiful as another, Schopenhauer claims: there is a hierarchy of “beauty,” according to the degree to which it facilitates pure contemplation – that is, according to the speed with which it raises the individual to a “species,” revealing its typical traits, the “idea” (“the higher stage of objectivity of the will”); ultimately, revealing to him the *very idea of man*. In this context, “poetry” (understood regardless of genre, as literature in general, especially as drama and tragedy) reveals/reproduces the “actions” of man: “Schöner ist aber Eines als das Andere dadurch, daß es jene rein objektive Betrachtung erleichtert, ihr entgegenkommt, ja gleichsam dazu zwingt, wo wir es dann sehr schön nennen. Dies ist der Fall theils dadurch, daß es als einzelnes Ding, durch das sehr deutliche, rein bestimmte, durchaus bedeutsame Verhältniß seiner Theile die Idee seiner Gattung rein

(particularly *the idea-of-human-action/the idea of "menschliches Handeln"*), a reflection specialized according to genres, whereas lyrical poetry is delegated to "action" through "feeling," as we have seen. (Poetry's quality of rendering/ "imitating" "actions" would also give it the quality of being, alongside music, an art with a succession in time, as G.E. Lessing had shown in 1766 in *Laokoon*.²¹)

I claimed that the centerpiece of Maiorescu's 1867 theory is Schopenhauerian in nature and that Herbart provides theories or concepts to strengthen/confirm it. This fact also takes place because Herbart is less concerned with the systemic scope of aesthetics than Schopenhauer is. Herbart's "aesthetics," as presented in his "manual" *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung in die Philosophie* [1813] and *Kurze Encyclopedie der Philosophie* [1831], betray a rather conservative-didactic approach.

ausspricht und durch in ihm vereinigte Vollständigkeit aller seiner Gattung möglichen Äußerungen die Idee derselben vollkommen offenbart, so daß es dem Betrachter den Uebergang vom einzelnen Ding zur Idee und eben damit auch den Zustand der reinen Beschaulichkeit sehr erleichtert; theils liegt jener Vorzug besonderer Schönheit eines Objekts darin, daß die Idee selbst, die uns aus ihm anspricht, eine hohe Stufe der Objektivität des Willens und daher durchaus bedeutend und vielsagend sei. Darum ist der Mensch vor allem Ändern schön und die Offenbarung seines Wesens das höchste Ziel der Kunst. Menschliche Gestalt und menschlicher Ausdruck sind das bedeutendste Objekt der bildenden Kunst, so wie menschliches Handeln das bedeutendste Objekt der Poesie." (Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. Erster Band, Drittes Buch, § 41, 248.); "[...] one thing is more beautiful than another because it facilitates this purely objective contemplation, goes out to meet it, and, so to speak, even compels it, and then we call the thing very beautiful. This is the case partly because, as individual thing, it expresses purely the Idea of its species through the very distinct, clearly defined, and thoroughly significant relation of its parts. It also completely reveals that Idea through the completeness, united in it, of all the manifestations possible to its species, so that it greatly facilitates for the beholder the transition from the individual thing to the Idea, and thus also the state of pure contemplation. Sometimes that eminent quality of special beauty in an object is to be found in the fact that the Idea itself, appealing to us from the object, is a high grade of the will's objectivity, and is therefore most significant and suggestive. For this reason, *man is more beautiful than all other objects, and the revelation of his inner nature is the highest aim of art*. Human form and human expression are the most important object of plastic art, just as *human conduct is the most important object of poetry*" (Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. I, "Third Book", § 41, 210).

- 21 "Es bleibt dabei: die Zeitfolge ist das Gebiete des Dichters, so wie der Raum das Gebiete des Malers." ["It is true that succession of time is the department of the poet and space that of the painter"] G.E. Lessing, *Laocoon*, chap. XVIII, in *Lessing's Laocoon*, ed. by A. Hamann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901, 131).

It is, in any case, a subject about which the philosopher has meditated only indirectly and occasionally, his primary interest being rather a fundamental reformation of psychology and its establishment as a science. Under these conditions, Herbart's "aesthetics" becomes the collateral and even retroactive beneficiary of Herbart's forays into psycho-philosophy, especially of the way in which he redefines the "object" of poetry – through feeling, the sphere of affectivity – in his significantly innovative works such as *Lehrbuch zur Psychologie*, published in 1816, and *Psychologie als Wissenschaft*, published in two volumes in 1824 and 1825. I chose to say "retroactive" because not so much Herbart will be the one who will introduce this innovation from psychology into his own way of conceiving the discipline called aesthetics, but rather his descendants or other like-minded intellectuals, such as Maiorescu.

Thus, Herbart aims to give scientific foundations to psychology, a field whose claim to present itself as a science had been discredited by Kant (for whom aesthetics itself could not have aspired to recommend itself as a science). For this purpose, Herbart chooses precisely Newtonian mechanics and mathematics (algebra) as supporting sciences or foundational sciences for his own reflections in the field of psychology. His belief is that psychological entities and phenomena can be interpreted and evaluated as if they were mechanical entities or phenomena and are ultimately formalizable into mathematical equations, that is to say, entities or phenomena that can be reduced to quantitative, measurable parameters, therefore to relationships (equations) between different orders of magnitude. One of the most common concepts in physics exploited by Herbart in this endeavor are the three principles of Newtonian mechanics – the principle of "inertia," the principle of force as a product of mass and acceleration, and the principle of "action and reaction."

The elementary measurement unit of Herbart's conceptual apparatus from the field of psychology-as-science is "the representation" (*die Vorstellung*).²² More complex psychological phenomena such as "feeling" (*das Gefühl*), "desire" (*das*

22 Some contemporary scholars prefer to translate the Herbartian concept of *Vorstellung* through "presentation": "The term *Vorstellungen* is hard to translate; neither 'ideation' nor 'representation' seem to really capture what Herbart had in mind. In English literature, terms like 'idea,' 'concept,' or 'mental entities' are also used; in some cases, *Vorstellung* is left untranslated. *Vorstellung* is one of the most central concepts of nineteenth-century German psychology (think of Schopenhauer or Brentano). In what follows, we shall use the term 'presentation'" (Wolfgang Huemer and Christoph Landerer, "Mathematics, Experience, and Laboratories: Herbart's and Brentano's role in the rise of scientific psychology," note 6, 89).

Begehren), “will” (*der Wille*) are explained by him as the result of relationships of greater or lesser complexity that engage with “representations.” The study of these relations should be dealt with by fields or sciences such as “statics of the spirit” and “mechanics of the spirit,” after the model of statics and mechanics particular to the physical sciences of that period. “Representations” (*Vorstellungen*), Herbart also believes, act as “forces” (*Kräfte*) in certain circumstances, for instance as confrontations of “forces” that can suffer “inhibitions” (*Hemmungen*) when the “representations” oppose each other. Without actually being “forces” or characterized by certain “forces” bestowed upon them from the very beginning, as properties or as specific “faculties,” the phenomena that constitute the object of psychology-as-science are converted by Herbart into a sum of quantifiable parameters and – ultimately – into a series of equations that give the philosopher the feeling that they can support the issuing of a consistent series of “laws” in the field of psychology.

Important for the impact on Maiorescu’s psycho-aesthetic conceptions are especially those passages from the second volume of *Psychologie als Wissenschaft* where Herbart revisits the theories of affect (*Affecten*) deriving them from the physics and mathematics of the relations between “representations.” He defines “feeling” (*das Gefühl*) here as a confrontation or contrast between opposing “representations” (as “forces”), a confrontation developed and maintained “within consciousness.” (It is a definition that will be borrowed verbatim by Maiorescu in *Einiges Philosophische...*) As early as in the first volume of *Psychologie als Wissenschaft*, Herbart had emphasized the existence of a “sense of contrast” or a “contrast” simply in the case of insufficiently “inhibited” “representations” which are maintained in “consciousness” and do not fall beyond it or under it,²³ because

23 Herbart borrows from John Locke’s *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [1690] the theory of “the narrow mind of man” (“the narrow mind of man not being capable of having many ideas under view and consideration at once, it was necessary to have a repository, to lay up those ideas which, at another time, it might have use of.” John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, vol. I., “Book II,” Chapter X, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), 193.) Herbart mentions Locke as early as his *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung in die Philosophie*, where he invokes “Diese Enge des menschlichen Geistes” and even “the range of sight” – *Gesichtskreis* (what one has before his eyes at one point), and the Lockean theory of the “narrow mind of man,” the mind (*der Geist*) being one and the same with consciousness (*Bewusstseyn*). Herbart thus enjoys the occasion of simultaneously exploring – also with the help of Locke – the possible existence of a space that is in symmetry with that of consciousness or, in any case, distinct from it: the space of non-consciousness, that is the space

they have not yet exhausted their pressures and counter-pressures: "In every case deviating from this, there arises a *feeling of contrast* among the ideas which are too uninhibited, because they *remain in consciousness* with the *urge* to inhibit themselves."²⁴

Sequence § 104 in the second volume of *Psychologie als Wissenschaft*, however, sheds more light on this Herbartian theory of "sentiment." The states of imagining/"representing" (*Vorstellen*), "desiring" (*Begehren*), and "feeling" (*Fühlen*) are defined here as "states of consciousness" (*Zustände des Bewusstseyns*). "Feeling" and "desire" are distinct types of "determinations of consciousness" – related to their nature as "states of consciousness" – and are arranged by Herbart in some antithetical or at least complementary posture: if "feeling" belongs to the "static" of the mind/spirit (*Statik des Geistes*), "desire" belongs to the "mechanical" posture of the spirit (*Mechanik des Geistes*).

But how does the philosopher arrive at these findings and what consequences do they have in the sphere of theorizing poetry?

"Feeling," explains Herbart, arises from "representations" that are in consciousness or that "stay"/are stationed in consciousness and do not "fall" outside it, beyond it, or below it. Two possibilities are thus revealed. The first: where "representation" is in balance with the inhibiting "forces," which implies a low "amount of inhibition" and the constraint of "sinking" (falling out of/beyond consciousness) having already been satisfied. Second: an "inhibiting" and a "raising" force are in balance with the given "representation," thereby preventing its "need to sink"/*der Nöthigung zum Sinken* (falling or sliding beyond/out of consciousness) and keeping it in a state of contention, conflict, or opposition between the pressure of inhibition and the counterpressure of remaining in consciousness, in a state of disinhibition. From the two postures, "feeling" occurs in – or defines – the latter: the one in which the representation exists *against* a

of sub-consciousness, or the unconscious, both discussed by Herbart in relation to the concept of "inhibition" and with the Lockean idea of "storehouse" or "repository," where the "inhibited" psychological phenomena are allegedly stored. The space of non-consciousness will be increasingly more explored by other scholars during the nineteenth century, as well as the concept of "inhibition" – Herbart being one of the first to theorize it –, which will become a central theme in psychoanalysis.

24 "In jedem hievon abweichenden Falle entsteht ein *Gefühl des Contrastes* unter den zu wenig gehemmten Vorstellungen, weil sie mit dem *Drange*, sich zu hemmen, im *Bewusstseyn* bleiben." J.F. Herbart, *Psychologie als Wissenschaft*, Erster Band, synthetischer Theil [1824], in J.F. Herbart, *Sämtliche Werke*, Fünfter Band, ed. Karl Kehrbach, 315.

constraint [inhibiting force], through the fact that some other cooperating force or a whole array of such cooperating forces do not allow it to yield to the pressure affecting it:

“When an idea *is* in consciousness, it makes a difference whether it is in equilibrium with the restraining forces, or whether a restraining force and an upward force balance each other out. In the first case it is in an unchallenged condition as to the degree of actual representation present; for since it rests in equilibrium, the inhibition must have lessened, that is to say, the need to sink must have been satisfied. – On the other hand, in the second case, the need to sink was by no means satisfied; rather, the representation exists *against* this necessity and *in spite of it*, since another cooperating force or a whole sum of such aids will not allow it to yield to the pressure by which it is struck.”²⁵

(The influence of Newton’s third principle – “Newton’s third law states that when two bodies interact, they apply forces to one another that are equal in magnitude and opposite in direction”²⁶ – is hereby implied. A series of actions and reactions giving the impression of a *struggle* prevent the representations that constitute “feeling” from sliding out of “consciousness.” The use of several essential concepts in mechanics, such as “equilibrium” and others, is also indicative of the influence exerted by this science on Herbart’s conceptual apparatus.)

In this way, “feeling” does not differ from the act of “representing” or imagining (*Vorstellen*), since both present their object “with the same clarity.” The difference, however, is posed “for conscience,” and it is, moreover, a significant one. For if “representation” refers to something presented “without suffering any violence” (satisfying the constraints of “inhibition” to then stand “in balance” with them), “feeling” presupposes a *violent balance maintained through* or for

25 “Wenn eine Vorstellung *steht* im Bewusstseyn, so ist ein Unterschied, ob sie selbst mit den hemmenden Kräften im Gleichgewichte ruht, oder aber ob sich an ihr eine hemmende und eine emportreibende Kraft das Gleichgewicht halten. Im ersten Falle befindet sie sich in Hinsicht des vorhandenen Grades von wirklichem Vorstellen, in einem unangefochtenen Zustande; denn da sie im Gleichgewichte ruht, so muss die Hemmungssumme gesunken, das heisst, der Nöthigung zum Sinken Genüge geleistet seyn. – Hingegen im zweyten Falle ist der Nöthigung zum Sinken keinesweges Genüge geschehn; die Vorstellung besteht vielmehr *wider* diese Nöthigung, und *trotz* derselben, indem eine andre mitwirkende Kraft, z. B. eine Verschmelzungshülse, oder eine ganze Summe solcher Hülfen, ihr nicht erlaubt, dem Drucke, von dem sie getroffen wird, nachzugeben.” (J.F. Herbart, *Psychologie als Wissenschaft*, Zweiter Band, analytischer Teil [1825], in J.F. Herbart, *Sämtliche Werke*, Sechster Band, ed. Karl Kehrbach, 58).

26 **, “Newton’s laws of motion,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 27 March 2023. Online: <https://www.britannica.com/science/Newtons-laws-of-motion>. Accessed 15 June 2023.

the maintenance of which violence is necessary. That is, a “representation” that exists, that is “in the consciousness,” but *torn, pressed* – therefore contested with “violence” (*Gewalt*) – between a pressure that inhibits it and a counterpressure that helps it not to yield to it:

“This difference is no difference for representation; on the contrary, what is represented has the same clarity in one case as in the other. Nevertheless, this difference exists for consciousness, for it affects the representation inasmuch as it is awake and not inhibited. What name should we now give to the latter determination of consciousness, since a representation hovers, pressed between opposing forces, in contrast to that first determination, since the same representation, neither brighter nor darker, is present without suffering any violence? How else shall we denote the pressed condition but by the name of a *feeling* associated with the idea?”²⁷

Inspiration for a general theory of “feeling” as a theory of affectivity/“affects” in a broader sense will also be found in Maiorescu’s chapter “Von den Affecten und den Leidenschaften; nebst Rückblicken auf das Vorhergehende,” from the second volume of *Psychologie als Wissenschaft*. Here, Herbart speaks more strongly about the need to take into account (effectively, in the proper, algebraic sense) the “force” (*die Kraft*) and the “power” or “intensity” (*die Stärke*) of an experience, as a parameter according to which one decides the circumstantial quality or “degree” of the contrast (“*der Grad des Gegensatzes*”). Thus, for Herbart, affect/feeling becomes a quantifiable, measurable entity, placeable on a scale according to its size: its quality of being “weaker” or “stronger” can be evaluated – and even *how* “weak” it looks, *how* “powerful” it is, etc.²⁸

27 “Dieser Unterschied ist kein Unterschied für das Vorstellen; vielmehr das Vorgestellte hat im einen und im andern Falle die gleiche Klarheit. Dennoch ist dieser Unterschied für das Bewusstseyn vorhanden, denn er betrifft die Vorstellung gerade in wie fern sie wacht, und nicht gehemmt ist. Mit welchem Namen sollen wir nun die letztere Bestimmung des Bewusstseyns, da ein Vorstellen zwischen entgegenwirkenden Kräften eingepresst schwebt, benennen, zum Unterschiede von jener ersten Bestimmung, da dasselbe, nicht hellere und nicht dunklere Vorstellen, vorhanden ist, ohne eine Gewalt zu erleiden? Wie anders werden wir den gepressten Zustand bezeichnen, als durch den Namen eines mit der Vorstellung verbundenen *Gefühls*?” (J.F. Herbart, *Psychologie als Wissenschaft*, Zweiter Band, analytischer Teil [1825], in J.F. Herbart, *Sämtliche Werke*, Sechster Band, ed. Karl Kehrbach, 58).

28 The “intensity” of sensation – a phenomenon that psychophysicists of the mid-nineteenth century no longer have any doubt is measurable – will become for Gustav Th. Fechner (1801–1887) a basic ingredient in the formulation of the law that bears his name: for the intensity of a sensation to increase in arithmetic progression, the intensity of the stimulus must increase in geometric progression. Fechner’s law furthers

“Feeling,” therefore, represents for Herbart *the existence in consciousness of the confrontation or pressure of opposing forces* – the “struggle” itself being the logical predicate of “feeling,” regardless of the number and nature of the “representations” participating in it. The “feeling” is thus generated by a certain “modality” of being “aware” of the “representations,” namely by the preexistence of a “force” of “inhibition” (*die Hemmung*) and a force of propulsion, the latter elevating or pushing up the “representation” exposed to “inhibition.” Under these conditions, the quantity (*das Viele*) of the “representations” involved in the process would not matter but rather their quality – namely the strength (*die Stärke*):

“It has been remarked above that the feelings have their seat in certain ways in which our ideas are in consciousness, while other inhibiting and uplifting forces act upon it. For Hiebey it is not important *how many* [emphasis is mine, T.D.] representations are present in consciousness; nor whether those ideas undergoing the action are in a more or less arrested state, which difference relates to representing rather than to feeling; but on *how strong* [emphasis is mine, T.D.] the urging of the forces working with and against each other is.”²⁹

In *Einiges Philosophische...*, the young Măiorescu will also argue that “feeling” is defined by the “mode of existence,” not by the number (*das Viele*) or the content of “representations,” that the “strength” or “intensity” (*die Stärke*) (quantifiable through “degrees”) of “force” (*die Kraft*) of each “representation” underpinning the feeling must, again, be taken into account. These are ideas that will also

the research of Fechner’s professor, Ernst Heinrich Weber, author of another law in psychophysics. Both laws were brought together under the Weber–Fechner law. The trend of mathematization/scientization of psychology initiated by Herbart continues, therefore, through the “psychophysics” of Fechner, a specialist in measuring and anticipating the relationship between stimuli and sensation, with the innovation of substantiating psychology, a discipline for which Herbart had not estimated the benefits of experiment, through experimentalism.

- 29 “Oben ist bemerkt worden, dass die Gefühle in gewissen Arten und Weisen, *wie* unsre Vorstellungen sich im Bewusstseyn befinden, ihren Sitz haben; indem andere hemmende und emportreibende Kräfte darauf einwirken. Hiebey kommt es nicht darauf an, *wie viele* Vorstellungen im Bewusstseyn vorhanden seyen; auch nicht darauf, ob diejenigen Vorstellungen, welche die Einwirkung erleiden, sich gerade in einem mehr oder minder gehemmten Zustande befinden, welcher Unterschied sich vielmehr auf das Vorstellen als auf das Fühlen bezieht; sondern darauf, *wie stark* das Drängen der mit einander und wider einander wirkenden Kräfte ausfalle.” (J.F. Herbart, *Psychologie als Wissenschaft*, Zweiter Band, analytischer Teil [1825], in J.E. Herbart, *Sämtliche Werke*, Sechster Band, ed. Karl Kehrbach, 76).

appear in his 1867 study on poetry, where the definitions given for “feelings” and “passions” share the same pattern (“passions” excelling in excess force/“intensity,” etc.)³⁰

Thus, in *Einiges Philosophische...* the future mentor of “Junimea” will also define feeling as a “struggle” or conflict (*der Kampf/der Widerstreit*) of certain opposing “representations” in the plane of consciousness, making the supposition – not unlike Herbart himself – that feeling can have varying “degrees” of “intensity” (*Stärke*) depending on the magnitude of the “forces” involved in the “conflict” that defines it:

*“The consciousness of the struggle of representations against each other is called feeling. [...] A resistance of representations against each other always arises in the soul, because this is the reason for the temporary disappearance of one representation after the other. But although we become aware of the conflicting representations, we do not become aware of the conflict of representations itself. Only when this has become such a struggle that it becomes conscious for its part is there and is called feeling.”*³¹ [emphasis is mine, T.D.]

“Feeling” is thus differentiated from other psychological phenomena in which “representations” are in opposition, due to the fact that it brings or maintains at the level of consciousness the very “struggle”/“contrast”/opposition (*das Gegensatz*) of “representations,” i.e., a contrast perceived as violent: “It is self-evident from what has been said up to now that the feeling does not directly depend on the content of the representations, but merely on their contrast in the corresponding circumstances.”³² The “struggle” (as mode of existence) would therefore be the specific

30 The concept of “intensity” appears in art theory even earlier, for example in G.E. Lessing’s *Laokoon* [1766], but under the requirement that art avoid rendering/mimicking extreme intensity (of pain, for example), which would be non-aesthetic.

31 *“Das Bewusstsein nun des Kampfes der Vorstellungen gegen einander heisst Gefühl. [...] Ein Widerstand der Vorstellungen gegen einander entsteht stets in der Seele, denn darauf beruht das zeitweise Verschwinden einer Vorstellung nach der andern. Aber obgleich wir da der widerstreitenden Vorstellungen bewusst werden, werden wir doch nicht bewusst des Widerstreits der Vorstellungen. Erst wenn dieser zu einem solchen Kampfe geworden ist, dass auch er seinerseits zum Bewusstsein kommt, ist und heisst er Gefühl.”* [my emphasis, T.D.] Titu Maiorescu, *Einiges Philosophische in gemeinfasslicher Form* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagbuchhandlung, 1860), 111.; (The year featured on the volume cover is 1861, but there is evidence that it had already been published at the end of 1860.)

32 *“Es ergibt sich aus Dem, was bisher gesagt wurde, von selbst, dass das Gefühl nicht unmittelbar abhängt von dem Inhalt der Vorstellungen, sondern bloss von ihrem Gegensatz in den entsprechenden Umständen.”* Ibid., 113.

difference of the “feeling” rather than the “content” or the number of “representations” engaged in this dynamic, just as Herbart had also argued. It is a “struggle” to which, moreover, a certain *duration* is attached – for it is set up and then maintained in a specific mechanic of “successive” “appearances” and “withdrawals” of contrasting “representations.” “Feeling” does not entail, therefore, only a “struggle” of representations, but a “struggle”-of-“representations”-extended-over-a-certain-duration. That is, a “struggle” (or action) limited in time, but at the same time *strong and intense* enough to be registered at the level of consciousness and accepted as something existing “in consciousness.”

Therefore, the following essential properties of “feeling” according to Maiorescu *via* Herbart are relevant: (1) the quality of being (acknowledged as) a *struggle* (*der Kampf/Widerstreit*) of “representations” (*Vorstellungen*); (2) the quality of being a “struggle” of a intensity/violence (*Stärke*) that would ensure it being kept at the level of consciousness; (3) the quality of being a “struggle” of a “certain intensity” carried out for a certain *duration*, i.e., that it has a specific timeframe. These are properties that Maiorescu will also identify in the art of poetry – in its defining role of “imitating” “feeling” or for which “feeling” constitutes the “object.”

The definition of feeling proposed by Maiorescu in 1860 in *Einiges Philosophische...*, building on Herbart's theories, will later be included in his definition of the “object” of poetry in the following manner: “the idea or object expressed through poetry is always a feeling or a passion and never an exclusively intellectual reasoning or one that belongs to the scientific realm, either in theory or in practical application.”³³

How Schopenhauer's and Herbart's Theories Work Together in Maiorescu's *Romanian Poetry: A Critical Inquiry*

Maiorescu's decision to identify the “object” of poetry by “feeling,” i.e., by the sphere of affectivity, has multiple consequences, evaluated in turn in his 1867 study. These consequences obviously stem from the fact that, if the “object” of poetry is “feeling,” then poetry must be a truthful *imitatio* of the “nature” of feeling, of its specific distinctions in relation to other psycho-affective phenomena: “The poet, called upon to express human feelings, discovered in their very nature the law that would guide him.”³⁴ From the “nature” of feeling, Maiorescu derives

33 Titu Maiorescu, *Poezia română*, 34.

34 *Ibid.*, 38.

three fundamental conditions that poetry must satisfy, conditions that determine three of its characteristics. The first is “a greater rush of ideas” (because, being an affect, feeling is a phenomenon that involves “movement” of “forces” that are constituted *ad hoc*); the second is an “exaggeration or at least an enlargement and a new perspective on the object under the impression of feeling and passion” (for feeling involves the “struggle” or the setting in motion of forces of sufficient “power” in order to remain, to dwell “in consciousness”); ultimately, the third entails a “rapid and increasing development towards a final climax” (because, as an affect, feeling is a transitory phenomenon, limited in time, with a beginning, development, and conclusion). (As discussed earlier, in *Einiges Philosophische...* “feeling” is defined as a “struggle”-of-“representations”-extended-over-a-certain-duration and at the same time *strong and intense* enough to be registered at the level of consciousness.) All these conditions and traits of poetry, which Maiorescu considers reliant on and derived from the “nature” of “feeling,” are indisputably borrowed from Herbart, although not exclusively. In order to explain the second condition, Maiorescu resorts to detailed concepts from the jargon Herbart himself had contrived for conferring psychology an allure of scientific soundness: it is about the “degree of intensity,” “form,” and “combination” (“representations” that produce feeling). Here they are at play in Maiorescu’s argument:

“The object of poetry is an idea which, either by its occasion or its energy, distinguishes itself and separates itself from ordinary ideas, rising above them. We could all have the feeling that serves as its foundation: *the degree of its intensity, the form, and the combination* under which it presents itself are original and particular to the poet. This new intensity and combination explain why, viewed from an ordinary point of view, poems usually seem *exaggerated*. But precisely their exaggeration, *kept within the boundaries of beauty*, is the stamp of the artistic emotion under which they were conceived.”³⁵

35 “Obiectul poeziei este o idee care, fie prin ocaziunea, fie prin energia ei, se distinge și se separă de ideile ordinare, înălțându-se peste sfera lor. Simțământul care-i servește de fundament l-am putut avea toți: gradul intensității lui, forma și combinațiunea sub care se prezintă sunt originale și proprie poetului. Această intensitate și combinațiune nouă ne explică pentru ce, privite din punct de vedere prozaic, poeziile par de regulă exagerate. Dar tocmai exagerarea lor, ținută în marginile frumosului, este timbrul emoțiunii artistice sub care s-au conceput.” *Ibid.*, 50. “Intensity” (*Stärke*) and “combination”/“connection” (*Verbindung*) are Herbart’s *star concepts* as early as the 1813 philosophy textbook and more commonly in the *Lehrbuch zur Psychologie*; “form” can also refer to several Herbartian concepts in the same semantic area. The quoted passage from Maiorescu also comes close to the way in which Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) put art in relation to the “intensity” of expressed feelings – see Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of*

More precisely, for Maiorescu poetry is an action through which the process of experiencing feeling is being mimicked. Poetry is therefore a cast/mold³⁶ for the feeling as a particular type of universally human experience, which can become “abnormal” if it becomes passion.³⁷ Thus, if feeling/passion entails “a greater rush of ideas,” “exaggeration or at least an enlargement and a new perspective on the object,” as well as a “rapid and increasing development towards a final climax or a catastrophe,”³⁸ poetry’s traits are derived from or closely mimic theirs. Hence the parallels between the “laws” of poetry and those of “feeling” that inspire Maiorescu to formulate the three (chiefly negatively connoted) norms of poetry mentioned prior. The first property/law of poetry is “a hasty transition from an idea to the next” (corresponding to the first property of feeling: the “great rush of ideas”), with the consequence that poetry is a compact, concise, and precise type of discourse, without “unnecessary” words or repetitions, but one which expresses more than what it says literally (a good occasion for Maiorescu to reference E. A. Poe’s analysis of his own poem, *The Raven*). The consequence of the second property/law of poetry – corresponding to that property of feeling/passion of acting through exaggeration or through a “new perspective on the object” – is, according to Maiorescu, the elevation of the “object” of the poem and the language in which it is communicated: these should be distinguished from the “ordinary,” from the “ignoble,” from the “mediocre,” from the “commonplace.” Whereas the second property of feeling, dictated by “the degree of its intensity, the form and combination under which it presents itself;”³⁹ offers a hypertrophied and/or elevated perspective on reality, the “object” of the poem must also be hypertrophied, “exaggerated”: “an idea which, either by its occasion or its energy, distinguishes and elevates itself from ordinary ideas, rising

Psychology, vol. II, second edition (London, Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1872), 643. The requirement that the “intensity of feeling”/“exaggeration” not exceed certain limits is common to Spencer and Maiorescu.

- 36 The process of mimicking feeling through poetry is addressed as explicitly as possible by Maiorescu: “Poetry seeks to imitate and produce the energy of affect.” Titu Maiorescu, *Poezia română*, 54.
- 37 For Maiorescu, as well as for the idealists and their descendants or likeminded intellectuals (Herbart is the proximate source), “passion” is a sign of an affective imbalance; whereas Herbart likened it to vice, Maiorescu defines it as “abnormality” (“abnormal state of the human soul [...] an intellectual and physical crisis, the scale of which varies from crying to madness.” *Ibid.*, 67).
- 38 *Ibid.*, 38.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 50.

above their sphere.”⁴⁰ For Maiorescu, it is an opportunity to exclude from poetry everything that can stimulate the “debasement” of the object of the poem or bring it to the parameters of the common and the commonplace (“commonplace debasement”): from the discouragement of “prosaic platitudes” to selecting and allowing only those private events capable of bringing “a breath of idealism to everyday existence” to be represented in poetry, and to incriminating the “mania” of diminutives (presumably a form of “linguistic decadence” and at the same time of ethnic corruption, in the propagation of which “their use by the Gypsies” played a crucial role, the diminutives being “*par excellence* a Gypsy manner,” worthy of “disgust”⁴¹). However, the “Junimea” critic admits that “debasement is a relative term” – in more modern terms we would say that it is dictated by context –, popular poetry being for him an example of avoiding debasement and an illustration of “nobility of feeling.” The third property/“law” of poetry derived from the peculiarity of the A-shaped curve dynamics of feeling – as a psychological event evolved towards a climax and resolved by a denouement or “catastrophe” – is, as I anticipated, the “*rapid and increasing development towards a final climax or a catastrophe.*” Hence the need, from a compositional point of view, for the poem to provide a mold of this gradual evolution of feeling or passion.⁴² The possibility to grade, even to quantify a feeling or an emotion (a

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., 59.

42 This requirement/condition of poetry – reflecting the ascending-descending curve of feeling and its quality as a finite event in time and space – would be correlated by Maiorescu (under the influence of Schopenhauer) with the quality of art/poetry itself to represent a pendant, a counterpoint to the “Sisyphean” type of causality, perpetually unsatisfied, always on alert, that produces scientific thought and intellectual activity proper. The type of “active intelligence” of the scientist would find in art a “beneficial consolation” or “a harbor of shelter”: the satisfaction of contemplating a *finite* event, a cause which is its own effect. In this sense, feeling is the perfect example of a “finite event,” with definite explosion and resolution, which does not perpetuate itself formlessly and infinitely, and this would explain the option of poetry to choose it as its “object”: “Poetry especially must protect our spirit from the boundless chain of causal nexus, manifest to us ideas *with beginning and end*, and give us a satisfaction of the human spirit. That is why it is responsible for directing us towards feelings and passion. For precisely feelings and passions are *well defined acts* in human life; they have a *birth and a pronounced conclusion*, they have a beginning that is felt and a catastrophe that is predetermined, and they are but presentable objects in the *limited form of sensibility.*” [my emphasis, T.D.] Ibid., 37. In many respects, Maiorescu’s 1867 study seems today a sum of clichés not updated to the aesthetic standards of the 1860s. However, the refinement of some explanations and correlations such as the one above – why exactly

Herbartian idea) therefore produces for Maiorescu a new argument, borrowed from the toolkit of scientific proto-psychology of the early nineteenth century, for the renewal of a poetical and rhetorical framework that was otherwise classic and classicized.

Under these conditions, since poetry is defined by the relationship with feeling, the criterion for appreciating a poem could never be the novelty or originality of its "object." Because the "object" of the poem cannot be "new," as long as it identifies itself with the same supposed eternal, general, universal human feeling (in which point Herbart's conception of the lyrical genre coincides, as we saw at Maiorescu, with Schopenhauer's):

"The poet is not and cannot always be new in the accomplished idea; but he must be new and original in the sensible garment with which he envelops it and which he reproduces in our imagination. The subject of the poems, the lyrical impressions, the human passions, the beauties of nature are the same since the beginning of time; new and always varied is only their incorporation in art: it is here that the poet's word establishes a previously unknown relationship between the intellectual and the material world."⁴³

Novelty or originality in poetry should, therefore, be sought, according to Maiorescu's 1867 study, not at the level of its "object," which belongs *to poetry* precisely because it belongs *to the universally human* and to a primordial emotional benchmark. Originality in poetry would depend, instead, on the technical solution used for expressing the feeling. For this purpose, figures of speech would have been created, as adjuncts to the "re-sensitization" of de-sensitized language through the abstraction caused by the current use of language and its quality as a vehicle of logical-rational thinking;⁴⁴ for the same purpose, more complex procedures such as gradation, climax, etc. would have appeared. Maiorescu's conception of "novelty" or originality in poetry – more precisely, of the area in

feeling as a limited form of sensibility must be the basis of poetry or of art in general, why art and science are antithetical, etc., even the reason for the need to establish some correlations between what art *must* undertake and what poetry *must* define – is overseen by many theorists from Maiorescu's posterity. It is overseen, in particular, by those commentators who are up to date (regardless of whether this update concerns the level of early twentieth or twenty-first century literary theory) but uninformed about the systemic pressure exerted by idealism and theories derived from it, all marked by the urgency of identifying symmetries, dialectics, oppositions, antagonisms, solutions for balance, etc. in a multilayered architecture of *the existing/the thought/the imagined*, undoubtedly also inspired by the laws of Newtonian mechanics.

43 Ibid., 29.

44 Ibid., 15.

which it is legitimate or, on the contrary, inadvisable to demand that a poem is innovative – therefore stems from the belief that if the “object” of poetry is the immutable universal human feeling, variations (i.e., the gaps where originality can manifest) can appear at the level of the technique of “imitating” this feeling only. And that technique is directly dependent on whether the feeling can accept a technical treatment, i.e., whether it can be measured, graded, quantified, reduced to an order of magnitude, subjected to some “combinations.”

Had Maiorescu not had access to Herbart’s psycho-mechanical-mathematical research that supported Schopenhauer’s argument that poetry has a duty to expose universally human feelings, he would not have been able to propose this solution to detect and at the same time to standardize the way in which it is legitimate/forbidden for “novelty” to occur and be appreciated in poetry. Classical rhetorics and poetics, though in some respects corresponding to some of Herbart’s psychological “laws,” could not have provided him with such subtle, scientific explanations. It is one of the reasons why I stated that Herbart’s theories work in Maiorescu to confirm and support Schopenhauer’s theories in a perfect liaison.

Conclusions

Applied to the much more famous Schopenhauerian theory of the lyrical genre, the Herbartian way of theorizing feeling, even if it does not explicitly claim to have devised a new way of imagining literary aesthetics or at least of confirming, with new evidence, what the literary tradition had already established, it allowed others to step in these directions, offering them tools and some (relative) certainties. The “power” of a feeling and its peculiarity of being limited in time will be carefully speculated by Maiorescu in 1867 and oriented towards a theory of poetry that revisits and innovates the poetics of classicism (brevity, etc.), but opens itself up to romanticism as well. In fact, in many ways, Maiorescu’s philosophical-theoretical apparatus was more modern than his actual critical filter. For whereas his theory of poetry combined sources such as Herbart, Schopenhauer, and E.A. Poe, even giving the impression that he is discussing poetry in a manner close to the theories of symbolist poetry, his preferences in the area of poetry itself stop before Charles Baudelaire, without de facto accepting the “modernisms” through which the lyrical genre seemed to evolve towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Maiorescu’s ideas about poetry – massively inspired by the works of Schopenhauer and Herbart – will cross the threshold of the twentieth century and mark the theories about poetry of some critics and commentators who will consider

themselves more conceptually advanced than their mid-nineteenth century counterparts. But these more modern, twentieth-century critics will no longer be fully aware of the origins of the theories and concepts with which they operate, nor of the fact that their newer visions on poetry contain remnants so resolutely tributary to idealism and to early nineteenth century German philosophy.

Acknowledgement: This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 101001710).



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