

BOOK REVIEW: PROF. DR. ERWIN POPPER – THE FOUNDER OF THE FACULTY OF PHARMACY OF CLUJ AND THE AMPHITHEATRE CREATED BY HIM – BY CRISTIAN BÂRSU

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Associate Professor Dr. Cristian Bârsu achieved this very interesting book as a rich series of texts written in the memory of Professor Dr. Erwin Popper, who was the founding dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy of Cluj and the founder of a pharmaceutical school in the same city. Being editor of this book, C. Bârsu also wrote the majority of these texts.

Containing a very large number of photographic images, this volume can be valued also as an album. Most of these photos present the effort to build the amphitheater created by Erwin Popper. C. Bârsu emphasized that Professor Dr. Ariana Maria Protase – born Popper (1937-2016) – lent him the family photo album, from where he got the great majority of pictures published in this book. Other photos belong to Professor Popper's former students, coworkers etc.

The prestige of the Faculty of Pharmacy of Cluj, directed by Erwin Popper, was also due to the following great professors: Ionescu Stoian, Cristian Maiorovici, Teodor Goina, Ion Manta, Silvia Ionescu, Emilian Țopa, Constantin C. Velluda, Valeriu Lucian Bologa, Victor Ciocănelea, Alexandru Silberg. But my most important master was Erwin Popper.

The period 1951-1956, when I was Prof. Popper's student, was the darkest historical phase undergone by Romania in the twentieth century.

The poverty of that time made that the Faculty of Pharmacy from Cluj – founded in 1948 – did not even have its own lecture hall. Some courses were held in the laboratory of Analytical Chemistry (called Hall A - situated under the space where "Popper Amphitheater" is now), others in the laboratory of Organic Chemistry (named Hall B – located on the first floor of the building in 41 Victor Babes street). At random, some lectures were held in one or other amphitheatres of the Faculty of Medicine, itself without sufficient educational facilities, being newly separated from the "King Ferdinand I" University.

It is easy to imagine the great care and the feverish toil put into practice by the young dean Erwin Popper, for creating, repairing, adjusting and rehabilitating the tiny building of 4 Pasteur street, where the Department of Bacteriology had been located until 1948. This great work

done by Popper is very well described by the editor of this book, compelling not only by descriptions but also in images. In 1957, following an idea of the dean Popper, above Hall A was started the building of the monumental achievement to which this book is dedicated. For a long time, the name of the amphitheatre was "Popper Amphitheatre", but a plaque in the memory of the founding dean was installed near the entrance only at the end of 2015.

As it is shown in this book, the finishing of the building demanded a major sacrifice from Popper: a stroke followed by hemiplegia. As the photos from this book prove, during all the steps of the achievement of this building Popper went daily up and down on the scaffolding site. He was among the team of workers, enjoying the progress of this work. His full engagement in this effort was added to his complex activity as dean, as professor, in his department and in all the activities of the Faculty. All of these efforts caused him this severe illness, just at the moment when the amphitheater was beginning to look as he wished. But he was not defeated. He started manfully another battle, this time against hemiplegia, retraining his pronunciation, learning to write with his left hand, using the first projector in Cluj and improving its devices to enable him to continue teaching his courses.

The "Popper Amphitheatre" has 200 seats, it is elegant and with natural light through its numerous windows. It is now the property of the "Iuliu Hațieganu" University of Medicine and Pharmacy. Thus, the Amphitheatre is the favorite place for courses of members of the Faculty of Pharmacy, but also of their colleagues from the Faculty of Medicine. The amphitheatre is also the place where many scientific meetings and events take place.

Assoc. Prof. Cristian Bârsu describes the elegant style of "Popper" Amphitheatre, which has bas-relief carvings on its walls. They were realized by the sculptor and poet Virgil Fulicea (1907-1979). The carvings were the special Prof. Popper's desire, in order to contribute to the educational process for students. In special texts, having educational purposes, C. Bârsu wrote the biographical data of the renowned masters: Carol Davila, Constantin Istrati, Gheorghe Spacu, Ion Vintilescu, Dimitrie Brândza, Ștefan Minovici, Constantin Hepites, Dimitrie Grecescu, Nicolae

Teclu and C. N. Ionescu, which are represented in these bass relief carvings.

The book begins with an Introduction, in which Cristian Bârsu mentions, among other things, that the elegance of this important place of education for students has “almost the stylishness of museums”. The ten texts written by Assoc. Prof. Cristian Bârsu present the leading place of Professor Popper in “the constellation of the great professors of the Cluj School of Medicine and Pharmacy”, Popper’s biographical data, the list of the scientific papers

published by him until the amphitheater was built, Popper’s cultural concerns, as well as a suite of texts which document the usefulness of this building, the effort of raising it, as well as its inauguration.

The book “Prof. Dr. Erwin Popper – the founder of the Faculty of Pharmacy from Cluj and the amphitheatre created by him” shows that this amphitheater was created by Popper with love for students, respect for science, culture, beauty and equilibrium.

Honorius Popescu