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Death: An Homage from Romania: Introduction

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Acknowledging the Fiftieth Anniversary of John Dewey's Death

An Homage from Romania

Compiled by Craig Kridel

Abstract

In 2000, the Romanian journal *Paideia* published a series of essays to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of John Dewey. Three articles—by Peter Hlebowitsh, then the editor of *Education and Culture*; Daniel Tanner, then the president of the John Dewey Society; and William Schubert, past president of the JDS—were prepared and translated into Romanian for publication. *Paideia* editor Nicolae Sacalis has contributed an article describing Dewey's influence in Romania. In "The Writings of John Dewey in Romania: Policy and Pedagogy," Sacalis describes the interest in pragmatism of the Romanian intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s and how Dewey's writings became important to the government's education leaders and school practitioners. Dewey's popularity was so great that a comprehensive overview of his work was published to honor and acknowledge his eightieth birthday. The writings of Dewey were silenced thereafter but not forgotten. His works reappeared in the 1970s for a new generation of Romanian educators, and since the 1989 revolution, his writings have received even greater popularity, leading to the commemoration of his death by *Paideia*.

Introduction

In 2000, I was contacted by Nicolae Sacalis, editor of *Paideia*, who wished to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the death of John Dewey with a series of essays in a forthcoming issue of his Romanian education journal. I recommended to Professor Sacalis that the leaders of the John Dewey Society could be invited to contribute to *Paideia*, and their essays would offer a fitting introduction and expansion of Dewey's writings from an American perspective. Three essays were prepared and translated into Romanian for publication. This issue of *Paideia* was well-received

by Sacalis's readership, and during subsequent conversations William Schubert suggested that JDS members might be interested in reading the original three essays. Also, Schubert maintained, many JDS members would not have necessarily expected a Romanian education journal to commemorate an anniversary date related to John Dewey and would be interested in a description of the "status" of Dewey's work in Romania. After a series of conversations with A. G. Rud, the current editor of *Education and Culture*, Sacalis was invited to prepare an essay describing Dewey's writings in Romania, published here along with the original three essays by Peter Hlebowitsh, Daniel Tanner, and William Schubert.

Dr. Sacalis, university professor at the National University of Theatrical and Cinematographic Arts (Bucharest), director of the Popular University Ioan I. Dalles (an open university institution in the Danish tradition), president of the National Association of Popular Universities (Asociatia Nationala a Universtatilor Populare, a nongovernmental organization), and founding editor of *Paideia* (established in 1993), has maintained a lifelong interest in the work of John Dewey and American education, a topic that caused him some degree of suffering during the Ceausescu dictatorship. He has written of his discovery of books by Dewey in a "special library" while studying philosophy and pedagogy at Bucharest University in 1968. Sacalis states that he made quite a commotion by presenting Dewey's life and ideas in a university seminar, and since that time he has been active working with others in the translation of Dewey's ideas and books into Romanian, including *Democracy and Education*. We thank Professor Sacalis for re-introducing Dewey to a generation of Romanian educators and for inviting members of the JDS to commemorate the life and death of John Dewey.

***The Writings of John Dewey in Romania: Policy and Pedagogy* by Nicolae Sacalis, Popular University Ioan I. Dalles, Bucharest**

William James could be considered the first great American academic to introduce pragmatism to Europe. A French translation of James's lectures, *Le Pragmatisme*, was published in Paris in 1925 and received widespread acclaim. With an introduction written by one of France's most important philosophers, Henri Bergson, *Le Pragmatisme* soon became popular in the intellectual circles of Europe, including Bucharest, and "this American novelty" known as pragmatism began to exert its influence in Romanian culture. Two years earlier, however, John Dewey's *The School and the Child* (*Scoala si Copilul*, 1923) appeared in Bucharest. Translated into Romanian by George Marinescu, director of the Scoala Normala (College of Education) in Bucharest and a very important educator who would soon become a general inspector of the Romanian Ministry of Education, *Scoala si Copilul* represented the Romanian version of the European edition, published by the Swiss psychologist Eduard Claparede, the champion of "new education" in Europe. With an introduction written by Claparede that outlined the innovative pedagogy of John Dewey,