EGOISM / SELFISHNESS AS AN EMOTION CONCEPT IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL-AFFECTIVE MODEL

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1. PRELIMINARIES

The paper tackles the lexical-semantic profile of the concept EGOISM/SELFISHNESS, delineated as such in the Romanian cultural-affective model and lexicon during the nineteenth century. Within the theoretical framework of cultural linguistics (Sharifian 2011, 2017a, 2017b) and cognitive lexical semantics (Fontaine, Scherer, Soriano eds. 2013), the study proposes a corpus-based analysis of a rather recently discriminated concept, as brought forward by its lexicalization in the texts of the period under consideration. The inquiry aims to complement and refine the results of prior research dedicated to various correlated emotion concepts and emotion words in the (Early-) Modern Romanian (Stoica 2015, 2017a, 2024), in order to highlight the gradual historical dynamicity of the Romanian construal of affectivity and of its counterpart lexis.

2. THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

From the cultural linguistics' perspective (Sharifian 2011, 2017a: 63-72, Wolf et al. eds. 2021: 79-150), emotions represent core subjects of (diachronic) processes of cultural (re)conceptualisations, thus incorporating the cultural cognition of a speech community[1]. Various emotion categories, emotion schemas,

[1] „Cultural cognition embraces the cultural knowledge that emerges from the interactions between members of a speech community across time and space" (Sharifian 2017c: 38).

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and emotion cultural metaphors are discriminated, defining a broader cultural affective model. Emotion concepts clearly illustrate the intricate relationship between cognition, culture, and language: they imply *cognitive* appraisal of a stimulus event, against the backdrop of a *culturally* validated set of collective norms, values, beliefs, and are *linguistically* encoded, by means of specific *terms* (sometimes, culturally specific), *collocations*, *idioms*, or by specific semantic representations and language practices (see the pragmatic cultural schemas, Sharifian 2017a: 51-62). Emotion concepts encapsulate clusters of prototypical semantic dimensions (such as *hedonic valence – euphoric/dysphoric*, *self-/hetero-orientation*, *control*, *norm-/self-(in)compatibility*, *extroversion*, *intensity*, etc.) that can take various shapes, following the appraisal process of the triggering event. The conceptual formulae of emotions are reflected in the lexical meanings of the corresponding terms, indexing particular emotion categories or emotion schemas (see also Stoica 2018: 187; 2024: 146).

Emotions concepts are also historically variable; they may undergo significant alterations, according to the changes in the worldviews, mentalities, and cultural redesign of a speech community (Frevert 2011; Matt and Stearns eds. 2014; Barclay et al. 2021, among others). The historical semantic profile of emotions can be reconstructed by delving into the semantic history of the counterpart lexicon, based on the existing textual sources from an earlier period (see Rosenwein 2010; Frevert 2014). In this respect, one may consider various types of texts of the time: glossaries, dictionaries, fictional or theoretical, philosophical works (both original and translated), as well as ego-texts: diaries, correspondence, etc., which document the conceptual meaning of the emotion(s) under analysis. In order to better grasp the polymorphic and dynamic characteristics of emotion concepts, a multilevel model of analysis was proposed in prior similar studies (for details, see Stoica 2015: 26-29; Stoica 2018: 185-187; Stoica 2024: 146-147; Stoica 2026a). This model encompasses a corpus-based investigation of the emotion words, collocations, and textual isotopies, taking into consideration the specific conceptual-semantic profile illustrated by the occurrences of the lexemes in various contexts.

The present analysis adopts the above-mentioned theoretical and methodological framework as well, while integrating certain theoretical tenets of psychology (Fromm 1956, APA 2015), which shed complementary light on the profile of the concept under consideration. The contextual-semantic analysis of the key terms denoting EGOISM/SELFISHNESS relies on a consistent corpus of nineteenth-century texts[2], which was surveyed using context explorer tools; a representative number of textual tokens were manually retrieved and qualitatively analysed, according to their degree of relevance to the concept under scrutiny.

[2] The examples were retrieved from the Digital Corpus of Romanian Texts of the Institute of Linguistics "Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti", Bucharest, Romanian Academy, and from the Romanian Digital Lexicographical Corpus of the Institute "Al. Philippide", Iași, Romanian Academy: https://clre.solirom.ro/.

3. *SELF-LOVE* AND *SELF-ORIENTED* EMOTION CONCEPTS IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL MODEL

On the background of the reorientation to the Western European cultural model, the nineteenth-century Romanian affectivity is the subject of a fast and intense process of "individualization" that brings into the fore one self's attributes, standards, interests, sensibilities, etc. In this context, significant changes affect the construal of emotions: self-centred schemas, priorly less prominent, are reinforced and rendered salient – see, for instance: *individual* HAPPINESS, *romantic* LOVE (Stoica 2015), or HUBRIS PRIDE (Stoica 2024); new self-centred emotion schemas are dissociated – see, for instance, SELF-LOVE, *patriotic* LOVE (Stoica 2018), or *existential* BOREDOM/ENNUI (Stoica 2026a); new derived, secondary emotion categories, are discriminated and focused on, such as *romantic* JEALOUSY (2017b), VANITY, ARROGANCE, AMBITION (Stoica 2024). All these conceptual changes permeate the lexicon, which is radically enriched and semantically refined: new affective words and new affective meanings appear, by means of lexical borrowings or developing polysemy. The conceptual-semantic profile of the mid-nineteenth-century Romanian lexicon of affectivity is thus heterogenous and – to some extent, at least for a certain period of time – rather fuzzy: on the one hand, there are new terms, usually conveying more accurate affective meanings; on the other hand, there are prior terms, which acquire new affective meanings, thus becoming rather semantically polyvalent and sometimes contextually ambiguous (Stoica 2015).

The discrimination of SELF-LOVE emotion schema is highly representative of these cultural, conceptual-semantic, and lexical mutations. As illustrated by the corpus data, it is dissociated from the eighteenth century onwards and is initially designated – in isolated occurrences – by a Neo-Greek loanword: *filavtie / filaftie* (< *φιλαυτία*) 1705 (Cantemir, I. I., I, 24). The term is glossed as "trufie; dragostea, iubirea sa" 'pride; love of self', which indexes an original bivalent affective meaning (for the semantic contiguity with (HUBRIS) PRIDE, see Stoica 2017a, 2024). The adjectival counterpart is also recorded at the beginning of the nineteenth century: *filavt* (< *φιλαυτός*), equated solely as "iubitor de sine" 'self-loving', c. 1832 (Golescu, Cond. VII, 32r). Gradually, SELF-LOVE acquires new explicit syntagmatic lexical labels: *iubire de sine / iubitor de sine*, *siniubire*, *amor propriu* (Stoica 2015; Stoica 2018: 195-196; Stoica 2024: 152-153), constantly recorded in the texts by mid-nineteenth century; they are semantically polyvalent, conveying also the meaning of 'vanity' (Stoica 2024: 155).

4. FROM *SELF-LOVE* TO *SELFISHNESS*. LEXICAL ENRICHMENT AND CONCEPTUAL REFINEMENT

In the first part of the nineteenth century, a new pair of words – of French origin – appears in the lexicon of SELF-LOVE: *egoism* 1822 (Mumuleanu, S. 280) (< fr. *égoïsme*, DELR; cf. şi *egoismós*, 1824, Tăutu, S. 124 < ngr. *εγωισμός* < fr., DELR) – *egoist* 1800-1812 (Budai-Deleanu, Ț. (B) 353) (< fr. *égoïste*, DELR; cf. also *egoistic*, 1835-1836, Murgu, C. F. 96^{v} < fr. *égoïstique*, germ. *egoistisch*, DELR). The definitions and the contextual uses of the terms signal a conceptual-semantic refinement, as well: the gradual delineation of a particular derived emotion category, conceptually rooted in SELF-LOVE: SELFISHNESS.

As indicated by the corpus data, throughout the nineteenth century the terms are semantically less accurate: they designate both SELF-LOVE and SELFISHNESS, the precise meaning being decoded in context. This original contiguity of the two nowadays different concepts brings into discussion the affective dimension of EGOISM/SELFISHNESS and its possible interpretation as an emotion concept.

4.1. LEXICOGRAPHICAL DATA

From the present-day viewpoint, SELFISHNESS may be perceived as a social-moral, behavioural concept rather than an emotion concept. See, for instance, its definition from a psychological perspective: "the tendency to act excessively or solely in a manner that benefits oneself, even if others are disadvantaged" (APA, *s.v.*).

This representation of the concept corresponds as well to the linguistic, lexical-semantic perspective, encrypted in the nowadays lexicographical definitions of the denoting terms, which consider SELFISHNESS an "attitude" or a "conduct" and not an emotion; the definitions also capture constitutive semantic features such as: *self-focus exclusiveness*, *cognitive awareness*, or *volition*: Rom. *egoism* – "*atitudine* de exagerată preocupare pentru interesele personale şi de nesocotire a intereselor altora" '*attitude* of exaggerated care for personal interests and disregard for others' interests' (DEX, *s.v.*), cf. also Engl. *selfishness* "the quality of *thinking* only to your own advantage" (Cambridge Dictionary, *s.v.*); Fr. *égoïsme* "*attitude* ou *conduite* de celui qui, le plus souvent *consciemment*, ne se préoccupe que de son intérêt ou de son plaisir propre au détriment ou au mépris de celui d'autrui" (TLF, *s.v.*).

However, the definitions of the Romanian lexemes from the nineteenth-century dictionaries clearly point out an initial *affective* construal of the concept. *Egoism* and *egoist* denominate a form of self-oriented LOVE, focusing not only one's own interests and benefits but also the *individual global self*. In most cases, *egoism* is glossed as *iubire de sine* or *amor propriu*, hence equated to SELF-LOVE; cf., for example, the gloss: *egoism (iubire de sine)* 'self-love', in the journal *Albina românească* (1832, 210), or the synthetic definition: *egoism* "amore de sine" 'self-love', later on, in 1862, in Antonescu's *Dictionary*.

The lexicographical definitions of the time also bring forward certain supplementary conceptual-semantic features, which frame SELFISHNESS/EGOISM a particular facet of SELF-LOVE:

(a) the ***intensive-excessive, extreme*** dimension of the affective appraisal: *egoism* – "iubire *peste măsură* de sineş" '*excessive* self-love' (1839, Vaillant, V.);

(b) the ***exclusive*** dimension of the affective appraisal, which inherently triggers the focality of the prototypical feature of *self-orientation*; see in this respect the recurrent explicative lexical collocations from the definitions: 'against the others', 'to others' detriment', 'only to/of/about oneself':

– *egoism* – "amor propriu (iubire de sine), care raportează *totul la sine*, care trage *toate pe seama sa împotriva celorlalţi*, îngrijire *numai pentru sine*" 'self-love; who refers *everything to oneself*, who takes *everything for oneself, to others' detriment*, who takes care *only of oneself*' (1848, Negulici, V.);

– *egoist* – "cel *ce iubeşte numai pre sine*" 'the one who *loves only oneself*' (1851, Stamati, D.); "care nu îngrijeşte *decât de sine*" 'the one that takes care *only of oneself*' (1862, PPND); *egoist* – "om care *se iubeşte numai pe sine*" 'a person who *loves only oneself*' (1886, Steinberg, D.).

A definition of *egoism* in Şăineanu's *Dictionary* (1896) is particularly relevant, as it explicitly points out not only the *exclusive* dimension of the concept but also its opposition to *altruism* or *love of others*: "*iubire exclusivă* de sine însuşi, contr. *abnegaţiune, altruism, dezinteresare*" 'exclusive self-love, opposite to *abnegation, altruism, desinterest*'; cf. also *egoist* – "cel ce nu se gândeşte decât la sine" 'the one who thinks only of oneself'.

(c) the ***dysphoric*** representation of the concept from an exterior evaluative viewpoint; most commonly, EGOISM/SELFISHNESS is categorized as one's vice or flaw:

– *egoist* – „care are *viţiul* egoismului, care nu se ocupă, nu vorbeşte, nu îngrijeşte decât numai de sine" 'the one who has the vice of *self-love/selfishness*, who takes care of and talks only about oneself" (1848, Negulici, D.); "cel care are *defectul* egoismului" 'the one who has the *flaw* of self-love/selfishness' (1862, Antonescu, D.);

– *egoism* – "*viciul* omului care raportă, trage toate la sine, *în paguba celorlalţi*" 'the *vice* of a person who takes everything to oneself, *to others' detriment*" (1862, PPND).

The lexicographical "normative" frame of EGOISM as a vice, a sin, etc. is persistent also in the definitions from the first part of the twentieth century: see "*viciul* de a ţine numai la sine" 'the *vice* of taking care only of oneself' (1924, Resmeriţă, D.), "*viţiul* omului care se gândeşte numai la interesul lui" 'a person's *vice* of thinking only of one's own interest' (1939, Scriban, D.). The negative evaluation of the concept matches a broader, general feature which seems to be particularly notable for the Romanian cultural affective model: a constitutive

social-moral dimension, rather constant across time (see Stoica 2026b). Emotions are construed not only by reference to the emoter's standards but also to the degree of conformity to the collective norms of a proper conduct.

The above-mentioned definitions from throughout the nineteenth century clearly indicate the affective character of SELFISHNESS, as it originates in SELF-LOVE. They also confirm an important conceptual differentiation between the two concepts, one highlighted in modern psychological studies: the *exclusive* centrality on the self, which is strictly specific to SELFISHNESS. This distinction implies the reference to another emotion schema of LOVE: LOVE OF OTHERS/AGAPE LOVE. SELF-LOVE and LOVE OF OTHERS are not mutually exclusive (Fromm 1956: 57-63), as an individual may (simultaneously) experience both forms of love, in different contexts. SELFISHNESS, by contrast, is an extreme, excessive, altered form of SELF-LOVE, essentially different from it, since it annuls any possible coexistence with LOVE OF OTHERS. It is strictly centred on the individual's wishes, needs, interests, benefits, etc., thus encapsulating a more *concrete-pragmatic* form of conceptualization. This salient conceptual feature may underlie the common present-day categorization of SELFISHNESS as a *moral* or *behavioural* concept rather than an *affective* one.

4.2. CORPUS DATA

The above-mentioned conceptual specificity may serve as a criterion for contextual discrimination between the contiguous nineteenth-century Romanian concepts of SELF-LOVE and SELFISHNESS, both denotable by the same semantically bivalent lexemes, *egoism – egoist.* The complementary or oppositional isotopies with words and collocations indicating LOVE OF OTHERS can be used as a contextual tool for semantic decoding. If there is a non-oppositional contextual association, the concept of SELF-LOVE is instantiated, since the two are not mutually exclusive. If there is an antagonistic contextual correlation, the concept of SELFISHNESS is recorded; see, in this respect, the following differentiating examples:

(a) *egoism* 'SELF-LOVE'

Instances of SELF-LOVE designated by the term *egoism* are very frequent in the texts of the time. In the first part of the nineteenth century, the accurate meaning of the word is sometimes explicitly decoded by a synonymic gloss (*iubire de sine* 'love of self'), inserted in the text – a sign of its novelty in the lexicon of the period (see ex. 1):

(1) "Iată ***egoismul (adică iubire de sine)*** care vă stăpânește cu atâta putere, încât au izbucnit mai înainte de toate alte idei!" (Tăutu, S. 111)
'This is the ***self-love*** that rules you so strongly that it burst out before any other ideas!'

(2) "Zinca Rosetti mi-a trimis portretul ei. Mi-a făcut asemenea multă plăcere, bucurie chiar […]. De ce mă bucur aşa de mult când cineva îmi arată un semn de aducere aminte? ***Egoism*** să fie?" (Rosetti, N.I. 110)
'Zinca Rosetti sent me her portrait. It gave me such a great pleasure, even joy […]. Why am I so happy when somebody shows me that he/she remembers me? Is it ***self-love***?'

Other contexts record a relevant contextual correlation of the terms for SELF-LOVE with lexemes denoting HUBRIS PRIDE, highlighting in this way their conceptual contiguity (since both share the focality of the *self-oriented* dimension) (see Stoica 2024):

(3) "M-am asigurat în sfârşit că încă sunt un mare poet. Poate că nimeni nu va zice aceasta, poate că nu voi fi în stare niciodată să scriu ceva mare; însă aceasta nu mă va opri de a mă şti eu că sunt. Aceasta nu este un ***egoism***, căci nu văd în ce mă poate ***mândri*** căci nu este nicidecum un merit al meu" (Rosetti, N. I. 65)
'Finally, I reassured myself that I still am a great poet. Maybe nobody will say this, maybe I shall never be able to write something great; but it will not stop be knowing that I am. This is not ***self-love***, because I don't see how it could make me ***proudful*** as it is not my merit.'

In the following fragments, the simultaneous (explicitly or implicitly) instantiation of LOVE OF OTHERS allows for the semantic decoding of the term *egoism* as 'SELF-LOVE' (and not 'SELFISHNESS'):

(4) "În toate e înapoi românul. […] Sărmanul! Nu-mi va fi mie dat oare a-l face să facă un pas înainte! Dar astă dorinţă fi va ***egoism***? Vanitate? Fie orice va fi, *este destul că doresc un bine al românului şi că aş da totul pentru ca să i-l pot face*" (Rosetti, N.I. 77)
'The Romanian is behind in everything. […] Poor him! Could I make him take a step forward? But is this wish a form of ***self-love***? Vanity? Whatever it may be, it's enough that *I want good things for Romanians and I would give everything to be able to offer this to them.*'

(5) "Englesa mi-a găsit aceea ce doream de atâta timp, şi ce se numeşte harpa eoliană. Câteva sunete mi-a dat numai şi am rămas încântat. Am simţit şi plăcere că *am făcut plăcere celorlalţi… **Egoism**!*" (Rosetti, N.I. 125)
'The English lady found me something I had wanted for such a long time – what is called an Eolian harp. After just a few sounds I was delighted. *I also felt the pleasure of pleasing others…. **Self-love**!*'

In all the above-mentioned contexts, SELF-LOVE is represented as a prototypically euphoric emotion, according to the emoter's viewpoint and appraisal,

yet dysphoric, according to the collective norms of the time that sanction the propensity to individual sensibility, interests, and goals. However, there is a context – in a philosophical text of the period – where SELF-LOVE, designated by the term *egoism*, is positively described as a trigger for other positive emotions, especially LOVE OF OTHERS, a highly valued concept of the time. Consequently, the two concepts do not oppose, but, on the contrary, are interdependent: the one who loves oneself will also love others:

> (6) "Din ***egoism*** emană amorul, familismul, amicia, ambiţia. […] Fără ***egoism*** n-am provedea pentru objectele scumpe inimei noastre, pentru consorţi, pentru fiii, pentru părinţi şi fraţi, pentru amici, pentru compatrioţi, pentru omenirea întreagă. […] Fără ***egoism*** adevărat ne-am purta către amicii noştri astfel cum să ne devie inamici, căci am avea numai instinctul fiarei. […] *A ama pe aproapele său ca însuşi pe sine nu va să zică a se urî pe sineşi*, a cădea în abnegaţiune pentru alţii, ci, *fiindcă pe sine ne amăm din drept şi din faptă, să amăm şi pe aproapele nostru*." (Heliade-Rădulescu, O. II, 827).
> 'From ***self-love*** result romantic love, love of family, friendship, ambition. […] Without ***self-love*** we could not see the valuable things for our hearts, for our companions, for our sons, for parents and brothers, for friends, for compatriots, for the entire mankind. […] Without true ***self-love*** we would behave towards our friends as enemies, because we would have only the instinct of a beast. *To love the other as yourself does not mean to hate yourself,* to fall in an abnegation for the others; *because we love ourselves in right and actions, we should also love the others.*'.

This nineteenth-century philosophical representation of the concept of SELF-LOVE corresponds to certain modern psychological viewpoint (see Fromm 1956, above).

(b) *egoism* 'SELFISHNESS'

Occurrences of *egoism* 'SELFISHNESS' are equally frequent in the texts, especially from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, indexing the gradual conceptual-semantic discrimination of this derived concept.

EGOISM is usually referred to in negative, critical terms, and, unlike in the previous example (6), is opposed to LOVE OF OTHERS; see, in this respect, the antonymic collocations with *a se jerfti pentru binele celorlalţi* 'to sacrifice for the well-being of others' (ex. 7), or *dragoste de sine* 'self-love' (ex. 9) and *altruism* (ex. 10). This conceptual representation also points out a salient interdependent, collective dimension of the Romanian cultural model of the time:

(7) "Foarte mândru de a nu avea ***egoismul*** de obşte al oamenilor, el ştia la trebuinţă *a se jărtfi pentru binele celorlalţi*." (Heliade, L.B. 115)
'He was very proud for not having the common ***selfishness*** of people, he knew how *to sacrifice for the well-being of others*, if necessary.'

(8) "matroană respectabilă […] Ea ştie că Dumnezeu *a creat-o nu pentru dânsa, ci pentru familia ei*, de aceea ***egoismul*** nu află loc în sufletul său, şi misia îi e împlinită" (Negruzzi, O. I, 284)
'a respectable lady […]. She knows that God made her *not for herself but for her family*, that's why ***selfishness*** has no place in her soul and her mission is achieved.'

(9) "Aceste idei se lupt cu interesele noastre […] ele ne fac să iubim aceea ce vatămă individul nostru, ne povăţueşte jărtfa acolo unde instinctul ne-ar povăţui ***egoismul***; ele ne împing înainte, acolo unde *dragostea de sine* ne zice să ne tragem înapoi" (Bălcescu, O. I, 167)
'These ideas are in conflict with our interests […] they made us love what harms our person, they recommend the sacrifice when our instinct would recommend ***selfishness***; they move us forward where *self-love* says we should step back.'

(10) "Este o lucrare […], în care sunt glorificate nobilele instincte ale unui copil […] cel mai cald şi mai frumos *altruism* de o parte; de alta, cel mai odios şi mai rece ***egoism***." (Caragiale, O. III, 972)
'It is a work […] that glorifies the noble instincts of a child […] the warmest and the most beautiful *altruism*, on the one hand; the most hideous and coldest ***selfishness***, on the other hand'.

Recurrently, EGOISM/SELFISHNESS is represented in opposition to PATRIOTISM/ LOVE OF COUNTRY, as illustrated by frequent contextual antonymic isotopies. In the Romanian nineteenth century, LOVE OF COUNTRY becomes a salient concept, construed as a social-moral emotion, aimed at ensuring social cohesion and unity, while also ratifying Romanian national identity, acknowledged and valued as such (Stoica 2016). Since the country is perceived as the group of individuals sharing a national identity, LOVE OF COUNTRY is conceptually contiguous with LOVE OF OTHERS and is therefore opposed to SELFISHNESS, the excessive, exclusive form of SELF-LOVE. This conceptual association points out a tense relationship between the sensibilities, well-being, and interests of the individual and those of the national community, a relationship that is particularly specific to the Romanian cultural-affective model of the mid-nineteenth century (for other examples connecting EGOISM to PATRIOTISM, see also Stoica 2017a):

(11) "câţiva pătimaşi de domnie […], *care pun persoana lor peste **naţie**, **egoismul** lor peste **patrie*** şi *interesul lor privat material peste interesul ţării*" (Bolliac, S. 147)
'some people, eager for power […] *who place their own persons above the **nation**, their **selfishness** above the **country*** and *their private interests above the interest of the country*.'

(12) "*Falsul **patriotism** este masca **egoismului** în timpurile de tulburare*." (Russo, S. 181)
'False ***patriotism*** is the mask of ***selfishness*** in troubled times.'

(13) "Cu cât se deosibeşte ***egoistul*** ce îşi caută numai interesul său […] de ***patriot***, care în interesurile de obşte ale naţiei, îşi află interesurile sale" (GTN 1835, 3/7)
'How different is the ***selfish*** *person* who looks only after one self's interest […] of the ***patriot*** who finds his own's interests in the nation's common interests'

(14) "*Nu poate fi **patriot**, Acela răpeşte tot. N-are nici **patriotism**, Are mare **egoism***!" (Propăşirea 341)
'He cannot be a ***patriot***, Who despoils all. He has no ***patriotism***. He has a huge ***selfishness***.'

Some other contexts highlight the specific *exclusive* conceptual-semantic dimension of SELFISHNESS (in line with the lexicographical definitions of the time, see above, 4.1.), as well as the *self-oriented* parameter, clearly indicating the concept under discussion:

(15) "am fost iubitori de argint, ***egoişti**, am voit tot pentru noi, nimic pentru alţii*, şi iată că ne pedepseşte […] cu ***egoismul*** nostru" (Bălcescu, O. II, 19)
'We loved the wealthiness, we were ***selfish***, *we wanted everything for ourselves, nothing for the others* and He [God] is punishing us […] for our ***selfishness***'

(16) "Am văzut ***egoismul*** în toată pompa lui, *uitându-să numai pre sine, învârtindu-să numai înprejurul celui în parte interes al său*" (Tăutu, S. 130)
'I saw the ***selfishness*** in all its glory, *looking only to itself, concerned only about its own interest*'

(17) Însă iar ***egoismul*** m-apucă, iar îmi vine *să vorbesc de eu şi de mine.* Dar ce să fac; aşa am hotărât […], *să vă vorbesc numai de persoana mea.* (Kogălniceanu, O. I, 60)
'But I am once again taken by ***selfishness*** and once again I feel like *talking about me and myself.* What can I do; this is how I decided […], *to talk only about myself*'.

The following example, extracted from an end-nineteenth-century text, is particularly relevant, as it encapsulates a synthetic, folk conceptual representation of SELFISHNESS:

> (18) "***Egoismul*** pe sine se cinsteşte mai presus de orice fiinţă. ***Egoismul*** din mândrie şi mândria din Satana; d-aceea depărtează pe frate de frate, pe părinţi de copii, pe prieten de prieten şi de obşte pe om de om […]. Fugi cât vei putea d-o asemene *patimă diavolească*." (Zanne, P. 34)
> '***Selfishness*** honours itself more than anything else. ***Selfishness*** from pride(fulness) and pride(fulness) from Satan; that's why it sunders brother from brother, parents from children, friend from friend, and, usually, a person from another person. […] Run away as far as possible from this kind of *devilish vice*'.

The fragment highlights the above-mentioned salient conceptual-semantic features of SELFISHNESS (also validated by the lexicographical definitions of the period): the *excessive* and *exclusive* dimensions of the affective appraisal, the additional prominence of the prototypical parameter of *self-orientation*, the intensely *dysphoric* external evaluation (as reflected in its categorization, in religious terms, as "devilish vice"), the strong incompatibility/opposition to other schemas of LOVE (*brotherly* LOVE, *filial-parental* LOVE, and LOVE OF OTHERS), and also its conceptual contiguity (or even conceptual affiliation) to HUBRIS PRIDE, which is negatively perceived and explicitly indicated as such.

The *dysphoric* collective moral appraisal of the concept is constantly illustrated in the texts of the time. SELFISHNESS is conceived as a condemned, criticized emotion, as the opposite of LOVE OF OTHERS/AGAPE LOVE, PATRIOTISM (that is LOVE OF ONE'S COUNTRY AND PEOPLE), or, in some contexts, of SHAME, a prominent social-moral emotion of the Romanian cultural-affective model (see Stoica 2021, and examples in Stoica 2017a). Within this contextual affective isotopy, grounded in the contrastive conceptual closeness with socially validated emotions, EGOISM/SELFISHNESS is construed as a negative moral emotion.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The historical lexical-semantic development of the concept of EGOISM/SELFISHNESS is symptomatic of the salient tendency toward self-orientation that characterizes the nineteenth-century Romanian cultural affective model and its corresponding lexicon. The corpus-based analysis highlights the gradual delineation of SELFISHNESS as a new concept, derived from SELF-LOVE, and, therefore, originally conceived in affective terms, as an *extreme*, *excessive* type of SELF-LOVE, fundamentally opposed to LOVE OF OTHERS. Lexicographical

and folk definitions of the designating terms, as well as the contextual instantiations in the texts of the time are significant and convergent in this respect.

The present scrutiny focused strictly on the occurrences of the key lexemes, *egoist* and *egoism* – new loanwords in the nineteenth century, which initially designate, rather inaccurately, both SELF-LOVE and SELFISHNESS –, aiming to decipher the precise meaning and the emotion concept they convey in the (con)texts of the period. On the basis of nineteenth-century definitions of the keywords, as well as on present-day lexical-semantic and psychological descriptions of EGOISM/SELFISHNESS, certain constitutive conceptual-semantic dimensions (such as *exclusiveness*) and isotopic restrictions (such as oppositional co-occurrence with LOVE OF OTHERS/ALTRUISM) are proposed as criteria for contextual dissociation between the concepts of SELF-LOVE and SELFISHNESS. Over time, the original conceptual-semantic ambivalence of the terms *egoism* and *egoist* progressively fades, following the diachronic reconceptualization of EGOISM/ SELFISHNESS, which gradually loses its original core *affective* dimension. The present-day meanings of the lexemes *egoism* and *egoist* – semantically accurate in their designation – clearly illustrate this conceptual-semantic alteration, resulting in the crystallization of a different psychological category[3].

Apart from the original *affective* dimension of the concept, one may also note its *negative moral* evaluation, as reflected in its framing as a "vice", a representation also validated by lexicographical definitions until the first part of the twentieth century. Despite the modern tendency toward self-orientation in the cultural mentality of the time, the affective appraisal remains essentially anchored in traditional collective values and norms, which favour group welfare over the personal one and require the individual's self-definition as an in-group member. In the same vein, noteworthy are, as well, the occurrences of EGOISM/SELFISHNESS as a dysphoric moral emotion, in contrast with PATRIOTISM, that is LOVE of one's *community/people* and *country*. This facet of EGOISM/SELFISHNESS is indexical of the cultural-historical dependency of emotion concepts in general. It is strictly decodable as such in context and is connected to paramount historical-political changes that affected Romanian space throughout the nineteenth century, implying – among other things – awareness of, striving for, and ratification of national identity and independence.

The social-moral configuration of EGOISM/SELFISHNESS is in line with a similar critical-negative collective perception of other recent self-oriented emotions of the nineteenth century, such as HUBRIS PRIDE, VANITY, or AMBITION (Stoica 2024). An essential feature of the broader Romanian cultural affective model, constant across time – *collective* and *social-moral* embeddedness – is thus reconfirmed.

[3] See a similiar diachronic reconceptualization in the case of Rom. AMBIȚIE/AMBITION (Stoica 2024: 157-160).

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EGOISM / SELFISHNESS AS AN EMOTION CONCEPT IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL-AFFECTIVE MODEL

Abstract

The paper proposes – within the theoretical and methodological framework of cultural linguistics – a corpus-based lexical-semantic analysis of the concept of EGOISM/SELFISHNESS, delineated as such in the Romanian cultural-affective model from the nineteenth century onwards. The analysis considers lexicographical and folk definitions, as well as the contextual uses of the keywords *egoism* and *egoist* – recent lexical borrowings – in representative texts of the period. The study highlights an original affective conceptualization. EGOISM/SELFISHNESS gradually emerges as a distinct emotion category, derived from another emotion concept: SELF-LOVE, itself a conceptual innovation of the Early Modern Romanian time. The terms *egoism* and *egoist* are initially semantically ambiguous, as they may designate both concepts. At the same time, the analysis reveals a salient socio-moral representation of the concept of EGOISM/SELFISHNESS, frequently recorded in opposition to emotions positively valued in the nineteenth-century Romanian cultural-affective model: PATRIOTISM or AGAPE LOVE.