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Review: Petre Țuțea: Between Sacrifice and Suicide (by Alexandru Popescu)

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Popescu's "Petre ÚuÛea: Between Sacrifice and Suicide" - Book Review

Michael S. Jones

Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies

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mentioned, is of paramount importance for the study of the religious situation in Russia. The book's two major merits, I suggest, are the author's sincere desire to admit the existing diversity in Christianity today, and his acknowledgment of the need for Orthodoxy to engage in cooperation and dialogue with Protestant groups. Unfortunately, few Orthodox in Russia itself share Sergeev's desire, since the Church in Russia appears to have already chosen the path of "revivalistic" Orthodoxy. It is also unfortunate that few among the Evangelicals in Russia acknowledge the need for any cooperation and dialogue with the Orthodox. Persecution of Protestants by "revivalistic" Orthodoxy has so embittered Evangelicals that they can muster no trust of the Orthodox or even desire to take them seriously. Sergeev is right that this situation needs to change, but it is unlikely to do so unless revivalistic Orthodoxy gives way to renewal Orthodoxy on Russian soil.

Victor Shlenkin

Popescu, Alexandru, *Petre Țuțea: Between Sacrifice and Suicide*. (Aldershot, England, and Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004) 353 pp. paperback. Reviewed by Michael S. Jones.

In many countries of the Soviet bloc, imprisonment of intellectuals who were not sympathetic to Socialist ideology was widespread and even systematic. There are many great intellectual and spiritual figures who are lost to the world because of the political prisons of Soviet-block countries. Great or promising intellectuals entered these "gulags" and disappeared, died, or were broken. The stories of these lost heroes deserve to be heard. However, Petre Țuțea's is not one of them. Petre Țuțea (1902-1991) rose to greatness *because of* his gulag experience.

Țuțea was born in 1902 in a rural Romanian village. He studied law in Transylvania, earning master's and doctoral degrees, and also studied in Germany. Țuțea read widely, both within and outside of his areas of specialization. He worked as a government administrator, eventually rising to the position of Director of the Office of Economic Publications and Propaganda. During WWII he served as a Director in the Ministry of War Economy.

Țuțea began publishing articles, many of which were on political subjects, in the mid-1920's. His political views seem to have passed through several stages, and at different points in his life he seems to have sympathized with democratic ideals, Marxist thought, and right-wing nationalism. His interests prior to the installation of communism in Romania in 1948 were primarily in the fields of economics and public policy. It is perhaps his outspokenness in these areas and his positions in the governments that preceded communism that made Țuțea a target for "re-education."

Țuțea was imprisoned in facilities specially designated for the "re-education" (brainwashing) of political prisoners, including the prisons at Ocnele Mari and Aiud. His time in prison encompassed 1948 through 1953 and again from 1956 through 1964. Prison life entailed living with very little food, scarce access to other necessities, and sometimes forced labor. Re-education involved enduring severe physical and psychological abuse in addition to ideological indoctrination. The goal of re-education was conversion of the prisoners to the secular communist world-view. Converts were promoted from torture victim to torturer.

A man of education and culture, Țuțea enjoyed a certain amount of prestige and prosperity through his administrative career. The loss of these, the potentially devastating change in his personal circumstances, and the disappointment in the direction taken by his country could have crushed his spirit. Add to this the systematic brutality of a prison system designed intentionally to break the human spirit, and it would be easy to understand if Țuțea had lost his sanity or abandoned his beliefs. His response was just the opposite: loss and imprisonment drove Țuțea to profound, sustaining spirituality, and a philosophy based thereon.

Țuțea's philosophy is a synthesis of science, culture, theology, and philosophy. It is remarkably religious considering the fact that his background is in economics and government. His philosophy could perhaps be described as a Romanian Orthodox philosophical anthropology. He succeeds in using basically secular terminology and a wide array of intellectual sources to express

Christian convictions. In reaction to, or in distinction from, the philosophy of his communist/socialist oppressors, which devalued humans and humanity and exalted the state, Țuțea believed that Christ's love gives value to all people. Christ views each person as an end in his or her self, not merely as means to be exploited for the benefit of the collective.

According to Țuțea, human enterprises such as art, science, technology, and philosophy are merely means to greater humanitarian and doxological ends. However, this does not result in Țuțea's philosophy having a pessimistic tone: on the contrary, his philosophy is very optimistic. This is a result of the theology implicit in Țuțea's philosophy: Țuțea believes both that it is possible for a person to successfully follow God, and that God is actively involved in human history. This optimism was virtually a necessity in Țuțea's life: without it he would not have survived his imprisonment experiences. This fact testifies to the potency of his philosophy: it has been tried by fire and has withstood the test.

Christ's life and message provide the paradigm for successful human life. Imitation of Christ is the way to maximize one's earthly life; love for God and love for others is the result of this imitation, which benefit both self and others. The anxiety that each human experiences can best be resolved by a humble seeking after God, which directs human energies into paths that result in ultimate, lasting joy. However, Țuțea is clear that unaided human seeking and human creativity cannot reach God; only through God's grace can humans succeed in fulfilling their religious and non-religious potential.

This raises the question of the proper place of reason according to Țuțea's philosophy. According to Țuțea, true religion is revealed religion. More precisely, true revealed religion is Christ. All other religion, including much or all (I'm not sure which of these is more correct) of Christianity, is mere human activity. Truth cannot be reached via pure analytic reason. The mind must be brought into parity with the heart and the body. This does not mean that reason must be abased, but rather that its analytic faculty must cease to be "judgmental" of the input of heart and body. Intellectual activity is valued, but so are emotional, aesthetic, ethical, and religious intuitions. Pure rationalism is sterile; philosophically, an alternative such as Romanticism would be preferable, while theologically, an alternative like mysticism is preferred.

It has already been stated that Țuțea's philosophy opposes communist/socialist philosophy. Țuțea believed that pride was the original sin, and that humanism is the prevalent contemporary version of this sin. Humanism, however, wears other guises in addition to communism. In addition to opposing Marxist communism, Țuțea also opposed materialist capitalism and the philosophies of eliminative materialism and Darwinian (non-theistic) evolution. He criticizes secular existentialism, which was popular among some of his Romanian philosophical contemporaries (eg. Cioran), as lacking space for holiness and heroism. Similarly, he offers an alternative to the bifurcation of Neo-Kantian philosophy, another influential movement among some of Țuțea's Romanian contemporaries (eg. Błaga), and argues for a "*correspondence* between sensory taste, spiritual discernment, intellectual joy, ontic mystery, vocational activity, scientific curiosity, and social identity." (261). He provides critiques of a wide range of philosophical movements, including both determinism and indeterminism, chaos theory, aporetic philosophy, and eleatic philosophy. The alternative he suggests to these is a philosophy of "nuance" that sees in the logic of nature a universal rational order that mirrors divine reason and harmony, yet without providing access thereto. The resulting philosophy heightens the unpredictability of existence for humans but also provides a basis for human emotional comfort and assurance.

Despite Țuțea's philosophical interests and vocabulary, at its heart his philosophy is a wide-ranging application of the Orthodox interpretation of Christianity. Popescu writes, "Țuțea presents a deeply traditional Orthodoxy in an often disconcertingly secular, interdisciplinary guise." (261). This Orthodoxy of Țuțea's philosophy is clearly seen in the almost mystical aspects of his philosophy of religion, in his insistence on the necessity of revelation, in the sacramentalism of his soteriology, and in his emphasis on the importance of community. Țuțea taught that since Christian truth is love, this truth can only be experienced in community. This led him to stay engaged with his fellow prisoners and also with those who imprisoned them. His Orthodoxy is also reflected in the proclamatory rather than analytic style of his philosophy, and in his ability to show forgiveness towards his torturers. Țuțea's

philosophy, bound up in his Christian faith, enabled him to minister both to his fellow inmates and to those who were charged with keeping and re-educating them.

In summation, perhaps it could be said that two basic features distinguish Țuțea's philosophy. The first of these is his unique utilization of philosophy and broad cultural learning to compose a wide-ranging Orthodox Christian philosophy. The second is his consistent practice of this philosophy even under the most difficult circumstances.

The author of this book, Alexandru Popescu, is a Bucharest psychologist and an Oxford theologian. He came to know Țuțea when he was a first-year medical student assigned to the floor of the Bucharest hospital on which Țuțea was being treated in 1980. Popescu was drawn to Țuțea's philosophical preaching, and although it was risky, he continued his relationship with Țuțea for twelve years, eventually finding his own Christian faith under Țuțea's tutelage.

Systematically describing Țuțea's philosophy is a difficult task. This is because Țuțea's disavowed systemization, partly as a reaction against the over-systemization of communist ideology, and partly because of Țuțea's philosophical position that reality transcends the limits of human rationality and therefore is not susceptible to human systemization. Popescu's presentation of Țuțea's philosophy is stylistically analytical but at the same time strangely vague on this account. Popescu does not argue for, nor present Țuțea's arguments for, Țuțea's philosophy. Țuțea himself refrained from arguing for his beliefs, presenting them exhortingly rather than argumentatively. Popescu's description of Țuțea's prison experiences is also vague, purportedly because Țuțea preferred not to talk about them.

The book itself is nicely laid out, with a map of Romania in the front, a seven-page chronological table comparing Țuțea's life with other important events in Romanian history, the usual forwards and prefaces, et al., a series of plates located in the center of the book, brief appendices on Romanian history and the Hesychast movement in Romania, a detailed bibliography, and an index. Although the book is paperback, the binding seems very durable. The back cover of the book contains glowing endorsements from such notable figures as Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Michael Bourdeaux, founder of the Keston Institute at Oxford. The style is that of an intellectual biography, although it proceeds somewhat slowly because of the esoteric nature of Țuțea's philosophy and experience. That Popescu has thoroughly researched his subject is clearly reflected in the numerous footnotes.

Petre Țuțea: Between Sacrifice and Suicide is not a book for the casual reader. It is, however, a well-written book. At times it gets a little bogged down in detail and analysis; at other times it leaves one asking for more specifics. All in all, though, it is a good treatment of someone who appears to be a difficult but interesting philosopher. This book will be of particular interest to those who are interested in Christian resistance to the communist oppression of religion in Eastern Europe, and also to those who are interested in religious perseverance in general. Although it is not a systematic philosophy, it will certainly be of interest to those who are interested in the development of an Eastern Orthodox philosophy. It is also of great interest to those who, like myself, have an interest in Romania.

Michael S. Jones, editor, Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies

Klaus Buchenau. *Orthodoxie und Katholicismus in Jugoslawien 1945-1991: Ein serbisch-kroatischer Vergleich..* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004. 484pp. Bibliography, Abbreviations, Index of persons. Euros 98.00, hardbound. *Reviewed by Paul Mojzes.*

Usually comparisons between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church among Croats tend to be rather biased affairs, very much at the expense of one of those churches. More often than not the Serbs and their church fare worse. Klaus Buchenau's book, fortunately does not belong in this category. Despite the fact that the author deliberately undertook a comparative study of the two churches and their roots in their respective societies he succeeded in maintaining a praiseworthy scholarly objectivity, shedding light rather than additional heat on a generally conflictual relationship