

# The relation of psychology and poetry in Albert Bazala's Psychology in Croatian Artistic Poetry

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## **Luka Boršić and Ivana Skuhala Karasman: “The relation of psychology and poetry in Albert Bazala’s *Psychology in Croatian Artistic Poetry*”**

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### **Abstract**

Albert Bazala’s book *Psihologija u hrvatskom umjetnom pjesništvu* (Psychology in Croatian Artistic Poetry) illustrates how during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a tendency to use various disciplines in an integrated way in the teaching process was present in the Croatian educational system. This work, intended for students, is a pioneering venture in the field of psychological literature, which in its content combines poetry and psychology as a scientific discipline. Furthermore, an attempt will be made to delineate how poetry and psychology are interrelated through Bazala’s interpretation of delusions and projections. Bazala’s interpretation of delusions, projections, illusions and hallucinations is exemplified in the poems of Ante Tresić Pavičić, Jovan Hranilović, Luka Botić, Franjo Marković and Gjuro Arnold. It is nearly impossible not to notice the strong influence of Gjuro Arnold and his textbook *Psihologija za srednja učilišta* (Psychology for Secondary Schools) in Bazala’s work.

Key words: psychology, poetry, delusions, projections,  
Albert Bazala

## **Introduction – Who was Albert Bazala?**

Albert Bazala was born on 13 July 1877 in Brno, today's Czech Republic. His father was Josip Bazala and his mother Amalija was the philosopher Gjuro Arnold's sister. In 1895 Bazala graduated from secondary school in Zagreb, and from 1895 to 1899 studied philosophy and classical philology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. There, he also obtained his PhD with the dissertation entitled *The Psychological Science of Apperception*.<sup>1</sup> In Germany Bazala continued his studies in philosophy in Munich, Halle and at Wundt's Institute of Experimental Psychology in Leipzig. In 1905/1906 he was a resident at the Institute of Experimental Psychology, which was founded by the notable psychologist Wilhelm Wundt. It is important to emphasize that *Psihologija u hrvatskom umjetnom pjesništvu* (*Psychology in Croatian Artistic Poetry*) was written prior to Bazala's stay in Leipzig. As will be shown in this paper, in the afore-mentioned book, Bazala was greatly influenced by his maternal uncle, the famous Croatian philosopher and poet Gjuro Arnold (Ivanec, 1853 – Zagreb, 1941), and his book *Psihologija za srednja učilišta* (*Psychology for Secondary Schools*), which has seven editions.<sup>2</sup> During his residence in Prague Bazala was befriended by philosopher and politician Tomáš Masaryk and the famous theoretician of pedagogy, František Drtina. Bazala's main career was that of a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. He was also socially active and in 1907 he initiated the foundation of the "Pučko otvoreno učilište" (Open School for People), an important institution of additional education open to anyone - still vigorously active up to the present day. Bazala was also founder of the *Journal for Philosophy and Psychology*, Chancellor of the Faculty of Philosophy and president of the Croatian Academy of the Arts and Sciences. He died in Zagreb on 12 August 1947.

Bazala was very prolific author, his most important works include (originally all in Croatian, for the purpose of this article translated into English): *Psychology of Croatian Artistic Poetry* (1901), *A History of Philosophy*, in three volumes (1906, 1909, 1912), *Ethics and National*

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<sup>1</sup> Bazala's doctoral dissertation was published in 1900 in *Nastavni vjesnik*.

<sup>2</sup> 1893, 1895, 1898, 1905, 1916, 1920 and 1923.

*Economy* (1915), *Materialism or Idealism in History* (1915), *A Philosophical Portrait of Franjo Marković* (1921), *University and Politics* (1923), *Philosophical Studies, I. The Methalogical Roots of Philosophy* (1924), *Mysterious Appearances* (1924), *Masaryk – The Thinker* (1934), *The meaning of Art in Commons' Lives* (1935), *The Idea of a National Philosophy* (1938), *Notes on the Problem of Race* (1939), *Philosophical Studies II, Consciousness and the World, Subject and Object* (1941), *Hesiod: Works and Days* (1970).<sup>3</sup> Today he is best known as the author of a voluminous *A History of Philosophy*.<sup>4</sup>

Although Bazala's primary vocation was directed towards philosophy, from his biography and bibliography it is evident that he displayed immense interest in psychological topics:

*“Bazala consistently addressed psychological topics throughout his life, which is not only brought forth in his lectures, but also in published works of his. Examples include: Psychology in Croatian Artistic Poetry (1901), Spenzer and Wundt (1902), Wilhelm Wundt (1910), On the Freedom of Will (1910), The Problem of Personality (1913), Psychological Problems as Drama (1917), Psychological Elements in Science and Education (1920), The Sociopsychological Conditions of Public Education (1922), etc.”*<sup>5</sup>

### **An Amalgam of Poetry and Psychology – from a Philosophical Perspective**

Bazala's book *The Psychology of Croatian Artistic Poetry* from 1901, with its main topic – delusions and projections – was intended for students in secondary school.<sup>6</sup> This work portrays how at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For more information concerning Albert Bazala see: Krstić (1937); Supek (1988): 87-92; Filipović (1992): 251-56 and Zenko (1995): 197-287.

<sup>4</sup> Bazala's *Povjest [sic!] filozofije I–III* was first published in 1906 by Matica hrvatska.

<sup>5</sup> Filipović (1978): 14.

<sup>6</sup> *Psychology in Croatian Artistic Poetry* was published in 1901 in Zagreb by Dionička tiskara.

century, students in secondary schools were offered a source that combined two distinct disciplines, psychology and poetry, in addressing issues related to humans' "... *perception of oneself and the perception of others.*"<sup>7</sup> In order to properly educate a student, alongside providing the student with an education in logic and an introduction to philosophy, it is also necessary to provide an education in "... *psychology as 'the foundation of mental sciences' ... A student who obtains such education would be prepared for both scientific work and life.*"<sup>8</sup> Bazala thus views education as a system in which distinct disciplines are integrated and used as a means of providing students with a more complete understanding of man and his mental processes. For him, the status of psychology as an independent science is undeniable, which is evident in the 'Preface' of *Psychology in Croatian Artistic Poetry*, where is provided the following definition of psychology:

*"Psychology is a science, which we as individuals always assume, when we demand something from ourselves or want something for ourselves, when we act in accordance to our will, or fail to do so doubting success will follow, when in knowledge, action and enjoyment we aspire forward or slip back."*<sup>9</sup>

Bazala adopts this definition of psychology as a science from the German philosopher and psychologist Johann Friedrich Herbart (Oldenburg, 1776 – Göttingen, 1841), whose work influenced the founder of experimental psychology Wilhelm Wundt (Neckerau, 1832 – Grossboten, 1920).

*"Wundt viewed psychology as a science composed of natural (Naturwissenschaften) and social sciences (Geisteswissenschaften). Experimental and research methods comparable to those of natural sciences should be used when approaching psychological issues."*<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Bazala (1901): 'Preface'. The 'Preface' is not paginated.

<sup>8</sup> Kalin (1988): 170.

<sup>9</sup> Bazala (1901): 'Preface'.

<sup>10</sup> Hothersall (2002): 138.

Bazala's work *Psychology in Croatian Artistic Poetry* is interesting insofar as it represents one of the first manuals and textbooks of psychology in Croatia. Prior to the afore mentioned work being published, only Gjuro Arnold's textbook *Psychology for Secondary Schools* preceded Bazala's work.<sup>11</sup> In this context Albert Bazala's work was a pioneering venture in the field of psychological literature intended for students, which in its content combines artistic poetry and psychology as a scientific discipline.<sup>12</sup> In the 'Preface' of *Psychology in Croatian Artistic Poetry* Bazala states the foundation upon which he bases the relation of artistic poetry and psychology, which also serves as a justification for his work. The main means of acquiring knowledge about oneself and others is 'perception' which gives psychology the status of an empirical science. Poetry is viewed as an additional source for psychology, since it has multiple values:

*"Poets have, while observing the human soul, recorded in their works many valuable observations, which gain even more importance when expressed in a beautiful form."*<sup>13</sup>

### **On Delusions and Projections**

Bazala substantiates his understanding of delusions and projections with examples in poems from Croatian poets: Ante Tresić Pavičić, Jovan Hranilović, Luka Botić, Franjo Marković and Gjuro Arnold. Why poetry? Bazala believes that the use of poems enables students to examine: "...

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<sup>11</sup> *Psychology for secondary school* was published in three editions by 1901 (1893, 1895 and 1898).

<sup>12</sup> Albert Bazala was one of the first authors to systematically address the issue of teaching philosophy, that is, the pedagogy of philosophy at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He wrote *A History of Philosophy* that served as an introduction to philosophy in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bazala was the author of the first articles on the methodology of teaching philosophy, for instance his article Bazala (1906). More on Bazala's pedagogical aspect of philosophy see Marinković (1988) and Kalin (1988).

<sup>13</sup> Bazala (1901): 'Preface'.

*concrete examples of abstract interpretation in school textbooks.*"<sup>14</sup> And in selecting the poems he limited himself to:

*"... editions of poems by Matica hrvatska; firstly, so that there is unity, secondly, because books from Matica hrvatska are widespread in our area. In addition, I also used some poetry that had not been published in Matica hrvatska, since its content was abundant with psychological material."*<sup>15</sup>

Since the poetic depictions of the human soul are taken as a valuable source for the psychological analysis of an individual's mental state, the focus of this article will be on two topics that Bazala elaborated on in his book i.e. delusions and projections.

At the beginning of the chapter's account of delusions and projections, Bazala provides a brief definition of the above:

*"Sometimes it happens to be the case that we mistakenly interpret sensations, which are a result of external events and objects. On the other hand, our conceptions might effect our senses in the same way as objects do. The former phenomenon are projections, the latter are delusions. Projections are products of illusions, whereas delusions are products of hallucinations."*<sup>16</sup>

His view on the relationship between the mind and the world, i.e. the reliability of perception is evident in the first part of the definition. Bazala does not hold the view that projections result from defects in our sensory apparatus. He argues that projections occur due to our flawed interpretation of perceptual stimuli from the environment. Illusions and hallucinations, two products from projections and delusions, are errors resulting from a flawed interpretation of external perception (i.e. illusion) or resulting from the mistaken idea that delusions are an external stimulus

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<sup>14</sup> Bazala (1901): 'Preface'.

<sup>15</sup> Bazala (1901): 5.

<sup>16</sup> Bazala (1901): 46.

(i.e. hallucination). Thus, illusions represent an error in the interpretation of external stimuli; there is an external stimulus, but an error occurs as result of an inadequacy in interpretation. However, this is not the case with hallucinations. When it comes to hallucinations, errors occur that are not caused by external stimuli, but in the case of hallucinations a delusion is present that there is a specific external stimulus.

Almost the same definition of delusions and projections is offered by Gjuro Arnold in his textbook *Psychology for Secondary Schools*:

*“It is in fact quite often that we falsely interpret sensations that result from external objects or that we feel our preconceptions affect our senses in the same way objects do. The former phenomenon is also known as projections, the latter delusions. The products of projections are illusions, whereas the products of delusions are hallucinations.”*<sup>17</sup>

Bazala further discusses illusions and hallucinations.<sup>18</sup> Thus, illusions: “... consist of many deceptions, which are a consequence of the structure of our feelings; we cannot avoid them, and we correct them by changing our attitude towards the objects.”<sup>19</sup>

In defining illusions Bazala was largely influenced by Gjuro Arnold, who in his textbook on illusions writes:

*“All these deceptions are natural consequences of the structure of our sensory system and therefore we cannot*

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<sup>17</sup> Arnold (1916): 75-76.

<sup>18</sup> In contemporary psychiatry illusions and hallucinations are considered qualitative observation disorders. There are several types of hallucinations: auditory hallucinations, visual hallucinations, gustatory and olfactory hallucinations, surface and deep hallucinations, pseudo hallucinations. “*Illusions are conditions in which there are external stimuli, but the individual experiences it inadequately.*”, and “*Hallucinations deceive senses in which there are no external stimuli.*” - Muačević (1995): 115.

<sup>19</sup> Bazala (1901): 46.



*avoid it. We correct them by changing our perspective in regards to the objects.*"<sup>20</sup>

Since the deceptions that we refer to as illusions concern the interpretation of perception, it is possible to refer to several types of illusions, depending on which perceptual apparatus is in question, auditory, visual, tactile etc. Bazala refers to two types of illusions. The first are visual illusions, which are explained using Ante Tresić Pavičić's (Vrbanj on Hvar, 1867 – Split, 1949) historical drama *Simeon The Great*:

*“Tko s visa pada, misli, da se zemlja  
Pram njemu diže. Djetetu na konju  
Pričinjaju se ko da bježe puti; ...”,  
(Falling from a height, the Earth appears  
As to rise. To a child on a horse  
The road seems to be moving; ...)*<sup>21</sup>

A visible example of illusion can be seen in this poem. The interpretation of visual stimuli is incorrect since what is perceived as ‘real’, is different than what is interpreted to be ‘real’. The earth rising during the fall is an illusion that occurs due to errors in the interpretation of events that arise as result of focusing solely on events from one's own position. Another type of illusion occurs when too much emphasis is put on imagination<sup>22</sup> while interpreting sensations, which is evident in Luka Botić's (Split, 1830 – Đakovo, 1863) poem:

*“Kako tuli, kako grozno vije,  
Čini ti se, zemljom i kamenjem  
Proviruju kletnici iz pakla.”  
(How it wails, how it howls,  
It seems as from the ground and stones  
The doomed arise.)*<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Arnold (1916): 76.

<sup>21</sup> Tresić (1897): 116.

<sup>22</sup> Bazala (1901): 29-38 addresses imagination and imagining.

<sup>23</sup> Botić (1885): 175.

Common superstitious beliefs in various monsters are an illustration of how imagination can lead to illusions. A possible explanation lies in the shortcomings of perception at night. i.e. what can be perceived at night. Given that perception cannot give a reliable representation of reality, imagination often complements the defective nature of perception.

For Bazala, hallucinations are “*exterior projections of our internal images.*” They have certain similarities to dreams, insofar as the images seem to correspond to external objects.<sup>24</sup> Hallucinations coincide with illnesses, neurological disorders, irritability and a guilty conscience. How a guilty conscience can induce hallucinations is demonstrated in Arnold’s poem *Irud*

“*Ne vidiš li, aoh, robe,  
Gdje se ko od klete zlobe  
Sve to više kupe ... nižu ...  
Pa se od ovih tvrdih tala  
Krvavijeh poput vala  
K meni već do loga dižu?*”  
(Can’t you see, oh, slave,  
In rotten malice  
They gather and line up  
And out of these unsparing blows  
Bloody waves  
Come rising over my bed.)<sup>25</sup>

An explanation of the condition mentioned in the poem is elaborated further on by Bazala: “*A kad se razabra, vidje, da je sve pogled bio kriv, samo glava da mu gori, a s njim da i on još dječju buku sluša i u krvi svaki čas grezne.*” (And when he gained consciousness, it was clear, his sight was to blame, overthinking has taken its toll, he listens to children’s cries and witters in blood.)<sup>26</sup>

Bazala presupposes that hallucinations can be eradicated by eliminating the pathological conditions underlying them. It is evident in

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<sup>24</sup> Bazala (1901): 48.

<sup>25</sup> Arnold (1923): 74.

<sup>26</sup> Bazala (1901): 50.

Arnold's poem that Arnold also believed that hallucinations stem from pathological conditions: "*Rob mu pruži lijek, i on se za čas smiri, a doskora se s groze opet probudi.*" (The slave gives him medicine, he immediately calms down, however, not long after, he again awakens in horror.)<sup>27</sup> Bazala concludes that hallucinations have, "... *not only affected individuals with illnesses and mental health disorders ... but humanity as well and have occasionally contributed to relevant events.*"<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

*Psychology in Croatian Artistic Poetry* is an interesting and pioneering attempt to combine the two disciplines in pedagogical practice. This work represents the beginning of psychological didactics in Croatia and depicts pedagogical and educational issues, mostly for philosophical purposes. Two topics covered in this text, delusions and projections, are taken as an example and they illustrate how Bazala considers artistic poetry as one possible way of describing psychological conditions. *Psychology in Croatian Artistic Poetry* was written during a period when psychology was just beginning to develop as a science and it is apparent that:

*"... something new and interesting is happening in Wundt's lab – mental processes are being objectively tested in carefully controlled experiments and psychology is actually developing into a science."*<sup>29</sup>

Bazala's understanding of psychology as a science was influenced by two German thinkers, Johann Friedrich Herbart and Wilhelm Wundt. Wundt's *Psychological Voluntarism* also had a great impact on the formation of Bazala's philosophical system. A relation between artistic poetry and psychology undeniably exists. Concerning this relation, he writes:

*"Here a disparity between him and scholars, i.e. psychologists is evident. Whereas the latter attempt to*

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<sup>27</sup> Bazala (1901): 49.

<sup>28</sup> Bazala (1901): 50-51.

<sup>29</sup> Hothersall (2002): 131.

*determine the general traits and characteristics of mental phenomena, the former clearly depicts every nuance of individual states and different characters, and attributes value to it, insofar as he depicts a variety of traits. In addition to examining the mental state of an individual, psychology as a branch also interprets mental states in order to determine their cause, the poet does not interpret; he only describes mental states and in that process he uses comparisons from the outside world or describes physical traits, in which the mental conditions are manifested.”<sup>30</sup>*

As shown in this essay, Bazala’s definition of projections and delusions i.e. illusions and hallucinations is clarified through the use of poems. Given the fact that this book was intended for secondary school students, there is no doubt that such an approach had a certain educational background. It should be noted that a similar approach had been taken by two famous psychoanalysts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Sigmund Freud (Pribor, 1856 – London, 1939) and Carl Gustav Jung (Kesswill, 1875 – Zürich, 1961).<sup>31</sup> From this it can be concluded that psychology, in the process of emerging as an independent science, partly turned to the humanistic heritage, seeking in poetry, as well as in mythology, resources for the understanding of the human soul. It is also important to note that Gjuro Arnold had a strong influence on Bazala’s work. Even though he relies on Arnold’s definition of projections and delusions, he also makes significant contributions of his own.

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<sup>30</sup> Bazala (1901): 4-5.

<sup>31</sup> See e. g. Freud (1907/08) and Jung (1922).

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## Sažetak

*Psihologija u hrvatskom umjetnom pjesništvu* (1901.) Alberta Bazale pokazuje kako je u hrvatskom obrazovnom sustavu na početku 20. stoljeća bila prisutna tendencija korištenja raznih disciplina na integriran način u nastavi. Ta knjiga, namijenjena studentima, pionirski je pothvat na polju literature o psihologiji u Hrvatskoj, koji svojim sadržajem kombinira poeziju i psihologiju kao znanstvenu disciplinu. Nadalje, pokušat će se odrediti kako se poezija i psihologija međusobno povezuju Bazalinom interpretacijom deluzija i projekcija. Bazalina tumačenja deluzija, projekcija, iluzija i halucinacija prikazana su na primjerima pjesmama Ante Tresića Pavičića, Jovana Hranilovića, Luke Botića, Franje Markovića i Gjura Arnolda. Gotovo je nemoguće ne primijetiti snažan utjecaj Gjura Arnolda i njegova udžbenika *Psihologija za srednja učilišta* u Bazalinom djelu.