

DANIEL DAVID, Psihologia poporului român. Profilul psihologic al românilor într-o monografie cognitiv-experimentală. Iași: Ed. POLIROM, 2015; DANIEL DAVID, Psychology of the Romanian people. The psychological profile of Romanians in a cognitive-experimental monograph. Iași: Ed. POLIROM, 2015

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I. The structure of book

The 2015 book written by Daniel David presenting the psychological profile of the Romanian people and its behaviors and attitudes in different aspects of social life as a main theme created a lot of discussions and controversies. From the beginning, this book received both positive and negative commentaries and reviews, probably due to a remaining conservative perspective of the society concerning this scientific area. When speaking on Romanian's psychological features, we find a lot of traditions and myths which provide a false image marked by idyllicism. For a long time the Romanian people were associated, by a significant number of researchers, with a rural existence and a powerful religious consciousness rather than offering a moral perspective on the world. It is not a simple task to investigate the psychological profile of the Romanian's behaviours regarding the political and social life, the personal life or the very wide range of emotions and reactions in banal situations. As we already know, the individual is very complex when we consider its social feature and researchers do not have a unique point of view on this subject. By centuries of existence, the Romanians survived and created an original culture in the South-European space, marked by a Latin feature given especially by their language. But the XXth century brought a series of radical changes in the social and political structures of this people and the consequences are now visible not only at the elites's level, but also in the everyday behavior of the masses. Today, Romanians appear as a conservative people looking suspiciously at the European and global

changes and transformations, but what are the causes for it? What are the features that highlight Romanians in Europe and, much more important, what are their capacity to preserve their identity and survive to numerous challenges? We will try to answer to these questions by analyzing the book of Daniel David, in the next passages.

As the author states in the introduction, this book is the result of 10 years research in the domain of cognitive psychology. „First, I wanted to do a complex and rigorous analysis. Unfortunately, at that time (2005) there were no major tests/psychological tools in Romania that allow us such valid analysis (e.g. „how we are” vs „how we believe we are”). Duration, although it may seem high, it is similar to major practical applications in other fields of life sciences; for example, in pharmacotherapy, distance from basic research to drug can take even longer and the same is true in clinical psychology / psychotherapy”(David, 2015: 16f.). This is the reason for the large amount of pages – 431 in the digital edition.

The book has a large introduction in which its author explains his reason for the research, the main targets of his work and the scientific tools used to investigate the Romanian people for establishing a psychological profile closed to actual realities. After that, the research is detailed in 5 chapters and each of it has more subsections. Finally, we have an afterword and a section of annexes that contains the conclusions and justifications with all psychological and sociological tools used.

In the *Introduction*, Daniel David presents the origins and reasons for his investigation and surely he details the scientific framework of the work. He argues that there are other similar books in the field of cognitive psychology which present the profile of an entire people, e.g. the Americans. „This project was conceived in 2005 when Terracciano and his collaborators published a major study in the prestigious journal *Science* in which they analyzed the gap between "how we are" in terms of personality traits and "how we believe" we are in 49 countries / cultures of the world. Publication of the article in *Science* magazine shows the interest of the scientific community on this topic. Indeed, in a globalized world in which countries/cultures come more often in interaction regardless of geographical distance, and in a European Union that tries to fit better members of highly diverse understanding of this issue, it is crucial to fostering collaboration and peace to avoid conflicts. For example, if a country/culture has a certain image of itself, and has many discrepancies over how it is in fact and another country/culture treats it as it is, not as it believes it is, it may occur frustrations, tensions and difficult international situation” (David, 2015: 15). Daniel David remembers also the previous contributions of Romanian scholars to this theme, especially the researches of Constantin Rădulescu-Motru.

Regarding the scientific framework, David says „one expanding area today is the intercultural psychology, where the analysis of psychological attributes is made at the country/culture level, compared to other countries/cultures, not at the individual level or smaller/larger groups in the same culture” (David, 2015: 15).

The first chapter contains the scientific framework and the tools and methods used to adapt this theory to the psychological features of Romanian people. According to Daniel David, psychology of peoples is a scientific area that creates more and more interest for specialists and also for the large public. The intense interaction between individuals from different countries or cultures provide a base of scientific research with powerful, solid arguments. Adding to the discussion the case of Romanians and their psychological profile, David mentions the contributions of Constantin Rădulescu-Motru and Dumitru Drăghicescu. He argues the necessity of a new approach because the previous researches have important limits and the methods of investigation was changed over the time.

In the second chapter, David presents the theoretical and methodological frameworks used to create the psychological profile of Romanians. The scientific base is very large but has a wide coherence and relevance for social realities in contemporary Romania. So, the major theories cited by Daniel David are: multimodal analysis, cognitive-clinical theory of taking over information, psychometric theory and psychological profile, theory of stereotypes, theory of central attributes versus peripheral. Combining these frameworks is a valid method to identify the main psychological features of the Romanian people. The methodological framework is based on the social statistics: sampling and interpreting data from quantitative and qualitative perspective.

The next chapter explains the main cultural features of the Romanian people, the geographical position and its impact on the Romanian’s evolution, but especially the demographics is relevant for this project. Also the genetic structure is taken into consideration because some psychological attributes depend on it. Historical evolution of the Romanian society show us why there are some collective attitudes and ideas providing a conservative profile. Among knowledgeable researchers, discussions regarding genetic influences on psychological traits are not about whether there is genetic influence, but rather about how much influence there is, and how genes work to shape the mind. In the case of Romanians, this book sustains the importance of historical processes in creating a psychological structure of an entire nation. History and genetics are complementary, because the genetic features need a long time to develop and consolidate.

On the other hand, a psychological profile is influenced by many external factors. For example, the attitude of Romanians towards foreigners, the influence of social environment and political culture are presented as major factors that individualize this people in Europe. A synthesis of the cultural profile of Romanians, explained in this chapter, has generated a lot of controversies because some public figures, analysts and researchers argue that in this perspective, Romanian people are considered at a lower level than other peoples in Europe. Contemporary Romanians are, undoubtedly, the combined result of genetic, historical and social factors.

In the fourth chapter we will discover the concrete results of this complex research in an empirical approach. The author offers information about the personality profile of Romanians, including their levels of intelligence, creativity, learning styles, emotional intelligence and temperaments. Some interesting conclusions are presented related to the Romanians' relationships with minorities. According to the study, „ethnocentrism spurred by conflicts in ethnic terms and ethnic discrimination, emphasizes the negative attitude relative to the majority population more than any other socio-demographic variables” (David, 2015: 279).

Romanians still have a reserved behavior relative to minorities, because the traditional and nationalist structures and thinkings have an important place in their life.

The last chapter widely explains the psychological profile of Romanians, using a historical perspective. Daniel David created this profile by comparing the Romanian people's contemporary profile with similar things in the past. The succession of historical epochs and political regimes have a substantial contribution to the actual psychological profile of this people. What is interesting in this chapter is the presentation of Romanian diaspora and ethnic minorities. For example, „Romanian immigrants from Spain have a lower level of psychic life's quality than Spanish”. But, on the other hand, „the Romanian cultural environment favors the national minorities (i.e. the Hungarians), in comparison to that of Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine. Language and age predict the Hungarian ethnocentrism in Romania, much better than education and gender” (David, 2015: 312).

In the section of conclusions, Daniel David says that any scientific research must be analyzed in a logic of rationality. In the public sphere, Romanians are presented in two major perspectives: first of them accentuate the positive features and the second emphasize the negative. This study aims to demonstrate that there are not inferior or superior nations. One of main conclusions is that Romanians have a great potential but their social institutions are not sufficiently developed to sustain it.

The author opt for a rational nationalism, combined with a tolerant thinking and attitudes that allow Romanians to live in collaboration with other national minorities. As the author argues, „in the globalized world, nationalism is important to maintain the national identity, but, in order to be credible, it must be modern and progressive, in other words, tolerant, aiming to show correctly the rights/identity, without blocking the rights of others or defaming the identity of others. I think the maturation of the Romanian psychology allows a technical but constructive approach of the psycho-cultural profile of Romanians, formulating the conclusions with a scientific rigor, but also carefully to extract the lessons that aid us, not only to punitively point some less satisfactory things” (David, 2015: 333).

II. Relevance, scientific contributions and controversies

This cognitive-experimental monography is the result of a long-term work, a work that totaled the application of numerous tests, data processing in statistical terms (and not only), reporting of obtained data to that from other countries (USA and nine other states from all around the world) and interpreting data so the conclusions are as less tainted by error. The publication of such a study required a long time, especially the other social sciences already brought their contribution to shaping a profile of Romanian people, referring there to sociology and anthropology but also to philosophy of culture (with indication that the studies from the domains mentioned above are not absolutely elaborated at the level of entire Romanian people, but can contribute to the creation of its own specificity).

As we know, the science of psychology is relatively new compared to other sciences and its development in Romania was blocked by the Communist regime, for decades the academic research of it becoming impossible due to the potential threat of its contents, but especially because this domain can not be politically or ideologically enrolled.

„Sapere aude!” – „Dare to know!” is an often used phrase in this book by Daniel David. We were greatly surprised by the capitalizing of previous approaches regarding the efforts to learn how are Romanians as a people; as we already said, the basic reference was the first treaty of Constantin Radulescu-Motru from the interwar period but the results from the studies of Mihai Ralea and Mircea Vulcanescu – with his book entitled *The Romanian dimension of existence* are also integrated. Daniel David also adds direct researches

on the psychology of Romanians from all major university centres – Iasi, Bucuresti, Timisoara, Romanian Academy.

We are not surprised by the results of Daniel David, but in the last period I was very interested in searching and understanding much more things about our identity as a nation and how we relate to others. And one of main conclusions of Daniel David emphasizes the national unity of Romanians: „at this level of analysis we have not found major differences between the old Romanian territories, nor in the empirical approach nor hermeneutical, probably as a consequence of a common education/socialization and globalization in the last century” (David, 2015: 336).

After reading the book we discovered that the importance of national component is not so great as others say, especially from mass-media and public space. Actually, the Romanian public sphere is dominated by an irrational nationalism and ethnocentrism that blocks any development and progress in social thinking. We also observed the fear of change that characterizes a large part of Romanian people, probably as a consequence of an isolationist political discourse, based on the myth of a „besieged fortress”. Daniel David says that „these results must convince us that Romanian citizens have a more important psycho-cultural foundation than differentiating elements, foundation on which we can build a common future in which the differentiating elements find a place and contribute to the unity in diversity” (David, 2015: 336).

From our perspective, the book written by Daniel David is a perfect tool for any researcher in the social and psychological sciences to know the attitudes, thinking and behaviours of Romanian people, compared with other nations. In a similar study, published in 2003 by G. Hunyady, Americans are considered by Romanians as powerful, popular, with honour; British are intelligent, educated and patriot; Chinese are viewed as patriots, honest, diligent, intelligent; French are patriot, educated and bohemian; Germans seems to be diligent, honest, intelligent; Hungarians and Russians are patriot, adapted, well-oriented, assertive. As we easily see, to be patriot is a fundamental feature for a nation, in the Romanian’s opinion. From these nations, Romanians prefer British, Americans and French, then Germans and finally Hungarians and Russians (Hunyady, 2003: 155).

The book was positively perceived by most of academic reviews and research centres. In an old and prestigious review – *Timpul*, Ph.D. Luminita Iacob appreciates that, in fact, „the data used by the author were obtained through international research, with coordinators from outside the Romanian space. Thus, less accessible material, in part unique, went through this book, in the attention of those interested in the topic” (Iacob, 2015). Other two significant reviews were published by PhD Maria Nicoleta Turliuc and PhD

Marius Lazar; they found both positive contributions and some inaccuracies regarding the methodology of research (Turliuc & Lazăr, 2015).

Finally, this massive monograph can be optimized in some aspects (e.g. compared factors and the writing style), but at the actual moment it can be really considered a starting point in the analysis of the Romanian people's psychology. This book can be used by governmental and non-governmental organisations in development of their public image strategies, but also it can serve as an efficient tool for political parties in the electoral campaigns. It offers an impartial perspective on the Romanians, in lights and shadows, and this aspects confers a great scientific value.

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