

ABOUT REFORM IN THE WORK OF ȘTEFAN ZELETIN

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Abstract

Ștefan Zeletin (1882- 1934) – a philosopher, an economist and a sociologist – is one of the household names of Romanian interwar liberalism. He graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy and Classical Philology in Iași, and in 1914 he defended his doctoral thesis (and was granted magna cum laude) at the University of Berlin. After finalizing his studies, Zeletin taught at the University of Iași.

Concerning his work, Ștefan Zeletin did not have the same attitude towards the two aspects of his thought: philosophy and sociology. He considered himself a philosopher who failed to complete his system of thought only because of the tough circumstances. Persuaded that there is an organic connection – yet to be discovered – between the economic life of a country, on one hand, and the political, legal and cultural institutions, on the other, (Claudian 1935) Ștefan Zeletin began his sociological writings, which marked the political and cultural life of those times.

The sociological and political works, which had made him known in several settings, were viewed by Zeletin as an episode within his activity, which he would have wanted to be focused on purely philosophical works. The author explains the approach to the practical aspects of social reality by the fact that he was determined to attend various events, which he felt the need to understand. An event that marked him deeply was the War of 1916-1918, to which he took part as an infantry officer; this event drew him closer to the often-disappointing reality of the Romanian society in an ongoing process of construction. “Hence, I decided to make the ultimate sacrifice: to renounce, for now, to any philosophical activity, to get to know our society just like it is and to try to give back to it something that may be in its interest. This also helped me fulfil an ardent desire I had felt on the front where, the carbine on my shoulder, I saw our society collapse like a cardboard castle.” (Zeletin 1927 p. 276) This article aims at unravelling several aspects regarding the life, the work and the sociological view of the author.

Keywords: Zeletin, the life, the work, the sociological view, the reform

Résumé

Ștefan Zeletin (1882- 1934), philosophe, économiste et sociologue, est l'un des noms les plus connus du libéralisme roumain de l'entre-deux-guerres. Il a été licencié de la Faculté de Philosophie et Philologie Classique de Iași, et en 1914 il a obtenu son doctorat (magna cum laude) à l'Université de Berlin. Après finir les études, Zeletin a été professeur à l'Université de Iași.

Concernant son œuvre, Ștefan Zeletin n'avait pas la même attitude envers les deux aspects de sa pensée : la philosophie et la sociologie. Il se considérait un philosophe, que seulement les circonstances ont empêché de compléter son système de pensée. Puisqu'il

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était convaincu qu'il existait une connexion organique (à découvrir) entre la vie économique d'un pays, d'une part, et les institutions politiques, juridiques et culturelles, de l'autre (Claudian 1935), Ștefan Zeletin commence ses écrits sociologiques qui ont marqué la vie politique et culturelle de son temps.

Les ouvrages de sociologie et politique, à travers lesquels il était devenu connu dans plusieurs cercles, était vus par Zeletin comme un épisode d'une activité qu'il voulait dédier plutôt à l'élaboration de ses œuvres de philosophie pure. L'auteur explique son étude des aspects pratiques de la réalité par le fait qu'il devait participer à de différents événements qu'il devait comprendre. Ce qui l'a marqué profondément a été sa participation comme officier d'infanterie à la guerre de 1916-1918 ; cet événement l'a rendu plus proche de la réalité de la société roumaine en train de se former, une réalité souvent insatisfaisante. « Ainsi, je décidai de faire ce sacrifice suprême : de renoncer pour le moment à toute activité philosophique, de connaître la société telle quelle et d'essayer de lui donner quelque chose de ce qui l'intéresse. Comme ça, j'accomplis un ardent désir que j'avais ressenti sur le front où, la carabine tenue à l'épaule, notre société s'effondrait sous mes yeux comme un château en carton » (Zeletin 1927 p. 276). L'article se propose de clarifier quelques aspects concernant la vie, l'œuvre et la conception sociologique de l'auteur.

Mots-clés : Zeletin, la vie, l'œuvre, la conception sociologique, la réforme

Rezumat

Ștefan Zeletin (1882- 1934), filosof, economist și sociolog, este unul dintre cele mai cunoscute nume ale liberalismului românesc interbelic. A fost licențiat al Facultății de Filosofie și Filologie clasică din Iași, iar în 1914 și-a luat doctoratul cu magna cum laude la Universitatea din Berlin. După terminarea studiilor, Zeletin a fost profesor la Universitatea din Iași.

Referitor la opera lui, Ștefan Zeletin nu avea aceeași atitudine față de cele două aspecte ale gândirii sale, filosofia și sociologia. El se considera un filosof, pe care numai împrejurările l-au împiedicat să-și desăvârșească sistemul de gândire. Convinși fiind că între viața economică a unei țări, pe de o parte și instituțiile politice, juridice și culturale, pe de altă parte, există o legătură organică, legătură ce trebuie descoperită (Claudian 1935), Ștefan Zeletin începe scrierile sociologice ce au marcat viața politică și culturală a acelor vremuri.

Lucrările de sociologie și politică, prin care se făcuse cunoscut în multe cercuri, erau privite de Zeletin ca un episod dintr-o activitate pe care o voia închinată tot mai mult elaborării operelor sale de filosofie pură. Autorul explică aplecarea asupra aspectelor practice ale realității sociale determinat fiind de participarea sa la diferite evenimente pe care încearcă să le înțeleagă. Ceea ce l-a marcat foarte mult a fost participarea ca ofițer de infanterie în războiul din 1916-1918, eveniment care l-a apropiat de realitatea, adeseori nemulțumitoare, a societății românești în formare. „Mă hotărâi deci și eu la acest suprem sacrificiu: să renunț deocamdată la orice activitate filosofică, să cunosc societatea noastră așa cum este, și să încerc a-i da ceva din ceea ce o interesează. Cu aceasta îmi împlinesc și o arzătoare dorință pe care o simțisem pe front, unde, cu carabina la umăr, vedeam societatea noastră năruindu – se ca un castel de carton" (Zeletin 1927 p. 276). Articolul își propune să aducă în atenție câteva aspecte referitoare la viața, opera și concepția sociologică a autorului.

Cuvinte cheie: Zeletin, viața, opera, concepția sociologică, reforma

1. Biographical aspects

Ștefan Zeletin was born on the 15th of July 1882, to the Moatăș family, as the fifth child; his parents were rather rich free villagers, and they lived in Burdusaci, County of Tecuci. His pseudonym comes from the Zeletin creek, which crosses his native village. He began his studies in the year 1889, in Burdusaci, and after primary school, he was transferred to Coasta Lupei (starting with the fifth grade). In 1895, he enrolled in the Theological Seminary of Roman. In 1899, he passed the examinations for the subsequent cycle in Iași, which he graduated in 1902 as a star pupil. In the autumn of the same year, he enrolled in The Faculty of Letters in Iași, majoring in Philosophy and Classical Philology. He obtained a bachelor's degree in Philology (he was awarded magna cum laude). In the period November 1906 – September 1909, he was a substitute teacher and a high school secretary. Subsequently, he became a secretary at the university pedagogical secretariat in Iași. (Papacostea 1935) After passing the so-called aptitude examinations [*examene de capacitate*] in 1910, he obtained a holder position at the German Language and Philosophy Department in Bârlad. In the autumn of 1909, he left to Berlin for postgraduate studies in the field of philosophy. He followed the courses of the doctoral school in Leipzig and Erlangen, choosing as specialties Philosophy, National Economy and Pedagogy. The title of his doctoral thesis is *Personal Idealism against Absolute Idealism in English Philosophy*.

He went to war; upon returning, he lived in Bârlad until 1920, when he left to Bucharest, where he became a teacher at “Mihai Viteazul” High school. In the summer of 1927, towards the end of the school year, he was offered a holder position at the Department of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy of the University in Iași, (thanks to the support of some of his friends, like Ioan Petrovici and Petre Andrei). In this period, Zeletin began revising his manuscripts, completing and correcting them. The 12 books – which he prepared as first edition or new edition – are the outcome of the efforts made mostly in the period 1927-1933. In the same period, Zeletin elaborated and set the foundations of his *Istoria socială* [*Social History*], which he aimed to study in close connection with the development of such matters. He was highly interested in this connection, and the notes would be published in a paper titled “*Forme de gândire și forme de societate*” [*Forms of Thought and Forms of Society*’], which would outline his view of Social History, with repercussions upon thought currents. (Papacostea 1935)

On the 22nd of November, he held his first course, while in May 1933 he held his last course.

2. Bibliographic references

The work of Zeletin can be divided into two major groups: printed works and manuscripts. The work of Zeletin was supposed to be published entirely, in 12 volumes, during the year 1935. His health issues prevented him from finishing

three of his works – *Un om [A Man]*, *Filosofia Ritmului [Philosophy of Rhythm]* and *Istoria socială [Social History]*, which never evolved from projects and drafts. We outline below the list of his works, as it was elaborated by the author himself at the end of 1926 and subsequently revised in March 1931.

Table 1. The work of Ștefan Zeletin

	Philosophy	Literature	Sociology
Published	Evanghelia Naturii I [The Gospel of Nature] (1915)	Însemnări din țara măgarilor [Notes from the Country of Donkeys] (1916) Retragerea [Retreat] (1926)	Burghezia română [Romanian Bourgeoisie] (1925) Naționalizarea școlii [School Nationalization] (1926)
To publish	Clipe de reverie [Instants of Reverie] (finalized in 1911) Evanghelia Naturii II (finalized in 1918) Esența firii [The Essence of the Being]	Metafizica Dosului [The Metaphysics of the Bottom] (finalized in 1918)	Neoliberalismul [Neoliberalism] (finalized in 1926)
To write	Filosofia Ritmului [The Philosophy of Rhythm]	Idee fixă [Fixed Idea] Mijloc sau scop? [Means or pupose?] Un om [A Man] Calvar – nuvele de război [Ordeal – War Short Stories]	Istoria socială [Social History] (handbook)

Source: Papacostea 1935, pp. 229-230

According to the author's notes, *Nuvele de război* and *Calvar* are to be eliminated from the list, because the latter will be downsized to a preface for *Esența firii*, while *Idee fixă* will be merged with *Mijloc sau scop*.

In the notes written by Zeletin in 1932 and 1933 concerning his writings, there is also a brief description and the number of pages, as well as the publishing order, “by the genesis of the underlying idea.” (Papacostea 1935, pp. 130-131)

- I. *Un om* (literary contents; around 100 pages)
- II. *De unde vine lumina?* (literary contents; around 300 pages)
- III. *Clipe de meditare* (aphorisms; around 100 pages)
- IV. *Evanghelia naturii* (philosophical contents; around 300 pages)
- V. *Esența firii* (philosophical contents; around 300 pages)
- VI. *Filosofia ritmului* (philosophical contents; around 350 pages)
- VII. *Retragerea* (literary contents; around 150 pages)
- VIII. *Burghezia română* (sociological contents; around 350 pages)

- IX. *Neoliberalismul* (sociological contents; around 350 pages)
- X. *Naționalizarea școlii* (pedagogical contents; around 120 pages)
- XI. *Istoria socială* (social/philosophical contents; around 300 pages)
- XII. *Un program* (social/political contents; around 120 pages).

Upon analyzing the first column above, it becomes apparent that philosophy has been given the least attention in the author's activity. *Evanghelia Naturii*, scheduled to be published as early as 1915, remained unpublished completely, while the second part remained a manuscript since 1918. *Clipele de Reverie* was published partially in 1928 in small format (77 pages), symbolically titled *Nirvana*. *Filosofia Ritmului* is absent.

From the literary column, *De unde vine lumina*, only excerpts have been made public. *Însemnări din țara măgarilor* was published in 1916 in small format (a volume comprising 88 pages). *Un om* was never written, just like the following titles: *Idee fixă*, *Mijloc sau scop?* and *Calvar, nuvele de război*.

From the sociological column *Istoria Socială*, all we have left is the beginning (the inaugural title – the first handbook held at the University) and some of the unpublished material. The other four – *Burghezia română* (1925), *Neoliberalismul* (1926), *Retragerea* (1927), *Naționalizarea școlii* (1926) – were published, but they are also available as manuscripts (Papacostea, 1935).

To the list of works, as presented by Ștefan Zeletin, we add his vast publishing activity in journals such as *Viața românească* in Iași, *Țara Noastră* in Cluj and *Pagini agrare și sociale* in Bucharest.

3. Sociological ideas in the work of Ștefan Zeletin

Papacostea dubs Zeletin the first Romanian sociologist who chose to leave the theories and to dive in the background of science, thus emancipating from the infinite abstract definitions, quite common in sociological literature; he bravely decided to attempt the observation of historical realities. (Papacostea 1935, p. 219) Zeletin considered his works of philosophy and politics as an episode of a relative value. The War of 1916-1918 drew him closer to the dissatisfying realities of the Romanian society, reason for which Zeletin put a temporary hold on his philosophical activity and decided to get to know Romanian society as it really is. To this purpose, he needed previous theoretical training, which he benefited from fully; the author had great insight into German Philosophy – influenced by Hegel – and even Marxism. Both underscore the dynamic element of the world, the historical spirit; they view continual evolution as a necessary process. Zeletin chose a deterministic view, where the “cause of all causes” is always the economic factor. The question formulated by Ștefan Zeletin is as follows: Can we explain, using economic determinism, all good parts and bad parts of Romanian society? In order to understand the underlying mechanisms of Romanian society, with its qualities and faults, with its western institutions and eastern morals, with its superior urban

culture and material and moral rural decay, Zeletin focuses of the transformation process of Romanian economy and on the commercial links with the West. Zeletin's sociological view can be analyzed in the books *Burghezia română* (1925), *Istoria socială* (1926), *Naționalizarea școlii* (1926) and *Neoliberalismul* (1927), “Țărănism și Marxism” (Arhiva pentru Știința și Reforma Socială, anul V, issues 1-2, 1924), “Începuturile individualismului” [Beginnings of Individualism] (1924), “Naționalizarea orașelor” [Nationalization of Cities] (Minerva, Iași, Year I, issue 2, 1927) and “Romantismul german și cultura critică română” [German romanticism and Romanian Critical Culture] (Minerva, Iași, Year II, issue 3, 1929). He also expressed his sociological opinions in various papers, notes, and replies in diverse journals.

In his social studies, Zeletin criticizes the realities of Romanian life; however, over time, his critical stance was replaced by an explanatory, scientific standpoint. “Our studied upon the revolution of modern Romania were driven by the same spiritual need (...). Overwhelmed by the 1916 events, which had shaken our trust in the future, we felt to need to get detailed insight into the origins of modern-day Romanian society, in order to have a clear direction in the chaos of our social and political life. We had to learn, through our own and thorough research, where modern Romania came from. Eventually, however, following continuous research since 1918, we managed to surpass our critical perspective and to evolve to the scientific one: to the causal explanation of the birth process of modern Romania.” (Zeletin 1925, p. 6)

Zeletin underpinned a determinist viewpoint in sociology and he acknowledged – in opposition to conservative views – that the superstructure bodies of the bourgeoisie are the necessary product of socioeconomic transformations. Zeletin permanently supported the progressive role of the bourgeoisie; he condemned socialism and he claimed the improvement capacity of capitalism and the possibility of transforming it on neoliberal foundations. Ștefan Zeletin stated, “The country's fate identifies with the fate of the national bourgeoisie... the issues that Romania faces during its current development stage are of a middle-class revolutionary nature, not of a working-class revolutionary nature.” (Zeletin 1927, pp. 4-7) Zeletin demonstrates that the only way for Romania to progress is capitalism. Nonetheless, an authentic capitalism can only be constructed by a national bourgeoisie in close connection with the European bourgeoisie. To this end, Romania needs a strong liberal party and a doctrine that inspires good government. Faithful to his social and political theories, Zeletin was always updated with the public life of the Romanian society; furthermore, he suffered alongside society. Though in his metaphysical novel *Metafizica Dosului* (1918), he stated that he would have been happier to have lived in a western country, thus not having to listen and to see everything that happened in the “country of donkeys”, (1916), Zeletin came to peace with his destiny and decided to pursue a political career. While a great part of his works treats the liberal doctrine, Zeletin joined

another party, because he was persuaded that it would respond better to people's needs and because he meant it as a protest against everything that went on in the public and political life of those times. Alongside P. P. Carp, he militated for the Junimea motto ("clean in private life, impartial in public life") in the political party created and run by General Averescu: People's Party.

Concerning his involvement in political life and the expression of his right to vote, Zeletin writes the following in a 1930 paper. "Nowadays, Romanian intellectuals, too, started thinking about the strong gesture. In reality, intellectuals can never be too democratic. The artificial levelling of democracy appals them, and when we add to this downside – as it occurred in our society – the undermining of living standards, their hostility is all the more natural. We are persuaded that less than 10% of our urban intellectuals actually use the most democratic of their rights: the right to vote. Today, elections are decided by the dregs of society; the ones who know they are even slightly superior to the common level choose to stay away: they do not feel tempted to add another vote to the other millions." (Zeletin 1930)

In the following lines, we propose to outline some of the underlying ideas, as determined by the writings of the sociologist Ștefan Zeletin.

Neoliberalismul. Studii asupra istoriei și politicii burgheziei române [Neoliberalism. Studies on the history and Politics of Romanian Bourgeoisie] (1927). His fundamental work, *Neoliberalismul*, is a theoretical and practical guideline for any liberal government. This work set the foundations of a new political and economic current in interwar Romania. Along with Vintilă I. C. Brătianu, Zeletin laid the foundations of the economic doctrine pertaining to the National Liberal Party in the interwar period; this doctrine was based on the Brătianu view "through ourselves" as the only way for Romania to progress. At the same time, Neoliberal theoreticians underlined the direct connection between industrialization and the general modernization of the country, as well as between industrialization and the consolidation of national independence. Zeletin characterizes his doctrine as follows. "I named this doctrine Neoliberalism, because the interventionist policy is the current specificity of new Liberalism, of Neoliberalism, of European bourgeoisie in opposition to the old, classical Liberalism. ... The new Liberalism intervenes generically, to solve conflicts, to harmonize divergent interests, to alleviate pain; briefly, to organize. Organization is the motto of new Liberalism nowadays." Neoliberalism and the "through ourselves" view constituted the foundation of the Liberal governments of the two interwar decades. The same ideas are also featured in *Manualul de economie politică și instrucție civică pentru clasa a opta de liceu [Manual of Political Economy and Civic Instruction for the Eighth High-school Form]*, published in 1927, created because of "the imperious need to provide a national character to this school subject, too." According to Zeletin, the manual focuses on the Romanian social field and it was designed in the laboratory of didactic work. "The purpose of this manual is to state the Romanian point of view." (Zeletin 1927, p. 3)

Din țara măgarilor. Însemnări [Notes from the Country of Donkeys] (1916) “Three times doomed – he complains – are those whom a cruel fate made them be born in the country of donkeys.” The Wars of 1913 and 1916, to which he participated, also showed him the lack of both material and moral preparation of the country for historical events of such a magnitude. Failing to accept the morals of this country, he decided to write the parable *Din Țara Măgarilor. Însemnări*, which C. D. Zeletin himself (2002) describes the book as depicting the “decline of morals, not a society without morals.” Ștefan Zeletin describes with gravity and utter honesty a rotten world, governed by poverty, bribes and failure to observe the laws. Discussing values and patriotism, the author states, “There are two things in the world, now and always rejected by all donkey souls, two things... that... they keep on hating until death... talent and honour.” (Zeletin 2006, p. 68)

In *Burghezia română. Originea și rolul ei istoric [Romanian Bourgeoisie. Origin and Historical Role]*, (1925) the author concludes that Romanian Liberalism has its own historical roots. In this book, the author studies two series of phenomena: the sequence of modern Romanian evolution (chapters I–III), unravelling the historical causes of the establishments contemporary with the author; and the sequence of transformations within the old rural world (chapters IV–V). Zeletin’s study is a passage from the critical to the scientific perspective, namely to a causal explanation of the birth process of modern Romania. The author related this process to the introduction of western capitalism in the Romanian Principalities; in his opinion, the 1848 Revolution and the 1866 Constitution are reference points that ensured its survival. This work is a middle-class stand against the agrarian, traditionalist standpoints, and it demonstrates the objective need for Romania to evolve towards industrial civilization. According to Ștefan Zeletin, “[O]ur future is related to this vital issue for us: we need a great industry.” (Zeletin 1925, pp. 16-18) Furthermore, the theoretician posited that Romania met the conditions necessary to industrialization: raw material resources, specialists, capital, labour force, domestic market.

In Zeletin’s view, bourgeoisie is the “social class that deals with exchange values, namely with merchandises.” (Zeletin 1925, p. 10) This class comprises those who produce the merchandises (the industrialists), those who make them circulate (merchants) and those who fund their circulation and production (the bankers). These three categories together are called the “capitalist class.” This first form of capitalism – commerce and usury – plays a destructive role concerning the social classes of the old feudal-agrarian regime. “The new people” – those who became rich in this period of social climbing using the power of money – leave behind nothing but suffering (Zeletin 1925) and, naturally, the discontentment against the ones who triumphed, who did not choose the most scrupulous means to fight. At the same time, the work became a commendation for the patriarchal times, when life was calmer and social inequality less overwhelming. (Zvanciuc 2006, pp. 202-207)

The Romanian “critical” culture was born – in Zeletin’s opinion – from the economic contradictions, from the social and political chaos necessarily produced by the initial and destructive forms of Romanian capitalism. When Romania enters indefinitely the era of industrial capitalism, the Romanian culture will become positive and creating, because at that point it will have become the expression of a national soul at peace with the fate and with itself. (Zeletin 1925) What we in Romania consider “abnormal” and “monstrous” because we have a deeply-rooted habit of comparing ourselves to the western countries of today, stops being “abnormal” once we compare nowadays Romania with the western countries of several centuries ago (Zeletin 1925). We may thus observe, based on the information provided by European economic history, that Romania passed during a period of “transition” throughout the 19th century. However, the western countries had passed through the same period many centuries ago: the transition from a natural economy to monetary economy. Hence, the poverty of peasantry class appears not as a product specific to Romanian society, not like an “abnormality” of our country, but like a social phenomenon once familiar to England, France or Germany during the dissolution of the old economic regime and the instauration of the capitalist regime. Because the capitalist economy has had a dissolving influence at the beginning irrespective of the country, boyars, peasants and the old guilds of professionals were dissolved one by one. Zeletin tries to find the mechanisms that relate the economic necessities of contemporary Romania to its political and cultural institutions.

Zeletin’s political beliefs regarding the economic, social and political history of Romania also entailed certain political conclusions. Thus, Zeletin is a partisan of the doctrine that the Liberal Party rejected for a long time: attracting foreign capital to the country. Industry, Zeletin notes, “always emerges with foreign capital and foreign capacities,” while capital nationalization is a process that comes later, after the development of the industry. According to Zeletin, our State policy slowed down Romania’s industrialization process because of its goal of finalizing two processes concomitantly, instead of letting them follow each other: the development of industry (using foreign capital) and the nationalization of capital. “However, to start the second process before ensuring that the first is out of any danger is to seal industry the fate of a being that must survive without air or food.” (Zeletin 1925, p. 133)

It appears natural for a bourgeoisie historian to focus mainly on the political body that represents the interests of the bourgeoisie, namely the Liberal Party; similarly, the (more or less anti-industrialist) critiques provided by Zeletin for the theories of *Poporanism* seem equally natural.

The book *Naționalizarea școlii* [School Nationalization] (1926) is the last part of Zeletin’s studies on the development of the modern economy. Referring to the Romanian education of his time, Zeletin concludes that the system works against its social purpose of creating good citizens.

The downsides of Romanian schools have the following causes: the overcrowded classrooms (between 50 and 100 students); the lack of intuitive and experimental materials; and the anachronistic character of regulations.

Our specialists, Zeletin writes, “have great insight into the social classes of England, Germany or France, but very little to no insight into our own social classes.” (Zeletin 1923, p. 727) It is not school that creates a social class, but social class creates the need for an adequate school. A school reform may become reality only if the society adopting it provides a twofold foundation: material and spiritual. The material condition is the proper industrialization of economy, while the spiritual condition is the creation of the national cult of labour.

Our country – Zeletin highlights from the beginning – had always had a borrowed school system: the history of our education is the history of borrowings from abroad. Such abnormality has a historical explanation, namely that “the entire development of modern Romania constitutes the history of foreign influences upon our social life.” (Zeletin 1926, p. 5) Therefore, education had to develop in the same style as modern Romanian society.

What is the stage of school nationalization? Theoretically, we are endowed with a national education, but practically we imitate the foreigners. Zeletin names this fact a social danger. “Our country has no use of the citizens educated using other ideas than those springing from its own needs.” (Zeletin 1926, p. 7) Zeletin discusses the issue of knowledge taught in schools and of the teaching method of choice for such knowledge. In modern democracies, Zeletin states, education must be: a) public and free, thus available to all citizens; b) unitary, because all persons are equal in a democracy, and c) practical, scientific, because the foundation of modern democracy is technical. “Hence, from beginning to end, democratic education will have to acquire this double character: to provide the young generation a professional training through nature sciences and in parallel with it, to provide a political training through the study of social sciences.” (Zeletin 1926, p. 23)

Zeletin believes that young people must get to know the institutions scientifically. This is the only way to become good citizens. “Therefore, it is clear that the core of Romanian education must be represented by sociology, namely by the sociology of modern Romania: this will be the core, from which and around which the entire curriculum will be grouped. Figuratively speaking, it may be stated that in Romanian education, the sociology of modern Romania is the sun, around which the other subjects must gravitate like satellites.” (Zeletin 1926, p. 38) We must cease the import of foreign programmes and guide Romanian school on a national basis. The ideas that our education must promote should derive from the research of our social reality.

The school subjects in Romania must be based on the autochthonous sociology of modern Romania, the only one that can relate young souls to social institutions. The rest of the curriculum derives from it following a causal pattern: a) the social history of old Romania in order to understand the new one; b) the social history of European States, as a means to understand the history of our State; c) the social

history of ancient States, as a means to understand the constitution of modern States. The main subject of education becomes a sociologized history, a history of the development of social institutions.

By focusing on understanding the current Romanian society, the school curricula will also comprise a series of auxiliary social sciences: a) elements of political economy; b) elements of law; c) elements of State politics and science; and d) elements of general sociology. Alongside them and in parallel with them, the nature sciences will be studied.

Within such a reform, foreign authors are superfluous. We must live our own curriculum, derived from our own needs. Such an endeavour takes time. Such sociologization of history, of education, can be constructed only on national foundations. We should not translate any foreign sociology book. "Such sociological education would be the most painful profanation of its destiny, which sociological education must fulfil in our school." (Zeletin 1926, p. 51)

In *Noi principii de reformă a învățământului* [*New Principles of Educational Reform*], Zeletin studies thoroughly the issues of a school reform. To intellectualist, passive education, he opposes an active, intuitive, creating education. From the Organic Statute to the interwar period, the purpose of Romanian school was to train clerks, to prepare persons for bureaucracy. The intuitive method was not applied in our country because it did not correspond to social needs. Gradual industrialization also entailed a gradual passage of education from the abstract method to the intuitive method. What school laws failed to accomplish, the actual development of society managed: school became the engine that today has the task of transforming a rural mentality into a modern mentality. We will have to "ingrain in our future generations the belief that working in the cultural field does not mean memorizing abstract formulas within foreign books, but extracting from our own social structure our own formulas, which correspond to our own national needs." (Zeletin 1923, p. 724)

Concerning his critical spirit, we believe it is essential to mention a paper published in 1923 in *Dreptatea socială* [*Social Justice*], where the author analyzes meticulously the Romanian education system. "Sad considerations upon the wages of intellectuals in general. In one of the best-known high school in the Capital, the headmaster is paid 1355 lei per month, while the first servant 1748! Conclusion: when intellectuals decide to made demands, without making any social philosophy, and to organize in order to impose their will, then and only then will they stop envying the fate of servants." (Zeletin 1923, pp. 31-32)

4. Conclusions

Concerning the details and some practical or political conclusions, the work of Zeletin can be annotated or amended: this is the fate of all great works. However, in terms of its theoretical frame, *Burghezia română* [*Romanian Bourgeoisie*] is a

book that no critique will ever eliminate from its prominent place in Romanian sociological research. (Claudian 1935, p. 271) The writing of *Burghezia română* laid the solid foundations of the sociology of Romanian State. Through its solid view, its impeccable logical apparatus, its perfect composition geometry and the vast underlying documentation, *Burghezia română* is one of the great books of contemporary thought. (Claudian 1935, pp. 272-273)

In his eulogy, Ion Petrovici wrote, “A special and eminent man, of whom we have spoken today a lot less that we will speak tomorrow.” His work was discussed on the 100th anniversary of his birth, marked by a series of papers published in cultural journals. His main works were reprinted only post 1990. Nae Ionescu said, “Zeletin is the first great rectilinear spirit of our culture.” (Zvanciu 2006)

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