

Marcel Chelba

On Kant's Modernity

A show on Radio Romania Cultural
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Moderator: Constantin Aslam

Guest: Marcel Chelba



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CA – Welcome dear philosophy lovers. At the microphone is Constantin Aslam. Director of broadcasting: my colleague, Ruxandra Mocanu. As many of you may have noticed, in the Romanian thought after 1990, alongside academic philosophy, nurtured and cultivated for formative purposes, a series of thinkers have appeared in the public space, whom we could metaphorically call *the independents* – intellectuals with various academic backgrounds, attached to philosophy for the sake of philosophy itself, as Mircea Vulcănescu once said – people who do philosophy simply to come to terms with themselves and the world they live in. Some of these cases are notorious. We all know, for example, the case of Noica – a non-academic philosopher who, paradoxically, has founded a *philosophy school*. Or, to give two other examples chosen at random: Camil Petrescu and Alexandru Bogza. In recent years we have all witnessed the strangeness case of Alexandru Dragomir, a professional thinker, a former student of Heidegger, who wrote philosophy for himself and who had no ambition to become an author. It was only by chance that after his death, through the well-known volumes published by Humanitas, we have the opportunity to look into the intimacy of a thought that was carried out with the natural aim of self-understanding, in the universe of which philosophy is both a way of living and a guide in piercing the mystery of life and death of each of us. Well, today's guest is also a professional thinker, physicist by training and a philosopher not engaged in the academic world, one of those independent thinkers for whom philosophy poses problems that cannot be solved outside their own research and reflection. And as today's guest has embarked on a philosophical research of his own, starting from Kant and philosophy's wider relationship with science, I propose today to follow a debate about our need for Kant and critical thinking in a world where the idea of the supremacy of reason and moral duty has fallen into a shadow, if not abandoned altogether. Today's guest of the *Springs of Philosophy* is Mr. Marcel Chelba, who is currently in Reșița – his home town. I greet Mr. Chelba on my behalf and on your behalf. Hello Mr. Marcel Chelba!

MC – Hello Mr. Aslam!

CA – I see that the technical conditions are met, so we can already start today's debate, dear Mr. Chelba, and I propose that we attack our topic today (as I said, the need of Kant and critical thinking in a world that seems to be governed of some principles that are contrary to Kantian philosophy). But let's start this debate in a roundabout way. I would propose that you remind the listeners, in a few moments, your meeting with Constantin Noica at Păltiniș in the summer of 1987, an episode which, incidentally, is also recounted in the volume of testimonies on Noica, *Noica's Cultural Model*, edited by Mr. Marin Diaconu at the *National Publishing House for Science and Art*) and published last year in the Constantin Noica Centenary, which I also presented on the radio. Please Mr. Chelba.

MC – I have known Constantin Noica since 1984. That meeting, recounted in the text to which you refer, viz: *Constantin Noica's Last Idea and the Endless Road of Philosophy*, took place in the summer of '87, less than three months before the passing of this *patriarch of Romanian philosophy*, so to speak. That meeting was really... it has remained etched very deeply in my memory... for those who have not yet read that article I would like to remind, it is a brief idea that Noica related to me during our last walk around Păltiniș, under the title that this would be his last idea and he does not know to whom he would leave it. Of course, I didn't feel targeted to take up such a dowry of ideas...

CA – And, after all, an idea as a task, so to speak.

MC – Exactly. But I thought for a long time that surely at that time he conveyed this idea to everyone who visited him, and after all, it can't be lost, even if I didn't understand what it was about, I would forget it or lose it somehow. Indeed, it didn't particularly concern me until late on, almost 11 years later, when I was doing an in-depth study of *antinomies* in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* – that's when I realized, I suddenly remembered that distinction that Noica made¹, that's what it was about, namely, he said, between *happy natures* and *unhappy natures*² included, above all, scientists, i.e. those who are concerned with the *finite*, who try to solve immediate, concrete problems, but are always exasperated by the fact that they come up against new problems and that their desire for edification, for solution, is endlessly delayed. For them,

as Constantin Noica said, *infinity is outside* – they are always running towards this *vanishing point on the horizon* but never manage to reach it. And the *happy natures* (with *infinity inside*), he said, would be *the philosophers*, first and foremost, and *theologians*, and he also oscillates with regard to artists and even certain categories of scientists — so he does not condemn science altogether as being outside this dimension of a global, synthetic knowledge of nature.

CA – Correct. What comes to my mind now, dear Mr. Chelba, however, is that you're in *the middle*, at the *interregnum*, so to speak.

MC – Exactly ...

CA – Right?

MC – I was coming from physics and...

CA – You came from physics and were an *unhappy nature* by training but also a *happy nature*, because you cultivated philosophy – because that was also the purpose for which, as you confess in this article, you did physics – that is, in other words, your motivation for doing physics was philosophical. Isn't it?

MC – Yes, but that was my particular condition – that few of my teachers knew it, that I had actually come to physics for philosophy, and because of that I had to face a lot of ironies and... well, inconveniences. But what's important here in this discussion? After that I made the connection... in time... at that time, when I had..., back then, in '87, I still only knew, obviously, the *Journal of Paltinis*³ (by Gabriel Liiceanu) and some of the newer works, those after 1965 onwards by Constantin Noica. I had not yet found his works from before 1944. I read those only afterwards, starting in 1987-88, when, assigned to Suceava, in a village in Suceava county, as a physics teacher, I found Petre Comarnescu's library at the *Museum of History* in Suceava – it was donated there, in its entirety, and had all Noica's works from before 1944, with Noica's dedication on them, to Petre Comarnescu. There I finally came across *Mathesis or Simple Joys, Open Concepts in the History of Philosophy in Descartes, Leibniz and Kant*, and *Sketch for the History of How Something New is Possible*.

CA – And with *De caelo*, probably.

MC – And with *De caelo*⁴ – but these three works, in particular,

represented for me a very strong link with everything I knew before about Constantion Noica. I mean, there, in *Mathesis...*, his debut book, was his whole philosophical program, along with his whole paedecic program, and... in *Open Concepts...* I found, I think, to this day, the best Kantian exegesis that has been written in our country, and in his *Sketch for the History of How Something New is Possible* I found a certain idea of philosophical reading: that idea that the history of philosophy must be read not simply as a novel, but with a guiding idea, with a certain philosophical project.

CA – Therefore, Mr. Marcel Chelba, this means that after these readings, this idea that Noica transmitted to you, namely, *the infinity outside/infinity inside*, has somehow taken root, has begun to bear fruit, and with this idea you have gone, I understand...

MC – It has become a kind of interpretative grid...

CA – Interpretation of philosophical thinking in general or...

MC – In general...

CA – Understood.

MC – And it was only... the trigger came only in the face of the Kantian antinomies, where I realized that this distinction *infinity in/infinity out* is really saving, because, there too, in fact, the whole analytical approach was in fact an unfolding of the concept of series, taken from mathematics by Kant, in the conditions of that model, that discussion about the finitude or infinitude of the world...

CA – Understood.

MC – Namely, everything was going on ... it depended on the way these series were run.

CA – Understood. No..., just a moment, we'll come back to this. In order to better clarify the starting point that stimulated you to develop a new grid for reading Kant, which you are considering in a project that is nearing completion, a four-volume project of interpretation of Kant's philosophy, and I want to direct our discussion to the volume already published in 2004, *Critical Introduction (On the Possibility of Metaphysics, as Science, in the Perspective of Kantian Critical Philosophy)*, published by Crates. I would like to propose that we focus on your reading project starting from this work, dear Mr. Marcel Chelba, so that our listeners will also have the possibility that after following our

debate, our discussion, perhaps they will be motivated to read the first volume — *the Introduction* — of the four volumes you are preparing on Kant. If you agree with this path.

MC – Yes. Sure. But to make this transition from... on my paper, I think it would be better to start at the end of it, which is where a certain pattern (I would say, a certain philosophical parable) appears, namely, the antinomy, the antinomic distinction between the *mole's perspective* and the *bird's perspective*.

CA – Understood. So you're suggesting to the listeners — I'm sorry..., and I won't interject — so you're suggesting to the listeners that the moment they try to decipher the reading grid that you propose in Kant maybe they should go towards the end of the paper, right? On *Dilemma and the Method of Metaphysics*. It's in Chapter 6 — if I'm not mistaken — *The Dilemma of the Mole*. That's what you mean, right?

MC – Yes. This would also be the link to the earlier discussion about this Noica's distinction: *infinite out/ infinite in...*

CA – Gotcha. Please develop.

MC – What is this actually about? It's about two fundamental perspectives of knowledge. The *mole's perspective* would be that *analytical perspective*, specific to the *positive sciences*, which advances from experiment to experiment in the depths of nature, of matter, making new discoveries, but which never manages to exhaust the object of study, on the contrary, it branches out and risks getting lost, losing its internal coherence — this is the perspective with an *outer infinity* — it is..., we might suggest another comparison, namely that between a plane tangent to a sphere — this sphere if it were the earth, let us say — and an outside view, in which the earth appears in its entirety. So the difference would be between the two perspectives: the classical one, in which the earth was seen as flat, and on which one could go on and on, and the other, in which the earth reveals its roundness but also its finitude at the same time. Well, this would be the *bird's-eye view*. So the *mole's-eye view* would be the perspective of a thought based on the principle of consistency, of non-contradiction, which takes place in the space of Euclid's geometry, in which the metric is constant, in which one can advance at an equal pace indefinitely, in which, as they say, the parallels never touch, and the other perspective, with an *inner*

infinity, is the perspective of a geometry in which the limits are contained in the plane, in which the metric is variable, in which, although one can advance an infinite number of steps, as in the models of relativistic physics, nevertheless this universe is finite, and this is precisely because the metric is variable — it is the perspective in which time is no longer uniform either, the perspective in which the relationship between space and time is in fact one of connection, of interdependence, whereas over there, in the classical perspective, with the *outer infinity*, they are independent and each can go on forever — so it is the version of classical mechanics, Newtonian, and the other would be the version of modern physics.

CA – Yes. Let us mention for the listeners, dear Mr. Marcel Chelba, that this work, *Critical Introduction (On the Possibility of Metaphysics as Science in the Perspective of Kantian Critical Philosophy)*, is with Internet access, right? It is a work that can be downloaded for free⁵...

MC – Yes.

CA – and I have a request if you have the Internet address available, maybe our listeners can see it now.

MC – It's very simple. If they go to Scribd and do a search on “Marcel Chelba” or “Critical Introduction” they will automatically find it.

CA – Understood. Those who now have a computer at our disposal, among our listeners, may already have your work in front of them and see that you actually proposed to us as a reading suggestion to look in Chapter 6, *The Dilemma and the Method of Metaphysics*, and you have to ...

MC – Or *Towards a new paradigm of science* – another chapter, which covers the same topic.

CA – Understood. So...

MC – Yes.

CA – So – I feel the need for clarification, and it is assumed that our listeners also feel this need, dear Mr. Marcel Chelba – so you propose the distinction between *the infinite outside/the infinite inside* based on the *parable of the bird and the mole*. With this way, with this parable, you, let us understand, have undertaken a reading of...

MC – Yes, now we can approach Kantian terminology.

CA – Right. So you have undertaken a reading of all of Kantian criticism, not just the *Critique of Pure Reason*, I take it — yes?

- MC – Yes. Basically now I've gone the opposite route to the book. In the book I actually tried to move from the terminology of Kantian philosophy to that of modern physics — now, in this discussion, I actually did the reverse process...
- CA – Understood. But that means ...
- MC – ... from science to the Kantian topics.
- CA – Yes. Yes, yes. May I...
- MC – And now I'd just like to point out this: that, as is known, or, well, it's not so clear to some, *Critique of Pure Reason* is a very polemical book, and its target is precisely the empiricism and naturalism of English thinkers in the first place, because that's where the tradition of this thinking was, with Hume, with...
- CA – Scottish school...
- MC – Of course it does, and this is best seen at the end, where Kant quotes that line from Persius about a Roman centurion's reply that *what he knows is enough for him and needs no philosophical sophistication*⁶. That is, it is this casteist, simplistic view, based only on immediate practical results, which refuses any nuance, any change of perspective — refuses *alterity* in the end — and in fact with this we see what the *Critique's* own aim is. Kant is primarily critical of *empiricist thought*, but he is also critical of *dogmatic rationalism* and *absolute idealism*.
- CA – I need one more clarification. Please.
- MC – Yes?
- CA – Let's understand that you, with this metaphor, with the *parable of the bird and the mole*...
- MC – Exactly, now we're going to draw...
- CA – No, my question was the following, just to understand better: you went with the perspective of contemporary physics in Kant to do a reading – a double reading, so to speak – *Critique of Pure Reason* on the one hand and contemporary theoretical physics on the other hand, as if *left hand/right hand*, to see if they are symmetrical?
- MC – Yes, sure, I looked for such analogies and found very strong analogies.
- CA – Right. Please.
- MC – *Mole's perspective* would be exactly the perspective of empiricist thinking and classical, Newtonian physics. *Bird's perspective*, the

one with *infinity inside*, would be the view of modern science (and *Kantian transcendental idealism*)⁷. Let me give you...

CA – How interesting! How interesting!

MC – Let me give you a quote, for example... from Niels Bohr. I've prepared a couple of quotes, which I think are essential, and I'd like you to let me give them to the listeners.

CA – I leave you. My request is that you don't go into technical details. Yes?

MC – Of course. Here is what Niels Bohr says: *"The source of the schizophrenia of the whole modern worldview stems from the separation, the opposition between subject and object. The separations, the oppositions, perhaps even deeper, like that between real and possible, actual and potential, matter and spirit, have hindered the progress of contemporary knowledge towards a true global synthesis."*⁸ Thus, the perspective of *modern science*, of quantum mechanics and relativistic physics, is precisely one that surpasses the *classical*⁹ one, of Newton, by this *completeness* of the physical system. Quantum physics, for example, is a physics in which this splitting or independence...

CA – Between subject and object ...

MC – ...between subject and object... has disappeared. They are linked in a single physical system and hence all the ambiguity and all the paradoxes of this new perspective of knowledge opened up by quantum mechanics and relativistic physics.

CA – And the second quote – that you said you had two.

MC – From Schrödinger I would give you a quote.

CA – Please!

MC – *"Einstein did not – as we sometimes hear – reveal the lie of Kant's deep thoughts on the idealization of space and time; on the contrary, he took a big step towards the perfection of this idealization."*¹⁰ That is, relativistic physics has not disproved Kant's theory of the apriorism of space and time as transcendental synthetic concepts; on the contrary, it has strengthened this theory, because space and time in relativistic physics are... just that, *synthetic a priori intuitions, constructions of our productive imagination, not representations of empirical experiences*.

CA – What you are saying – I am interrupting you for a moment – what you are saying, dear Mr. Marcel Chelba, is quite revolutionary. We learnt at school that Kant's theories on space and time in the

Critique of Pure Reason have been disproved by relativistic mechanics, by quantum theory, and that, therefore, we would need another philosophical construction, since Kant is no longer relevant, his philosophical representations coming into conflict with recent developments in science. But you claim the opposite.

MC – Yes. Unfortunately there is a very serious *misunderstanding*, shall we say – a misunderstanding of Kant – right in the middle of the revolution of scientific thought.

CA – But what I say belongs in the Western academic textbook. It's not about Romania here.

MC – Although the pioneers of this scientific revolution that took place at the beginning of the last century with quantum mechanics and relativity theory made full use of Kantian concepts and referred to him, even with obvious suggestions, nevertheless, in philosophical criticism or in modern epistemology Kant was considered outdated or invalidated by these advances.

CA – Right. Right.

MC – Let me give you a quote from Fritjof Capra – a more recent commentator – to see a link of modern physics to Kant, but totally ignored. He references, makes connections with Eastern philosophy, which is not wrong, there are these connections, but European philosophy has the benchmarks and the critical grid by which to interpret these results of modern science, it doesn't have to go that far.

CA – But the physicist regards them as oddities, Mr. Chelba. Please.

MC – Here's what Capra says: "*Maya* does not assume the illusory nature of the world, as is often erroneously claimed. The illusion lies at the level of our understanding, in taking as reality the forms and structures, objects and phenomena around us, instead of understanding that they are but abstract concepts produced by the intellect. *Maya* is the illusion by which concepts are identified with reality, by which the map is confused with the territory."¹¹

CA – Correct.

MC – Now, what is this about? It's exactly about the *transcendental illusion* that Kant was talking about – this *subreption*, this *substitution* that we routinely make between our *representations* and the *represented object*, between the *phenomenon* and the *thing itself*².

CA – Yes.

- MC – After that I could quote you from Poincaré, to see how close he was also in thinking, in essence, to Kant, but, again, he didn't recognize himself in Kant – probably because most physicists knew Kant from indirect sources and, by that time, Kantian exegesis was still quite..., how shall I say..., from the beginning and... rudimentary.
- CA – And tributary to a traditionalist interpretation, without making a competent reference to recent configurations of science. Dear listeners ...
- MC – And let me give you another example.
- CA – No, just for a moment, let me make a broadcast announcement, dear Mr. Marcel Chelba. Dear listeners, you are watching the show "Springs of Philosophy", broadcast on the radio station "Romania Cultural", in a debate that I am conducting by telephone with Mr. Marcel Chelba, who is currently in Resita. As you can see, the subject of the debate is the topicality of Kant's thought, the need for Kant and critical thinking for the world of science in which we live... The subject of the debate was suggested to me by the appearance of a book, which in fact heralds a whole series of volumes dedicated to Kant's thought – the work *Critical Introduction/ On the Possibility of Metaphysics, as Science, in the Perspective of Kantian Critical Philosophy*, the Crates Publishing House. As I said earlier, the work is also available in electronic format, to which we all have free access. Make the addition, Mr. Chelba. Please.
- MC – And I would give you another illustrious example, namely, what I have called *Einstein's epistemological paradox*¹³. Einstein says: „As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain; and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality“¹⁴.
- CA – Hmm ..., yes.
- MC – Here, with this famous paradox, Einstein fell well and truly over Kant, declaring himself practically entirely on the side of a *possible transcendental certainty* and a *constitutive empirical uncertainty* within experience, to which mathematics (*transcendental knowledge, possible a priori*) can only provide *transitory models*, possible forms of a hidden empirical reality, never perfectly adequate to it.
- CA – Yes. Mr. Chelba. Please. Once again I would ask you not to use technical terms. Indeed, things are very subtle, one who is a

professional and who has read Kant will be able to read your paper. My request is that we stick to the parables and meanings, and then the need for subtlety of thought will be satisfied by our listeners reading your book directly from the Internet. I return now. I apologize...

- MC – In short, this is about what I have called the *hermeneutics of empirical experience*. So this idea that Einstein stated in the example given is what happens in Kant as well – that is, knowledge, in this scientific perspective, is actually a *hermeneutics of empirical experience*, of our sensations and perceptions. For this is what Kant is all about: we do not go before objects with our minds a *tabula rasa*, as Locke thought, but with a certain *welcoming device*, with a *system of categories*, with a *system of concepts*, with a *system of representations*...
- CA – Or, as Heidegger says, with a *horizon of the already-meaning*, since we already have multiple meanings that we introduce into the objects themselves, calling them...
- MC – Yes. They can be called *heuristic biases*¹⁵, and knowledge has to resort to a series of verifications, to a confrontation between what comes to us through experience, through sensations, and what comes to us through reason, but the idea is that knowledge is the *play of these two perspectives*, the top-down one, of reason, through transcendental deductions, from the *principle of synthetic unity a priori*, as Kant says, and the one of empirical experience, within our direct contact with things.
- CA – Insist...
- MC – We are again in the same parable of the mole and the bird, in which the mole, the classical, empiricist perspective, advances in an opaque, resistant environment, without a horizon, without perspective, without landmarks, without a Pole Star, while in the other, modern perspective, all this topos of knowledge is given *a priori* and knowledge advances by particularization, not by generalization.
- CA – I'd like to come back to the parables again, Mr. Marcel Chelba, and I'd like to open another window into the interpretation – let me use a strong word, but I am convinced that this is the case, in the *revolutionary interpretation that you propose of Kant's thought* – and I want to illustrate that you have a parable, for example, not only for the interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but also of

the *Critique of Practical Reason*. In the second chapter – *For the sake of peace* – you have a parable which is called *Titanic Waltz*, and I would ask you to...

MC – Let's review it!

CA – Let's review it. Please.

MC – Let's imagine there's a shipwreck and... there are lifeboats, but there are more passengers than can fit in them.

CA – That ship is the *Titanic*.

MC – Yes. Let's say it's the case of *the Titanic* itself. Well, the question is who will be saved. The *pragmatic perspective*...

CA – Our usual one.

MC – ...says those who will be stronger, those who will be able to mobilize – to form parties, interest groups, colonies, states and so on – and beat the others, so they can get into boats. The other, ethical and, literally, Kantian perspective, in my interpretation, is precisely that which is commonly practised in the navy – I do not know whether it is a written or unwritten law, whether it has the same value for sailors as the Hippocratic Oath has, for example, for doctors – but it is known that in such cases men sacrifice themselves and women and children are put into boats. But this way of thinking, this ethical perspective, has nothing to do with pragmatism. It is something that resembles exactly that Kantian critical decision, that *categorical imperative* that he speaks of, which leads us even to sacrifice when this is for the good of humanity. But this *good of humanity* in pragmatic perspective is nonsense. The pragmatic perspective is a *logic of the majority*, so to speak. It is based on the vote of the majority. But the *vote of the many* enters into the *bald paradox*: What is..., when, how many is enough for a vote to be edifying? It gets into a vicious circle. At the limit, this thinking in the logic of the majority ends up with totalitarianism, because maximum success is when *everyone* or *the vast majority* votes with a certain option, with a certain perspective of thinking¹⁶.

CA – That means that the need for Kant, to summarize, is a need to nevertheless conduct our lives according to principles that are justified in rational order.

MC – Exactly.

CA – A way of thinking that we have nevertheless abandoned, because we now look at the world through the glasses of rights, through

the glasses of what we are entitled to, telling ourselves that we deserve... – so this optics conflicts with what Kant claims and the truth seems to be with Kant and not with us – right?

MC – What is very hard to understand in Kant is where this *categorical imperative* and *sense of duty* comes from. It is very simple. Decisions, in this ethical perspective, are made by the same process by which, over there, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, categories were deduced: from the *principle of a priori synthetic unity* – here they are deduced from the concept of God or from the concept of the *common good*. Therefore, precisely because moral decisions, in this ethical perspective, have the value of *mathematical theorems*, they become *imperative* for us. And precisely because, for example, the Pythagorean theorem is valid for everyone, not just for some – its validity does not depend on a *majority*, as in the case of pragmatic thinking – then the consequences obtained on the basis of this theorem also have the same categorical value for everyone. This is precisely why this *sense of duty* appears in Kant's ethics. It is not imposed. Like *politeness*, for example. If *politeness* is regulated, imposed by a decree, it no longer has the same moral value, it becomes a law with punitive value.

CA – Correct.

MC – It really has a moral value only insofar as it is optional, it is the free, unimposed decision of each individual, based on the same series of transcendental deductions, from the same single, common principle of the *general good*.

CA – I'm watching the clock, Mr. Chelba...

MC – So, in Kant we always see two complementary perspectives confronting each other, but there is a certain relationship between them: one seems solitary and sufficient in itself (the perspective of classical empiricism); the other, although it is more general, more comprehensive, and gives a broader solution to things, has the handicap of being ignored by the other perspective. So, it should be noted that between these two perspectives there is also an asymmetry: there is a unilateral encompassment, a certain incommensurability, as Thomas Kuhn put it – that is, the relativist perspective, for example, cannot be contained, explained, within the classical physics, only the perspective of classical physics can be contained, deduced within the relativist

perspective (as a mere particular case) — so too pragmatic ethics can only be thought of as possible within the perspective of this higher, authentic ethics, founded by Kant.

CA – Dear Mr. Marcel Chelba, I keep looking at the clock. We have three minutes left. I wanted to go a little deeper into your project. We are running out of time. I promise you that we will come back in a future debate on the very unusual way in which you interpret Kant. My question is as follows — and please formulate in a minute and a half, two minutes, the answer. My question is this: what do your other volumes contain and when will we have them available, so that we can make, for those who are interested, a complete foray into the reading grid you propose to Kantian thought. Please. Two minutes!

MC – This *Introduction*, which we have tried to talk about a little today, is really an Introduction to Volume IV: *The Antinomy of Pure Reason and the Ontological Antinomy, or on Antinomic Schematism and its Possible Ontological Significance*. This is actually the central work, which I started several years ago, and the volume that has appeared is just the *Introduction* to Volume IV, which is still in progress. Then there is Volume II: *Letters on Myorithic Ethics* — which is precisely an attempt to interpret the folk ballad *Mioritza* in the perspective of Kantian practical philosophy, in the spirit of the ideas I have set out...

CA – 10 seconds.

MC – and there is the *Appendix*, which is a *critique of the modern analytical spirit*. But I don't know when they will appear.

CA – Dear Mr. Marcel Chelba, thank you for participating in the show. Surely, as soon as they appear, we will have debates on *Radio Romania Cultural*, on the show *Springs of Philosophy*. Dear lovers of philosophy, here we end this week's edition of our meeting on the airwaves. We'll meet again as usual next Saturday on *Radio Romania Cultural*. Until our next meeting, Ruxandra Mocanu from the broadcasting direction and Constantin Aslam wish you, as usual: *Good thoughts, good words, good deeds!*

¹ On the show I said "Kant" instead of "Noica". It was a slip of the tongue.

² In the show I said *happy natures* instead of *unhappy natures*. Another slip of the tongue, because of the huge emotions I had at the start of this show (my first appearance on a radio show).

³ For those who don't know, Păltiniș is the highest mountain resort in Romania (at an altitude of over 1400 m), founded in 1894 by *Siebenbürgischen Karpatenverein* (when Transylvania was an annex of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). Păltiniș is located at approx. 30 km from Sibiu (Hermannstadt), almost in the geographical center of Romania. There, in a cottage, as a tourist, Constantin Noica spent the last years of his life. He was also buried there, in the courtyard of a monk's hermitage. It should be noted that, on the Sibiu-Păltiniș road (the only access road to Păltiniș), there is Rășinari, Emil Cioran's home village. Symbolically, by moving from Bucharest to Păltiniș, Constantin Noica chose to stay true to his student friend, Emil Cioran (settled in Paris), and to keep the candle of philosophy burning in Romanian culture. This was all that the former *political prisoner* (1949-1964) could do for the good of philosophy and of our human species in communist Romania. For several years (1975-1987), Constantin Noica made of Păltiniș the geographic and spiritual center of Romania – the honey hive from which the entire elite of the Romanian intellectuals drank and took their intellectual confirmation, including, the most famous, Andrei Pleșu and Gabriel Liiceanu.
[https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Păltiniș_\(Sibiu\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Păltiniș_(Sibiu))

⁴ And *Two Introductions and a Passage to Idealism and Philosophical Diary* – minus *Pages on the Romanian Soul*, which was probably put on the Index. I made this clarification in the article referred to (*Constantin Noica's Last Idea and the Endless Road of Philosophy*), but I have not made it here, so as not to digress too much from the subject.

⁵ The book can now be downloaded for a fee in PDF format (fourth edition) from <https://kantinomus.com/>

⁶ "*Quod sapio, satis est mihi, non ego curo, esse quod Arcesilas aerumnosique Solones.*" *Critic of Pure Reason* [A 855, B 883]

⁷ In the broadcast I omitted to make this point. But the association I was making between Kantian transcendental idealism and the new knowledge perspective of the modern sciences was obvious, however, throughout the discussion. This was, after all, the subject of the whole discussion.

⁸ This quote comes from an indirect source, on the Internet, from a Romanian physicist, who omits to specify his own source. Meanwhile the blog of that physicist has disappeared from the Internet. When I discover his source, I will come back and make the necessary

clarifications. So my English translation is a back-translation into English of the original quote, assuming it was a real quote and not an interpretation.

In any case, the idea stated here is perfectly compatible with Bohr's well-known epistemological view that *the opposites are not contradictory but complementary*, and that *the true object of physics is not nature in itself*, but only our *relationship with nature* (the way it can appear to us, or the way we can interpret the messages it conveys to us in the experience):⁹ It is wrong to think that the task of physics is to find out about nature. Physics concerns what we can say about nature." (Nick Herbert quotes Niels Bohr, in *Quantum Reality*, Anchor Press/Doubleday, New York, 1985, p. 259.)

The Kantian transcendental perspective, in which Niels Bohr looked at physics, is obvious. I recently found the work of Paul McEvoy:¹⁰ *Niels Bohr: Reflections on Subject and Object*" (2001). I especially recommend Chapter 10.2, *Bohr and Kant*. The full text of the book follows:

<http://books.google.ro/books?id=VlqHqHsh890C&pg=PA244&lpg=PA244&dq=bohr+subject+object&source=bl&ots=UHGwPYOCl&sig=FkM3jrwEkdC88VagTGLIBIHckWm&hl=ro&ei=5nrcTLWtDorJswadlpSiBA&sa=X&oi=bookresult&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBUQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false>

⁹ Lest it be thought that there is a confusion of terms I must make the following clarification here:

"Modernity" in European academic circles, until the early 20th century, was embodied by the *Newtonian model of thought*. When Niels Bohr imputed to the "modern view" that schizophrenia (split or independence) between subject and object he was in fact referring to this Newtonian (deterministic) paradigm of knowledge — which *the new physics* (statistical, probabilistic and relativistic) had just overcome. After the contributions of Niels Bohr and the other founding fathers of quantum mechanics, as well as those of Einstein, "modernity" identified itself with the *new probabilistic-relativistic paradigm of knowledge* and pushed *the old, deterministic paradigm* of Newton into the realm of the *classical*. (*The concept of modernity is a sliding concept that is always sliding up the scale of history.*) Now, the first *modern*, in this new sense, is Kant — for it is he who, for the first time, by saying that *the thing itself is in fact a synthetic a priori intuition of the subject*, united *subject and object* in a *single system of transcendental knowledge*, in which *the creative imagination* takes precedence over *empirical experience*, just as in modern physics *the mental experiment (Gedankenexperiment)* was to take precedence over laboratory research.

¹⁰ Schrödinger, E.: *Ce este viața? Spirit și materie*, Ed. Politică, București, 1980, p. 184.

Schrödinger, E.: *Was ist Leben? Die lebende Zelle mit den Augen des Physikers betrachtet*. (Leo Lehnen Verlag ([Sammlung Dalp](#) 1, München, 1951, 2. Aufl.) und *Geist und Materie* (Diogenes-Taschenbuch, Band 21782, Zürich 1989, ISBN 3-257-21782-X).

The translation from Romanian to English (a retroversion) belongs to me.

¹¹ Fritjof Capra, *Taofizica: o paralelă între fizica modernă și mistica orientală (The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism)*, Ed. Tehnică, Buc., 2004, p. 88-89". The retro-translation from Romanian to English belongs to me. When he makes this reference to the Maya doctrine, the author has in mind the fact that *quantum*

mechanical objects are basically *probability clouds* — as they say. This is the so-called *probabilistic interpretation* of the Copenhagen School, according to which the knowledge of nature in quantum mechanics is a veiled one, which does not even go as far as the *object itself*, as was (apparently) the case in classical mechanics, but only the *probability of finding it in experience in a certain state*.

¹² The vast majority of physicists still think today in a deterministic key — under the influence of this transcendental illusion — of the belief that we would know things, within experience, exactly as they are in themselves, objectively and unproblematically. Einstein himself, as is well known, firmly rejected the view of Niels Bohr and the Copenhagen School, according to which we never know things as they are in themselves, but only as they appear to us through our sense organs and measuring devices (i.e. as phenomena in Kant's sense). What we know about nature is not reality itself, but only the interpretation we give to our interactions with it. Einstein was convinced that this probabilistic and subjectivist view of nature (certain only in its own uncertainties), proposed by quantum mechanics, would one day be superseded by a much more accurate physics that could determine precisely what was happening in the world of elementary particles. Among contemporary physicists I would mention, for example, Stephen Hawking, who was convinced that physics would soon be able to tell us how the universe works and what God intends for his own Creation.

¹³ In the scientific literature, under the title "Einstein's paradox" is actually mentioned the Einstein-Podolski-Rosen paradox — the paradox that says that if any act of measurement (experimental knowledge) perturbs the measured object (produces changes in its quantum state), then in the case of "entangled particles" we must postulate the possibility of spontaneous action at a distance (with supraluminal velocities), which (from the perspective of the deterministic, classical paradigm) is absurd. In fact, Einstein has another paradox — what we might call Einstein's heuristic paradox — namely, that Einstein is a *modern within his own theory* (in his relativistic, four-dimensional space, Einstein blatantly goes beyond the paradigm of classical determinism), *but in his perception of quantum mechanics he is a stubborn classicist, who fails in no way to assimilate the postulates of this new physics*. A more extensive discussion of this topic can be found in the *Critical Introduction*, in the chapter *Towards a New Paradigm of Science*. What I call here *Einstein's epistemological paradox* is one that concerns the *ontological break between our mathematical models of empirical reality and physical reality itself* — which is nothing less than a reiteration of *Kantian epistemological criticism*.

¹⁴ A. Einstein, *Sidelights on Relativity*, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1922, p. 28.

¹⁵ Or *heuristic fictions* — a Kantian phrase (CRP, A 771, B 799), consecrated by Vaihinger, by which *the pure concepts of reason (synthetic a priori intuitions)* are qualified as mere *working hypotheses — preliminary suppositions*, with an *orientative (regulative, says Kant) role*, which we, as a rule, until contrary evidence appears, use *as if they were true* with regard to the *object of empirical experience*. In short, in Vaihinger's interpretation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, *synthetic a priori intuitions*, regardless of their logical consistency, are nothing more

than *heuristic prejudices* that do not constitute *knowledge* except insofar as *they are not contradicted by experience*. In the broadcast instead of *heuristic biases* I said *empirical biases*. I stand corrected.

¹⁶ History has proven many times that *one man can be right against all*, and that, despite the persecutions inflicted by the majority, his truth will eventually emerge and impose itself on the majority as a universally valid truth. As, for example, in the case of Giordano Bruno. In the show I didn't get to make this point – but I make it here, because this is the conclusion of the *critical idea*, started there, about the *gregarious (en gros, in bulk) manner of pragmatic thinking*.