

BETWEEN ORTHODOXY AND THE NATION. TRADITIONALIST  
DEFINITIONS OF ROMANIANNES IN INTERWAR ROMANIA

By

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## Abstract

The aim of the present thesis is to provide an analysis of the cultural debates of interwar Romania regarding the definition of the character of the Romanian ethnicity in connection with Orthodox spirituality and institutional Orthodoxy. This thesis will focus on the traditionalist side of the debate as depicted in the works of Nichifor Crainic (1889–1972) and Nae Ionescu (1890–1940).

This paper goes between two definitions of Romanianness that introduce Orthodoxy in explaining its specificity. One (several) of Nichifor Crainic, an integrative cultural vortex that comprises traditional rural culture and Orthodoxy and a radicalized one of Nae Ionescu that conditioned the Romanianness to its direct link with Orthodoxy thus distinguishing between “true” Romanian and “good” Romanian. I have tried to account for the lack of dialogue between the promoters of these definitions and their legacy in Romanian culture.

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## Introduction

Between 1920 and 1940 the relationship between culture and ethnicity constituted one of the most dominant political themes in Eastern Europe. The cultural, historical, anthropological debates shaped national identity in every country in the region. After 1918 the building of the national state in East Central Europe had as a principal consequence a quest to define the nation. The political regimes engaged in an official sponsored project to define nationhood. The main reasons behind this political attitude were the inhomogeneous population inside their borderlands or the menacing strong neighbors. In the same time revisionism, political conservatism, artistic avant-garde, anti-modernism and fascism joined hands with the same purpose: to provide a right-wing definition of the nation where racial nationalistic grounds were the backbone for an exclusivist and anti-Semite ideology which eventually led to an explosive state of facts.

The rise of Soviet Russia on the one hand and fascist Italy and Germany on the other hand had a tremendous effect on Eastern Europe: in the conflict between the god of the Nation and the idol of the class, the countries from the Eastern Europe attempted to avoid a political partnership with the revolutionary states and involved in different regional and international alliances. But these political alliances could not put an end to the appeal of the fascist states: it seemed that by the end of the 1930s, under the influence of the economical crises, the god of the Nation ruled over Eastern Europe, as well.

This balancing situation is also true in Romania's case. Around this confrontation in creating the national identity I construct my paper. The "geo-cultural bovarism" (Sorin

Antohi) of the countries in the region is the main metaphor which describes the permutations of different categories, including nation and religion.

The literature on the Romanian case is poor. Although in interwar Romania there was a hotly debated over the nation between the traditionalists and modernizers, there are still unclear aspects about it and its connection with the emergence of the fascist movement of the Iron Guard in the mid 1930s. A historiographical overview concerning this issue should begin with Keith Hitchins. In the context of the debates over the role played by the centre on the periphery in economic development, Romania started to play a major role and to interest the specialists. It is in this context that the first volume in which one of Keith Hitchins's first texts regarding the traditionalist group of *Gîndirea* was published.<sup>1</sup> Hitchins continued to express his insights on the interwar debate regarding the Romanian character in a new monograph which framed the whole traditionalist camp into a historical context lacking from the previous text. Another scholar who published in the same period was Sorin Alexandrescu, a Romanian scholar. First in an article<sup>2</sup> and then in a book, entitled "The Romanian paradox"<sup>3</sup> he had one of the first attempts to reconstruct the Romanian debates and to critically analyze the context in which they took place. Zigu Ornea produced the first synthesis which attempted to integrate the traditionalist camp of Nichifor Crainic and the generation led by Nae Ionescu within the intellectual and political trends already present in interwar Romania with the emerging Iron Guard.<sup>4</sup> When it has been published, Ornea's book provided the clearest comparative framework for the traditionalist movement in the field and intended to be the first monograph on the Romanian interwar period which integrated Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu, the main actors of this thesis in a broader

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Hitchins, "Gîndirea: Nationalism in a Spiritual Guise" in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania 1860–1940. A Debate on Development in a European Nation* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> Sorin Alexandrescu, „Junimea: discours politique et discours culturel” in I. P. Coulianu (ed.), *Libra: Études roumaines offerts à Willem Noomen*, Groningen, 1983

<sup>3</sup> Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român* [The Romanian Paradox] (Bucharest: Univers, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right. The Nineteen Thirties*, (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1999).

cultural context in which the influences coming from other intellectuals and the relevance of the political factor counted, as well. Mac Linscott Ricketts<sup>5</sup> proved that Eliade's Romanian roots were more complicated as believed before. He was one of the first exegetes who underlined the capital presence of Nae Ionescu's in the future intellectual development of Mircea Eliade.

The 1990s brought about a socio–historical approach of the Romanian interwar in general and of Romanian nationalism in particular. Irina Livezeanu was the first scholar in the field which in her book concerning the emergence of Romanian nationalism took into account the fact that nationalism came as a reaction to different problems to which the Romanian state came across after the unification of 1918.<sup>6</sup> Compact ethnic minorities, the heterogeneous distribution of the wealth between different Romanian provinces, diverse systems of schooling, dissimilar policies applied by the Romanian state through its administration to homogenize the Romanian population became problems for a Romanian state wanting to achieve ethnic homogenization. The autochtonist replica was a complementary solution to the problems to which Romania struggle. Leon Volovici's book is important for the present research because it showed the connection between the nationalist ideology of Orthodoxism and its exclusive character exercised mainly on the Jews.<sup>7</sup>

Although a reputed specialist on Romanian Communism, Katherine Verdery remained faithful to this sociological, anthropological approach of the Romanian interwar. Writing about the traditionalist camp and, especially, about Nichifor Crainic she noticed that the Romanian discourse about national identity in an Orthodox key had two other reasons:

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<sup>5</sup> Mac Linscott Ricketts, *Mircea Eliade. The Romanian Roots*, I-II, (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995)

<sup>7</sup> Leon Volovici, *National Ideology & Antisemitism. The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991).

on the one hand a reply to a historical theory which considered that Romanian people as a Latin people had to adjust its civilization according to other state from Europe (namely, France) and on the other hand that Church tried to re-enter the political game in the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s.

Other important contributions are authored by Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine<sup>8</sup> and Marta Petreu.<sup>9</sup> Both books show the way in which the nationalist project of the traditionalists ended up in becoming just a puppet-tool for the Romanian fascist movement. People like Mircea Eliade who wrote texts like “Why do I believe in the final victory of the Legionary movement?” or Emil Cioran, the author of “Transfiguration of Romania”, a book heavy loaded with the fascist ideology of the Iron Guard, joined the movement in the late 30s. They were the most prestigious intellectuals coming from the nationalist circle of Nae Ionescu and with access to Crainic’s writings. The reason why the second generation of Romanian traditionalists chose to enroll in the Iron Guard, but failed to continue the “ethnic ontology” of Nae Ionescu in its confessional aspect, or the Orthodoxist project of Nichifor Crainic, remains a topic untackled by these two books.

In 2000 a wave of revisionism was felt in the historiography on the related topic. The monograph of Florin Țurcanu on Mircea Eliade’s early years eased up the accusations of anti-Semitism and fascism laid against him and demonstrated that Eliade was very much influenced by an intellectual and political context to which only Zigu Ornea made a fragmentary reference.<sup>10</sup> Țurcanu’s contribution for my topic is that he proved without doubt that Eliade was supporting a nationalist spiritual revolution embodied in the Iron Guard, but this revolution was not a Christian, Orthodox revolution. The latest relevant

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<sup>8</sup> Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionescu. L’oubli du fascisme*, (Paris: PUF, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Marta Petreu, *An Infamous Past. Emil Cioran and the Rise of Fascism in Romania*, (Chicago: Ivan. Dee, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade. Le Prisonnier de l’Histoire* (Paris: Editions la Decouverte, 2003).

monograph, written by Philip Vanhaelemeersch<sup>11</sup>, attempts a comparison between the two debates to see the connections and the differences between them. Starting from the intellectuals from “Gîndirea” journal, Philip Vanhaelemeersch draws a comparison of different traditionalist currents and establishes the origins of this movement: after the war, there was a certain interest towards establishing a national definition, but this definition was build according to Western rules. Crainic and Blaga tried to offer an alternative by building an autochtonist perspective in which the nation should have been depicted by starting from the social realities of the Romanian state. The peasantry and the village, Orthodoxy and the Christian tradition became the main categories of Crainic’s followers, starving for a national ideal uncorrupted by the decadent West.

Sorin Antohi is another important scholar that devoted time to this particular issue. “Civitas imaginalis”<sup>12</sup> is one of the most daring attempts to establish the roots of Romanian ethnical ontology. Starting from the Romanian revolution of 1848, Sorin Antohi suggests that any nationalist project had a utopian feature, namely, no connection with the surrounding reality. Furthermore, these nationalist projects were meaningless because they had no applicability in the Romanian social environment. In the interwar this utopian characteristic determined the traditionalists to embrace a fascist project of “a beautiful Romania as the sun in the sky” in which no minority had a place and a political alliance with fascist Italy and Germany was compulsory.

The importance of the present topic has been partially emphasized by all the aforementioned scholars. The aim of my thesis is to shed light on why Orthodoxy served as a source of inspiration for the Romanian nationalists especially for Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu in the debate about the character of the Romanian ethnicity. Another fundament

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<sup>11</sup> Philip Vanhaelemeersch, *A generation “without Beliefs” and the Idea of Experience in Romania (1927 - 1934)*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Sorin Antohi, *Civitas imaginalis. Istorie și utopie în cultura română* [Civitas imaginalis. History and utopia in the Romanian culture] (Iassy: Polirom, 1999).



issue on the agenda of this paper is to answer what was Orthodoxy for Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu. Although the relationship between Orthodoxy and national identity has been the subject of the abovementioned historiography on the subject, the connection between Orthodoxy and the rebirth of the Romanian nation has been insufficiently discussed. Even though all these scholars focused on building the Romanian concept of ethnicity, the present paper brings new input to the historiographical debate. In fact, it can explain the relevance of Orthodox spirituality and tradition for the building of Romanian ethnicity. The presents thesis propose an innovative angle of analysis, namely not just a secular project of defining Romanian ethnicity, but rather a definition which also took into account categories borrowed from the vocabulary of the Orthodox church and spirituality.

The main focus of my research is to explain the relationship between Orthodoxy and nationalism as studied and expressed in the works of Nae Ionescu and Nichifor Crainic. More precisely, my paper intends to show the way in which Orthodoxy served as the conceptual basis for the construction of the Romanian concept of ethnicity in the inter-war period. After stating that Orthodoxy for Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu is synonym not with the Romanian Orthodox Church as an institution, but with a spiritual, confessional and doctrinal concepts used by the Orthodox Church, I will attempt to see how the concept of Orthodoxy was used by the traditionalist camp in their attempt to build an ethnic definition grounded in this concept. The analysis will focus on Nae Ionescu and Nichifor Crainic because one represented the traditionalist side of the debate and the other a radicalization of the traditionalist definition. Also, the choice fell on them because of their view which connected Orthodoxy with Romanianness had a career which went after the 1940s. Nae Ionescu and especially Nichifor Crainic were used by both fascist and communist ideologies in their attempts to shape a nationalist ideology. I consider this *longue durée* of intermingle between Orthodoxy and nationalism throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century to be the most important

reason for taking into consideration both Crainic and Ionescu. I chose Nichifor Crainic as the main actor of the thesis because he had excellent theological expertise and made a conscious link between Orthodox spirituality and the concept of Romanian ethnicity. Also, his contribution was more consistent on this topic than Ionescu.

On the other hand, Nae Ionescu metamorphosed the traditionalist nationalist project from the status of a cultural language to an ethnic ontology and this transforms him into an important actor in my story. Philosopher and professor at the University of Bucharest, he was interested in developing an ontological racial concept of Romanian ethnicity by using a philosophical method which was absent in Crainic's case. For the present thesis, the two case studies are important because they show the way in which the debate about Romanian ethnicity was shaped from two different perspectives, that of the theologian and that of the philosopher. Furthermore, their insights are bound up with the idea of Orthodoxy which creates a persuasive context.

The research will use a one-fold methodology. I will analyze the discourse of the two thinkers as expressed in their books, speeches, letters and articles. Their writings are imbued with references about the importance of Orthodox spirituality in defining Romanian ethnicity. Their mutual interest in Byzantine ecclesiastical art, in church architecture, their bitter critique of the "liberalization of the Church" (Nae Ionescu), the common perceptions regarding European history, will be duly subjected to close scrutiny. The thesis will attempt to establish a comparative approach of the two case studies. I shall explore the similarities and differences between Nae Ionescu's and Nichifor Crainic's approaches and influence. Subsequently, an intellectual comparison between the two case studies will also be very useful. Different approaches from intellectual history (Fritz Stern, Roger Woods, Jeffrey Herf, Zygmunt Bauman) and fascist studies dealing with the relation between intellectuals and fascism (George L. Mosse, Alastair Hamilton, Richard Steigmann-Gall, James Gregor,

Zeev Sternhell, etc.) will be used to integrate the two Romanian intellectuals into a much larger framework than the Romanian case. The case study will also be placed in a larger framework through comparison with the Balkan countries in the same period.

The thesis has four chapters. The first describes the 19<sup>th</sup> and inter-war historical and cultural background of the intellectual debates concerning the idea of ethnicity. Beginning with Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917) and reaching Nichifor Crainic (1889 – 1972), this particular chapter intends to provide the reader with a summary of the cultural trends involved in the debate. More precisely, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the *Junimea* society tried to define the Romanian nation in relation with the village and the traditional values described by Orthodox spirituality. Against the Liberal opponents who attempted to build a Romanian civilization based on Western values, the Conservatives from the *Junimea* society undermined the importance of the Western urban civilization. Maiorescu and his followers believed that the Romanian ethnicity should be constructed starting from a national culture inspired by the Romanian village. After 1900, the debate fades away. Although Nicolae Iorga and Constantin Rădulescu-Motru developed Maiorescu's idea in a new direction, the Liberals became more important in Romanian culture.

After 1918 when Greater Romania was formed, the problems concerning the definition of the nature of around Romanian ethnicity began to emerge. In the newly formed state almost 30% of the population were ethnic minorities. The official Liberal ideology advocated an integrationist policy inspired by the Western paradigm. The reaction of the traditionalists was voiced mainly by Nae Ionescu and Nichifor Crainic. Also, from 1927 the Iron Guard movement started to gain public support using a similar ideology as the aforementioned intellectuals. Accordingly, the chapter is built around two main statements. On the one hand, any debate concerning the Romanian view about ethnicity was asserted in

a cultural framework. On the other hand, I will try to point out the political agenda behind these cultural debates.

The second chapter will be a scrutiny of the intellectuals gathered around the journal *Gîndirea* [The Thought]. Nichifor Crainic was the main spokesmen of this intellectual circle which attempted to reconstruct Romanian nationality on the basis of the Romanian traditional civilization represented by the Romanian village. Nichifor Crainic's discourse about the relationship between Orthodoxy and ethnicity was incarnated into a "discipline of the Christian tradition" which was considered to be the main element in shaping this ethnicity. I will suggest that there are three stages of in Nichifor Crainic intellectual approach regarding Orthodoxy and the Romanian nation. In the first stage, as an apolitical intellectual, he proposed a return to the spirituality of the Romanian village and to its rural Orthodoxy as a base for developing an original national culture against other cosmopolitan and pro-Western projects. The second stage in Crainic's work continued to associate Orthodoxy and Romanianness but now his political involvement with both the National Peasants Party of Iuliu Maniu and the Iron Guard until 1933 influenced the way in which Crainic imagined his project. Because of his rapprochement with these political movements, he intended to become the official ideologue of this regime and the present paper will attempt to show the se shifts as reflected in Crainic's speech. The last stage looks at the position of Nichifor Crainic after 1934 and his original ethnocratic utopia in which Orthodoxy was associated with nationalism, totalitarianism, anti-Semitism and Italian corporatism in a nationalist project through which Crainic wanted to maintain benevolent neutrality with both political factors which had authoritarian expectations: the Iron Guard and King Carol. The aim of the chapter is to underline the political agenda behind Crainic's attempts to adjust his speech and his wish to become an ideologue of the Romanian regime. Another aim is to show that Romanian traditionalists did not have a linear trajectory in their

nationalist ideology and even Crainic's view which seems to be the most systematic floated from a stage to another.

The third chapter deals with the other protagonist of the story, Nae Ionescu (1888–1940). The chapter will be structured in two parts. In the first part, before 1930, I will present the intellectual interests and the articles of Nae Ionescu in order to show that Orthodoxy did not played a major role for Nae Ionescu although he wrote religious meditations and even articles in *Gîndirea*, in the magazine where Crainic used to publish. Furthermore, a direct comparison between Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu's intellectual profiles will be provided in order to reply to a capital question, why Ionescu never entered in a dialogue with Crainic. The last part of the chapter deals with Ionescu's ethnic ontology grounded on Orthodoxy and utters the Ionescu's reasons behind his radicalization of the traditionalist definition of a connection between Romanianness and Orthodoxy into an ethnic ontology. Statements like “We are Romanians because we are Orthodox and we are Orthodox because we are Romanians” and his distinction between “true” Orthodox Romanians and “good” Greek–Catholic Romanians are the core of this ontology which denied Romanianness to every non–Orthodox citizen. Further, the career of Nae Ionescu after his conversion to the fascism of the Iron Guard and his attempt to politicize the sacred and to introduce the Romanian Orthodox Church into politics so that the Iron Guard will earn an ally will represent the targets of my chapter. The aim of this chapter is to answer why Ionescu's radical definition was never constructed into an intellectual dialogue with Nichifor Crainic. Another aim of this chapter is to show that Ionescu's ethnic ontology was not politically innocent, but served as a weapon against the Greek – Catholic Peasants Party of Iuliu Maniu, an attack made on King Carol's behalf.

The last chapter will survey the legacies of these two different projects. Accordingly, I will divide the chapter into two parts. The first part will focus on the case of Nae Ionescu

and I will argue that his legacy under the form of a un-Orthodox ethnic ontology will pass from him to the generation which in the late 1930s will join the Iron Guard. Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), Emil Cioran (1911–1995) and Constantin Noica (1909–1987) wrote about the necessity of a Romanian spiritual revolution to fulfill the messianic mission of the Romanian people, this revolution was a non – Orthodox revolution and this was directed mainly against the Jews, rather than against other Christian denominations. The aim of this subchapter is to reply to a simple question, why Nae Ionescu’s ethnic ontology failed to preserve its confessional feature.

In the second subchapter I will deal with Crainic’s career after 1962 when he was released from prison. During the 1960s the interwar nationalist ideology was revived. Different sources were read again and framed a new understanding of the Romanian ethnicity. Once again, despite being sentenced by the Communists to years of imprisonment for being a sympathizer of the Iron Guard, a now aging Crainic from  *Glasul Patriei*  became the spokesperson for a resurgence of the nation, framing a traditionalist project on building an official Communist ideology. It is still a controversial issue why the Communist Party preference fell on Nichifor Crainic’s nationalist speech. Probably, the interwar ideology of Nichifor Crainic was used because unlike Nae Ionescu’s unfortunate heritage, it was fascist-free. Until 1990s, Crainic was one of the primary unquoted sources of the Ceausescu’s regime in its quest for a nationalist Communism in Romania. In a comparative approach, I will also bring into discussion some of Lucian Blaga’s texts in order to show how the traditionalist discourse of the interwar period changed to produce a Communist nationalist narrative. The aim of this subchapter is to point out that Crainic’s narrative from this period, although maintained some features of the interwar period, changed again under the influence of the Communist ideology and the hostile historical context.

It seems the interwar nationalism managed to cross the hard winter of the first years of Communist Romania only to find its mutations all over the years of Ceausescu's regime. Also, Orthodoxy and nationalism joined hands once more to sustain a totalitarian regime in its bid for total control over the Romanian society. After 1990, this mechanism was put again into practice. Nevertheless, different Romanian thinkers and theologians like Răzvan Codrescu and others cultivated the nationalist ideology of the interwar period in a strong connection with Romanian Orthodoxy. Accordingly, inside the Romanian 20<sup>th</sup> century history an organic continuity was established, despite a stumbling capacity of adaptation to different political contexts. Diagnosing accurately the mutations of this flagellum named nationalism mixed with religion is the last instance of my academic undertaking.

# 1. The Building of the Romanian Character. The cultural debate in modern Romania

## 1.1. Abstract

The cultural debate on the Romanian ethnicity was one of the most interesting and puzzling cultural events from the Romanian history. After four centuries of Ottoman dominations, the Romanian principalities became aware of their own ethnical identity. After the 1859 unification, a quest for a Romanian understanding of ethnicity and quality of being Romanian started to animate the spirits of the Romanian intellectuals. As the Russian Slavophil movement<sup>13</sup>, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanian intellectuals began their ethnical adventure by improvising a cultural identity of their own people.

The cultural debate on the Romanian ethnicity was one of the most interesting and puzzling cultural events in Romanian history. After four centuries of Ottoman dominations, the Romanian principalities became aware of their own ethnical identity. After the 1859 unification, a quest for a Romanian understanding of ethnicity and the quality of being Romanian started to animate the spirits of the Romanian intellectuals. As the Russian Slavophil movement, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanian intellectuals began their ethnical adventure by improvising/ inventing a cultural identity of their own people.

The present chapter has two aims. First I will show that between the 19<sup>th</sup> century and interwar stage of crystallization of the Romanian ethnic definition canon there is certain

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<sup>13</sup> Please see Andrej Walicki, "Russian Social Thought: An Introduction to the Intellectual History of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Russia", *Russian Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 1977, p. 1-20.



continuity. The debate regarding the Romanian ethnicity and its character from the interwar was directly connected with the efforts of the Junimists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The emphasis on the importance of ‘organicity’ was stressed by both the Junimists and traditionalists in the interwar period. Another aim of the chapter is to show that there was a constant debate in modern Romania regarding the Romanian character. Connected with a cultural and economic development, the definition of Romanian identity troubled both the Liberal and the autochtonist orientations in Romanian culture and politics. I will always point out that cultural debates regarding Romanian ethnicity were always backed by a strong political agenda.

The chapter will be divided in two parts. In the first part I will deal with the early definition over Romanian ethnicity from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The efforts of the Junimists to build up a Romanian culture starting from the social realities of the Romanian village and their contempt towards the Liberal generation of 1848 who believed that importing different institutions and cultural trends was the solution to alleviate Romanian cultural and economical backwardness. Maiorescu and his *Junimea* circle attempted first to create a Romanian national culture and to define what meant to be Romanian. The positivist legacy of Maiorescu and his followers was continued by Nicolae Iorga and reached a peak at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The second part of my chapter investigates the traditionalist camp after the reunification of 1918. After shaping the framework of the debate between the Westernizers and the traditionalists, this part of the chapter will focus on the traditionalists, mainly on Nichifor Crainic and his counterpart Nae Ionescu. At this point I will suggest some possible answers on why Orthodoxy began to play such a major role for Nichifor Crainic’s definition of Romanianness. The fact that Crainic was a theologian, the expressed need of the Church to come back into the political life, the fascination exercised in that particular age by a

certain stream of archaism, all these factors contributed to the emergence of Orthodoxy as the link between Romanianess and the Romanian culture as expressed in the villages. The importance of the village will also be questioned, almost all the major traditionalists coming from villages. Secondly, the village became important because it represented the missing link between the Junimists and the interwar nationalists. I will also point out the possible implication of the Church and of different political agendas in the debate regarding Romanian ethnicity.

The preliminary conclusions will be provided to put the whole debate into a larger framework in order to better understand the implications and connections of the Romanian nationalist environment with other historical contexts and definitions of the nation.

## *1.2. Defining Romanianness in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romania.*

### *Europeanists fighting each other*

After 1856, young Romania faced the terrible fate of any youthful state in the Balkans: after several centuries of foreign oppression, it had to define an ethnic identity of its own in order to sustain its claims for political legitimacy. Nevertheless, the post 1848 Romantic atmosphere with its highlight on nationality and enlightenment for the ordinary people the main statements was speculated also by the Romanian intellectuals who wanted to define a perspective on the Romanian ethnicity<sup>14</sup>. No less important was the birth of a Romanian cultural canon; although Nicolae Bălcescu in “Românii supt Mihai Voievod

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<sup>14</sup> Please see, Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866 – 1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Romanian translation (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), p. 68.

Viteazu” tried to idealize the Romanian past because the present was too dark, in the absence of a glorious Romanian history, after 1866 the Romanian intellectuals started to build their national canon on cultural grounds.

The most important movement which created the canon was *Junimea* from Iași<sup>15</sup>. Created by some Romanian students returning from different corners of Europe, for the Romanian culture *Junimea* society represented the first conscious intellectual movement attempting to create an intellectual concept of Romanianess. In order to understand properly the impact of the *Junimea* movement there are two aspects on which the analysis must focus. First of all, *Junimea* had a specific intellectual background which needs to be explained. Created especially by students who studied in Germany, the intellectual profile of the movement was rather conservative and anti-liberal.<sup>16</sup>

Against the 1848 liberal spirit, the *Junimea* movement was preoccupied not with the import of different customs and civilization from the West. Rather, they tried to discover a genuine Romanian culture and to build the Romanian view about ethnicity on it. The intellectual sources of this bitter critique against 1848’s cultural imports from the West are multiple. From a sociological and philosophical perspective, the representatives of this circle were influenced by Herbert Spencer who advocated for a gradual, “organic” development of any society<sup>17</sup>. Accordingly, any development of the Romanian society based on these imports was considered to be a foreign interference in the Romanian path in history. Historically, the most important source quoted by the *Junimea* intellectual was

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<sup>15</sup> For *Junimea*, please see Zigu Ornea, *Junimea și junimismul* [Junimea and the Junimism] (Bucharest: Eminescu, 1978) but also Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, p. 68–99.

<sup>16</sup> For the impact of the German influenced elites on the Romanian intellectual life in general and about *Junimea* in particular, please see Ștefan Zeletin, “Romantismul german și cultura critică română” [The German Romanticism and the Critic Romanian Culture] in *Minerva*, 1/3, 1929, p. 63 – 83; Tudor Vianu, *Influența lui Hegel în cultura română* [Hegel’s influence in Romanian culture] (Bucharest: Editura Casei Școalelor, 1933).

<sup>17</sup> For Herbert Spencer and *Junimea*, please see Alexandru Zub, *De la istorie critică la criticism. Istoriografia română sub semnul modernității* [From Critic History to Criticism. The Romanian Historiography under the Sign of Modernity] (Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 2002), p. 76.

Henry Buckle, the English historian,<sup>18</sup> who criticized firmly the French Revolution and its influence on the European states. Another important source was Schopenhauer and his pessimistic view over reality; Schopenhauer's disagreement with the present reality was used by the Junimist thinkers to address a critique towards Romania's liberal institutions depicted as imports without a specific social and cultural background<sup>19</sup>.

These sources were used especially by Titu Maiorescu to criticize the 1848 moment in Romanian culture and history. The leading intellectual figure of the *Junimea* movement, Maiorescu developed an interesting theory of the Romanian path in history (a critical *Sonderweg*?) by suggesting that all the political and cultural imports after 1848 were alien to the Romanian spirit. He used to call them "forms without content" because, in his opinion, the Romanian people were not prepared for them. In one of his renowned texts "În contra direcțiunii de astăzi a culturii române" [Against today's direction in the Romanian culture] he says:

Before we had a political party which has need for an organ of its own and a public longing for science, who needs different readings, we created political journals and literary reviews and we have falsified and we despised journalism as such. Before we had a culture to burst over the school's bench, we have built Romanian athenes and cultural societies and we have despised the spirit of the literary societies. Before we had even a single shadow of scientific activity we have created the Romanian Academic Society... and we falsified the Academy's ideas. Before we had even required artists, we have create the Conservatoire of Music; before we had even a talented painter, we have created the School of Arts; before we had a single valuable dramatic play, we have founded the Romanian National Theatre and we have despised and falsified all these forms of culture.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> For Buckle, please see Alexandru Zub, *Junimea: Implicații istoriografice* [Junimea: Historiographical implications] (Iași: Junimea, 1976), p. 34.

<sup>19</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, p. 70.

<sup>20</sup> Titu Maiorescu, "În contra direcțiunii de astăzi a culturii române", p. 133-134 in Titu Maiorescu, *Critice I* [Critical Essays] (Bucharest: Minerva, 1978).

Maiorescu's critique is aimed against a direction of the Romanian culture which after the Peace treaty from Adrianople (1829) attempted to build a Romanian culture. Ioan Heliade-Rădulescu and his intellectual circle intended to develop this canon from shaping a Romanian literature by simply translating different literary works from foreign literature. "It does not matter how bad you write, just write!" was the slogan of this intellectual circle. They were facing a delicate dilemma: although they were all convinced liberals and wanted to implement liberal political values in the Romanian political environments, the cultural and political tradition behind such a bold attempt was missing. Therefore, Heliade-Rădulescu and his followers tried to borrow the institutions and the main cultural and political trends from the West in order to surpass the political backwardness of the Romanian society. These intellectuals were involved in the revolutionary events from 1848 and, in Maiorescu's view they were responsible for the irrational cultural imports from the West.<sup>21</sup>

In order to challenge Heliade-Rădulescu's initiative for building a Romanian canon based on imports, but also Simion Bărnuțiu's school of Latinists, Maiorescu chose to start from an autochtonist perspective which had to take into account the social realities of Romania. To see the way in which Maiorescu intended to build the Romanian culture there are two statements to be made. On the one hand, despite his 1840's Liberal forerunners, Maiorescu proposed an esthetic alternative for writing original literature. Inspiring himself from German aesthetics and western literature, but adapting these theoretical concepts to Romanian realities, Maiorescu borrowed only the esthetic principles of writing literature in order to produce an original literature. Translation from another language was no longer good enough for giving birth to a national literature and this had been already seen by the

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<sup>21</sup> For 1848 generation in the Romanian culture and the critique of Maiorescu, please see Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture. Literacy and the Development of a National Identity* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006) p. 135 – 142; 176 – 195.

1848 generation in the articles “Dacia literară” [Literary Dacia] magazine.<sup>22</sup> In this context, Maiorescu was the first to understand the need for a Romanian understanding of literature and he started to act as a literary critic who offered his generation a theoretical guide for writing original pieces of literature. For example, when he spoke about writing poetry, he stressed that for certain poetry to be important, this must have two conditions: the material and the ideal.<sup>23</sup> For the material condition of the poetry to be perfect, the poet had to comply with two requirements: to choose the less abstract words in order to convey the poetic message, to use epithets in order to enrich the poetical and linguistic style, to use personifications and the correct use of literary comparison.

The ideal condition of the poetry can be reduced to three main principles to which the poet has to achieve an original poetry:

1. A great speed in imagination of the poetical ideas.
2. An exaggeration or at least a highlight and a new view of the things under the impression of feeling and passion.
3. O fast growing development towards a final happy end or towards a catastrophe.”<sup>24</sup>

But writing an original poetry did not mean that Junimist poets were writing a Romanian poetry. As Zigu Ornea pointed out<sup>25</sup>, Maiorescu was playing a dangerous game: although he was a positivist thinker who wanted to establish a new aesthetics based on reason and against Romantic values of feeling and the historical past, Maiorescu had to cut a deal with the Romantic tradition represented by Bolintineanu and Alecsandri. This compromise was embodied in his direct encouragement towards the Romanian writers to discover Romanian folklore and to excavate the vestiges of the Romanian historical past.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly,

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<sup>22</sup> For the impact of these articles please see Teodor Vîrgolici, *Începuturile romanului românesc* [The Beginnings of the Romanian Novel] (Bucharest: Minerva, 1962), p. 12–41.

<sup>23</sup> Titu Maiorescu, “Poezia română. Cercetare critică” [Romanian poetry. Critical survey] in *Critice I*, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Titu Maiorescu, “Poezia română. Cercetare critică” in *Critice I*, p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> Zigu Ornea, *Junimea*, p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> Please see Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, p. 257 & Alexandru Zub, *De la istorie critică la criticism. Istoriografia română sub semnul modernității*, p. 117.

*Junimea* was found as a literary circle which had as an intricate task to promote an authentic Romanian literature on Maiorescu's theoretical bases. As Alex Drace – Francis pointed out, “art and learning were for Maiorescu to be judged against Europeans norms: national character does not represent for him, at least at this stage, the principle criterion determining aesthetic judgment. In fact the reverse could be said to be true: only the impartial application of the aesthetic principles will allow the national character to flourish.”<sup>27</sup>

Maiorescu tried to create the Romanian cultural canon by directly promoting different writers and poets. Mihai Eminescu (1850–1889), Ion Creangă (d. in 1889), Alexandru Odobescu (1834-1895) were only few of the writers who started to publish in “Convorbiri literare” [Literary talks], the journal of *Junimea*. For example, when it comes to Eminescu, one can understand that Maiorescu's project was heterogeneous: although Eminescu was labeled as the last Romantic poet, his interest in folklore and ancient Romanian literature was praised even by Maiorescu.<sup>28</sup> The most interesting of his poetries is *Scrisoarea I* [Letter I] in which he became the spokesman of the Romanian ethnicity against foreigners who were depicted as a parasite category and against the decadence of the Romanian nation. In “Ai noștri tineri la Paris învață”, Eminescu addressed a sharp critique to the Romanian youth who preferred to spend their lives in decadence and so – called erudition forgetting the place from where they have left. The bravest attempt of Eminescu was the novel “Geniu pustiu” [Empty genius]. As G. Călinescu used to say, the hero of this novel, although a character taken from a utopia<sup>29</sup>, Toma Nour is a complex character in which Eminescu depicted a man who lost his roots because of the French Revolution, has discovered the primary force of reason and the struggle for the national ideal.<sup>30</sup> What has to be added to Maiorescu's attempt to build the Romanian literary canon is the political background behind

<sup>27</sup> Alex Francis–Drace, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture*, p. 178.

<sup>28</sup> Zigu Ornea, *Junimea și junimismul*, p. 479.

<sup>29</sup> For this utopic character of Eminescu's hero, please see Sorin Antohi, *Imaginaire culturel et réalité politique dans la Roumanie moderne. Le Stigmate et l'utopie*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), p. 111.

<sup>30</sup> *Opera lui Mihai Eminescu I*, (Bucharest: Minerva, 1976), p. 252–256.

it. As Ioan Stanomir has accurately showed in his monograph dedicated to Eminescu<sup>31</sup> Romanian literary canon has behind a strong political canon, the Conservative canon. Buckles, Spencer, Tönnies or Edmund Burke were nothing more than the main spokesmen of Conservative party all across Europe and they were the sources of inspiration for Eminescu and Maiorescu.

As Maiorescu, who together with Petre Carp became after 1866 one of the young leaders of the Romanian Conservative Party, Eminescu was against a Liberal “contractual state” following Jean–Jacques Rousseau’s famous idea.<sup>32</sup> The Romanian conservatives stood for a “natural” or an “organic” state which had to develop itself from the present social realities from the young Romanian state. This is one more reason in favor of an acid critique of the Romanian conservatives represented by Maiorescu and Eminescu against the 1848 spirit which was considered the incarnation of their most dangerous enemy: the Romanian Liberal Party which was depicted as the incarnation of the disruptive spirit of the French Revolution.

This is one of the most interesting particularities of the Romanian case: the cultural canon is conditioned directly by a political canon. Although Alex Drace–Francis seems to disagree with this political influence over the nationalist project of Maiorescu and his companions<sup>33</sup>, the 19<sup>th</sup> century *Junimists* “acted both politically and culturally to impose their own view”<sup>34</sup> The Conservatives built their own ethnical canon by starting to understand and use a Romanian culture (a rural one) in order to maintain in culture the same continuity as in politics. Although they were discontented with the Western cultural and political imports, the Liberals considered that an adequate Romanian culture behind the

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<sup>31</sup> Ioan Stanomir, *Reacțiune și conservatorism. Eseu asupra imaginărilor politice eminesciane* [Reactionarism and Conservatorism. Essay on Eminescu’s political Imaginary] (Bucharest: Nemira, 2000), p. 17 – 53.

<sup>32</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, p. 263.

<sup>33</sup> Alex Drace–Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture*, p. 180.

<sup>34</sup> Sorin Alexandrescu, „Junimea: discours politique et discours culturel” in I. P. Coulianu (ed.), *Libra: Études roumaines offerts à Willem Noomen*, Groningen, 1983, p.48.



concept of Romanian ethnicity must be helped by borrowing institutions and concepts from the West in order to overlap the social and political backwardness of the Romanian society. Although the goal of the two parties was the same, the origins and the means through which they understood to create it were different.

### *1.3. The interwar period: “the great debate” over Romanian ethnicity. Liberalism and nationalism in interwar Romania*

After 1918, the things started to change in what was than Greater Romania. The unification with the Romanian provinces in the Russian and Austrian empires brought a sense of fulfillment to the Romanian nationalist elites. But it also questioned the sense of Romanianess: the price Romania had to pay was high and the new state had to confront with social realities that were not at all encouraging.<sup>35</sup> Around 30 % of the Romanian population was represented by different ethnic minorities (Hungarians, Germans, Jews, Ukrainians, Gypsies, etc.) and the State had to come to terms with this complicated situation. One can argue whether it was possible to speak about Romanian ethnicity when this was contested in its own country given the fact that in the new provinces the economical and cultural elite was not Romanian.<sup>36</sup>

The Romanian State engaged in a process of unification of the new provinces into a centralized mechanism and to Romanianize the ethnic minorities from the new provinces. Certain laws concerning public education and homogeneous administration were introduced

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<sup>35</sup> For the historical context after 1918, please see Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, p. 320–332 and Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918 – 1930*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 29–48.

<sup>36</sup> Please see Stephen Fischer–Galați „The interwar period: Greater Romania”, p. 293–295 in Dinu C. Giurescu and Stephen Fischer–Galați (eds.), *Romania. A Historical Perspective*, (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1998).

to achieve these goals, although sometimes these harsh measures were received squarely by the inhabitants of the new united provinces.<sup>37</sup> Together with the electoral and land reforms from 1921, all these political initiatives targeted the unification on a social and ethnical scale of the Romanian population. Nevertheless, these initiatives coming from the centre were not always welcomed. For example, people like Onisifor Ghibu in Bessarabia protested against the primary school's unification put into practice by the Romanian State.<sup>38</sup>

The Romanian State embarked also into a large campaign of cultural and historical justification of the Romanian claims over the new acquired territories. Accordingly, large archaeological campaigns were initiated in all the Romanian provinces in order to prove the archaeological homogeneity of the Romanian people all across the country. Vasile Pîrvan became the most known Romanian archaeologist and his book named "Getika" (1925) was the direct result of these archaeological excavations. As Philip Vanhaelemeersch has pointed out, archaeology was the most accessible way through which the Romanian state wanted to begin a new ethnical cultural canon.<sup>39</sup> Starting from archaeological evidences, the Romanian state was able to encourage the building of a definition of the Romanian ethnicity.

At this point a certain remark must be made. Unlike the period before 1918, when the Romanianness was defined only in cultural terms, in interwar Romania there is a constant renegotiation of the ethnic understanding and building at least at three fundamental dimensions: political, cultural and historical. From a political perspective, the ethnical building process was considered a finished business after the triumph of 1918. However, the State and the main political parties enflamed a different nationalist discourse which had direct consequences in the cultural and historical sphere. Because the state financed

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<sup>37</sup> Please see Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, p. 92.

<sup>38</sup> Onisifor Ghibu, *Considerații*, p. 4 in Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, p. 55.

<sup>39</sup> Philip Vanhaelemeersch, *A generation "without Beliefs" and the Idea of Experience in Romania (1927 - 1934)*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 23.

different nationalist projects, some intellectuals decided to join hands with the State and to subordinate their academic expertise to the nationalist project patronized by the National Liberal Party or the Royal House.

In the interwar period there were two main understandings of Romanianness. On the one hand, the thinkers inspired by the Western like Mircea Lovinescu<sup>40</sup> and Ștefan Zeletin<sup>41</sup> considered that Romanian cultural and social destiny had to be fulfilled by borrowing and adapting the institutions and customs from the West. They were the continuators of both the 1848 generation and of the *Junimists* from Iași. As Keith Hitchins argued, the sympathizers of this trend “treated Romania as a part of Europe and insisted that she had no choice but to follow the path of economic and social development already taken by the urbanized and industrialized West.”<sup>42</sup> It is interesting to question why this path towards the West was adopted by a large number of Romanian intellectuals. Although there are several explanations behind this cultural polarization I think that the first explanation was related to the fact that when Lovinescu and Zeletin started to publish their main works the Romanian Liberal Party, the main advocate of tidying up the relationship with the West, was in power (1923 - 1928).

Furthermore, their goal was to establish a nationalist cultural which will be the expression of the bourgeois city and industrial and financial development of the Romania embodied in the political ideology of the National Liberal Party. As Thomas J. Kiel noticed “the National Liberal Party looked towards building a state stimulated, state organized, and state protected capitalism under the leadership of a Romanian bourgeoisie to carry out its

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<sup>40</sup> Please see *Istoria civilizației române moderne* [*The History of the Romanian Modern Civilization*], (Iași: Institutul Cultural Român, 1998).

<sup>41</sup> *Burghezia română: Originea și rolul ei istoric* [The Romanian Bourgeoisie: Its origins and historical role], (Bucharest: Nemira, 2005). For Ștefan Zeletin please see Balázs Trencsényi, “The ‘Münchansenian Moment’: Modernity, Liberalism, and Nationalism in the Thought of Ștefan Zeletin” in Balázs Trencsényi, Dragoș Petrescu, Cristina Petrescu, Constantin Iordachi, Zoltán Kántor (eds.), *Nation-Building and Contested Identities. Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies* (Iassy: Polirom, 2001), p. 61–80.

<sup>42</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Romania 1866 – 1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 292.

economic modernization agenda. The National Liberal Party realized that its own political success depended on it being actively engaged in building a larger bourgeoisie in Romania. Despite the economic growth of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Romanian bourgeoisie remained small, especially that portion of the of the bourgeoisie who were “Romanian” by ethnicity.”<sup>43</sup>

Eugen Lovinescu (1881-1943) was the most influential literary critic of his time. After 1918, he became one of the first intellectuals supporting the official nationalist ideology of the Romanian Liberal government. Lovinescu’s theory about the synchronism between Romanian and Western culture<sup>44</sup> suggested that Romanianness had to be constructed from Western models and the Romanian society was called to adjust itself according to Western customs<sup>45</sup>, but, despite the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europeanists, this process had to be carried on according to the needs of the Romanian society. He believed that after the assimilation period from the 1848 until 1918 had to be followed by a certain period of integration of different borrowings coming from the West.<sup>46</sup>

Lovinescu was convinced that the after the unification from 1918 the time came to be developed a genuine Romanian culture which was supposed to define the Romanian character. Behind this intellectual project of building the nationalist canon there is also a political project namely the Romanian Liberal Party. Lovinescu and Zeletin’s ideas were developed during the hegemony of the Romanian Liberal Party (1922–1928) and these ideas echoed a political ideology that wanted to adjust Romania to Western standards. Privileging the modern Romanian town, the capital of the heavy industry, good schools and the political

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas J. Kiel, *Romania’s Tortured Road towards Modernity* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2006) p. 113

<sup>44</sup> For the best description of this concept in the Romanian culture and its relation with building the national canon, please see Virgil Nemoianu, “Variable Socio-political Functions of Aesthetic Doctrine: Lovinescu vs. Western Aestheticism” in Kenneth Jowitt, (ed.), *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation*, (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978), p. 174-207.

<sup>45</sup> For a short usage’s description of the Lovinescu’s *synchronism* in Romanian society, please see Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, p. 334 – 335.

<sup>46</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, p. 293.

parties was the main social concern of the Europeanists. Accordingly, the Romanian character had to be built starting from these Western values in order to overlap the social and political backwardness of the young Romanian State.

#### *1.4. Nationalism in religious garments. The autochtonist understanding of Romanianness*

The autochtonists tried to respond to this attempt of building the Romanian national canon by shifting their views in the opposite direction from the pro-Liberal intellectuals. If the Europeanists wanted to define the Romanian character starting from Western borrowings, they preferred to search for the premises of the national canon at home. Mixing together avant-gardism with its emphasis on archaic culture<sup>47</sup> with a Romantic *Volkgeist* already present in the Romanian culture, the traditionalists began to focus on the Romanian village and the spirituality encapsulated in it. The Romanian village with its culture and folklore became the place from which they wanted to start building the real Romanian cultural canon. Despite Liberal thinkers like Lovinescu, the Romanian traditionalists did not have a clear agenda on their minds. Their efforts transcended the cultural, political or economical compounds of the Romanian national character.

One has to question why in the interwar Romania nationalism emerged in an Orthodox key and was embraced by such a large number of intellectuals. Although it is obvious that in the interwar Romania an “integral nationalism” (Irina Livezeanu) was developed in order to achieve a certain ethnical homogenization of the minorities living in the new acquired provinces, Irina Livezeanu’s explanation of the direct allegiance between

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<sup>47</sup> For avant-garde, please see Norbert Bandier, “Avant-gardes in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: New Perspectives”, *Contemporary European History* 14/3 (2005), p. 393.

Orthodoxy and nationalism in the Romanian traditionalism against a strong Jewish minority is misleading.<sup>48</sup> Orthodox Christianity depicted as a genuine cure against the Jew minority has been also described extensively by Leon Volovici.<sup>49</sup> When he speaks about Crainic, he states that “his first objective was the ‘de–Judaization’ of Jesus and the Bible itself.”<sup>50</sup> However, the text quoted by Leon Volovici is rather a later text of Nichifor Crainic, one from his fascist period. At the beginning of his career, Crainic dismissed anti-Semitism as an incoherent ideology of nationalism. Stating that Crainic intended to eradicate the Jewish background of the Christian Bible in order to frame a nationalist Orthodoxy is contradicted by one of Crainic’s most poignant texts. Arguing against the Aryan theology of the Third Reich<sup>51</sup> which tended to exclude any Jewish influence from Christian theology and Bible, Crainic wrote a text called “Race and Religion” in which he claimed that Christianity cannot be labeled as a Jewish religion because its founder was both human and divine.<sup>52</sup> Crainic’s bitter attack on Alfred Rosenberg’s Germanic ideology which was both anti-Semite and anti-Christian demonstrates quite accurately that Romanian nationalism used Orthodoxy for other purposes rather than just tackling a Jewish minority.

Rather, against both Livezeanu and Volovici, one has to argue as Thomas J. Kiel truthfully noticed that “Anti-Semitism was not a creation of nationalism. Rather, it was assimilated into Romanian nationalism as one of its key elements. The modern Romanian

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<sup>48</sup> Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, p. 12–13.

<sup>49</sup> Leon Volovici, *National Ideology and Antisemitism. The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991), p. 97 – 98: “Nichifor Crainic found in Christian theology his main argument for advocating the fight against Judaism and elimination of Jews from Romania’s social and intellectual life. His arguments were not new by any means; what was new was his polemical aggressiveness, unprecedented in Romanian theological exegesis.”

<sup>50</sup> Leon Volovici, *National Ideology and Antisemitism*, p. 98.

<sup>51</sup> For the de–Judazation of the Bible/ Christ in the Third Reich done by the Nazi *Landskirche* and the contribution of Dietrich Eckart, please see Richard Steigmann–Gall, *The Holy Reich. Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919 – 1945*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 13 and passim.

<sup>52</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Rasă și Religione” [Race and Religion] in Răzvan Condrescu (ed.), “*Fiecare în rândul cetei sale.*” *Pentru o teologie a neamului* [“Everyone in his own troop.” For a theology of the people] (Bucharest: Christiana, 2003), p. 48–66.

nationalist project struggled with the ‘origins’ of and the identity appropriate to the Romanian people.”<sup>53</sup>

Another question arises: why Orthodoxy and spirituality became such crucial concepts in the interwar period for the nationalist discourse? The explanatory reasons are manifold. From a political perspective, given the fact that Liberals were mostly atheist and the National Peasant Party was mainly formed by Transylvanian Greek–Catholics the Orthodox stream which seems to characterize the writings of the Romanian autochtonists can be labeled as an Orthodox political and cultural reaction to the exclusion from the public sphere of the most important Christian denomination in Romania. Culturally, in order to sustain their claims for an organic development of the Romanian state and nation, they had to identify an uninterrupted development in the Romanian history. They have identified this organic continuity in the Romanian history with the tradition of the Orthodox Church.

On the other hand, the connection between confession and nationality was nothing new in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Balkan region, especially for the peoples subjected to the Austro–Hungarian monarchy and Ottoman monarchies.<sup>54</sup> In the case of Romanian Orthodoxy, not just the intellectuals tried to define the Romanian nation according to the principles of Eastern Christianity, but also the Orthodox Church itself became an important actor on the scene of national building process and attempted to institutionalize its own project of building the Romanian nation<sup>55</sup>. It is known that after 1918 the Church wanted to play a major role in the main scene of the political debate by defining itself as the “national church” of the Romanian people, especially after 1925 when the Romanian Patriarchate was proclaimed and, therefore, the Romanian Orthodox Church became completely independent

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<sup>53</sup> Thomas J. Kiel, *Romania’s Tortured Road towards Modernity*, p. 127.

<sup>54</sup> Please see Emanuel Turczysky, *Konfession und Nation. Zur Frühgeschichte der serbischen rumänischen Nationsbildung* (Dusseldorf: Schwamm, 1976), p. 7 and passim but also Peter F. Sugar, „Nationalism and Religion in the Balkans since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”, p. 11 in Peter F. Sugar, *East European Nationalism, Politics and Religion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).

<sup>55</sup> Katherine Verdery, “National Ideology and National Character in interwar in Romania”, p. 105 in Ivo Banac & Katherine Verdery (eds.), *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995).

from the Patriarchate in Constantinople. Through its clerical and schools apparatus the Church became one of the most supportive actors of the State nationalist propaganda.

However, the Church chose to play a double role: on the one hand, the Church embraced the nationalist discourse of the State but on the other hand the Church started to develop its own nationalist speech. The case of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae's inflammatory articles developing a direct interdependence between Orthodoxy and nationalism published in *Gîndirea* conducted by Nichifor Crainic is another proof of the fact that there was a mutual dialogue between the traditionalist intellectuals and the Romanian Orthodox Church.<sup>56</sup> The association between nationality and confession in the Romanian case became also manifest in 1927 on the occasion of the promulgation of the concordat between the Romanian State and the Vatican. Because of the large amounts of land properties and financial subventions granted to the Roman Catholic Church by the Liberal government, the Orthodox Church responded in the Romanian Parliament through the voice of the Metropolite Nicolae Bălan who in a speech named "The national Church and its Rights" defined Orthodoxy as the only church able to contribute to the development of the Romanian nation.<sup>57</sup> Although the Orthodox Church protested vehemently against the concordat, this was adopted by the Parliament and left the Church with the feeling of a wounded pride. The disappointment relating to the approval of the Concordat and the dissolution of the Romanian character of the Greek-Catholics who considered the promulgation of it as a personal triumph can be seen with a clear eye in Nichifor Crainic's and Nae Ionescu's articles and there is a direct consequence of their support for the Church.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Most interesting are "Ortodoxie și națiune" [Orthodoxy and the Nation] in *Gîndirea* XIV/2 (1935), p. 76 – 84 and "Românism și Ortodoxie" [Romanianness and Orthodoxy] in *Gîndirea* XV/8 (1936), p. 400-409.

<sup>57</sup> For more details about this struggle please see Fr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church] Vol. 3 (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 1981), p. 401 – 405.

<sup>58</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right. The Nineteen Thirties* (Colorado: Boulder, 1999), p. 79.



Why intellectuals like Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu started their claims for building a national creed inspired by a traditionalist key remains the issue at stake. One of the explanations for this kind of attitude was provided by the intellectual cultural context in which they have developed their insights about tradition and spirituality. Living in an age in which the pessimism of Oswald Spengler's statements towards the Western culture<sup>59</sup> and the death of any spirituality in front of the mechanized industrial environment from the bourgeois city, the focus on the Freudian unconsciousness and on Heidegger's existentialism, these major changes in the European culture were deeply influential for the Romanian intellectuals:

In their search for new values they [the traditionalists] eagerly embraced all things Eastern. A veritable wave of irrationalism and mystical ideas seemed to break across Rumanian intellectual life. They came from Asia, especially India, but from Europe, too. Alongside Buddhism and Yoga, Christian and mystical philosophy, as expounded by the Fathers of the Church, Kierkegaard and Berdyaev exercised a profound influence on Romanian thought.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, another important factor which led the traditionalists to assimilate in their cultural discourse the village depicted as the matrix of the Romanian spirituality was a sociological reality: 72% of Romanian population lived in rural areas<sup>61</sup> and the peasant problem was one of the most problematic issues of the modern Romanian state.<sup>62</sup> After 1918 the peasant problem caught the attention of different Romanian parties and governments and especially to this electorate the nationalist building project was directed.<sup>63</sup> The Western

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<sup>59</sup> For Oswald Spengler's critique of modernity, please see Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary modernism. Technology, culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 49.

<sup>60</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, p. 299.

<sup>61</sup> For a complete statistic please see Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, p. 36.

<sup>62</sup> Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania. Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (Yale: Anchor Books, 1969), p. 89.

<sup>63</sup> Please see John R. Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe. A Century of War and Transition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 91: "Article 1 [of the Romanian Liberal Constitution from 1923] proclaimed Romania to be a 'unified and indivisible national state'. At least it spoke of the population as individual citizens rather than ethnic Romanians."

minded intellectuals considered that Romanian village had to be mechanized and the illiterate peasants had to be educated in order to relieve the peasantry from its backwardness which assured to Romania the status of an undeveloped country.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, between 1923 and 1928 the Liberal government had not succeeded to encourage an economical revival of the Romanian peasantry which turned eventually its hopes in Maniu's National Peasants Party.<sup>65</sup> Alongside the nationalist discourse of the State, the most important representatives of the traditionalist yoke were coming from the villages<sup>66</sup> and they wanted to offer a cultural discourse which reflected the majority of the Romanian population in the absence of a political party which defended their national identity.

I will have to argue that coming from a rural environment and criticizing vehemently the positivist and mechanized West, the traditionalists embraced paradoxically the 19<sup>th</sup> century Junimist idea of an "organic" development of the Romanian state and national building project which considered that imports from the West had to be rejected and future Romania and Romanian ethnicity had to be shaped according to the social and cultural realities of the majority of the Romanian population meaning the peasantry. A deep impact on both the Junimists and the autochtonists had the book written by Ferdinand Tönnies named *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887) which emphasized the importance of the community described as a spiritual relationship and tradition between all the inhabitants of a certain village over the mechanized society of the big city. The conflict between the two terms was based on an economical reality which was a paradoxically consequence of the Romanian society. As Andrew C. Janos has pointed out,

In the West, social mobilization implied the rising public awareness of masses who had been already detached from the norms of the traditional *Gemeinschaft* by the experience of the market economy. There the 'masses' were wage earners and small

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<sup>64</sup> For Romania backwardness, please see Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, p. 342.

<sup>65</sup> Henry L. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 108

<sup>66</sup> For example, Crainic came from a small village called Bulbucata (Vlașca county); for this please see Nichifor Crainic, *Zile albe. Zile negre* [Good days. Bad days], (Bucharest: Gîndirea, 1991), p. 1. Also, Lucian Blaga was the son of an Orthodox priest from the village Lancrăm (Alba county).

producers who had learned to live in a world of give-and-take and to fend for themselves without the emotional support of the kinship groups, communities, and extended families. In other words, the masses had been rationalized before being mobilized; they have been acculturated to the impersonal norms of the modern *Gesellschaft* before entering onto the political stage... In Romania, the acculturating experience of the market had largely been lacking. The images of the modern world had been transmitted through the medium of education, and hence had been reduced to a form of vicarious experience. Thus while the lower classes of the West were modern both socially and politically, those of Romania became modern politically (in that they could formulate and articulate demands) but not socially (for they continued to look for the moral and emotional support of kinship, household, and community)<sup>67</sup>.

The difference between the 19<sup>th</sup> century intellectuals and the 20<sup>th</sup> century autochtonists lays in the fact that Maiorescu and his followers wanted to engineer a Romanian culture which would have fitted perfectly in the universal culture of his time. The village was downplayed not as a mark of Romanian spirituality or ethnicity, but as a basic social reality from which the Romanian ethnicity had to be built organically. For the traditionalists the village was the nexus between an unaltered Romanian spirituality which was in the same time the intersection between Romanian character and Orthodoxy as a guarantee of the Romanian spirituality.

### 1.5. *Final remarks*

The Romanian debates over the understandings of Romanian ethnical canon can be considered to be the one of the most important historical phenomenon in the Balkan's history. First of all, I will have to conclude that between traditionalists from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> On the economical consequences of this attitude please see Andrew C. Janos, "Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective: The Case of Romania" in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation*, (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978), p. 100–101.

century cannot be traced a direct connection. Representing a social class namely the Romanian landowners, the Conservatives of Titu Maiorescu were defending their own social and political capital by generating a national canon under their signature. The great differences between 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century traditionalist intellectuals are the fact that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Nae Ionescu and Nichifor Crainic were not representatives of a Conservative political canon because the Conservative Party disappeared after the land reforms from 1920's. Secondly, although it is obvious that both canons are based on the concept of tradition and the importance of the Romanian village is a common feature, the 19<sup>th</sup> century intellectuals were secularized thinkers. In the interwar period, the interest towards building the national canon from Orthodoxy and Christian spirituality as it was represented in the Romanian village is a certain feature of the second Romanian debate over ethnicity.

In the Balkan's context the closest case study to the Romanian debates about ethnicity is the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian case. As the Romanian Junimists, the Russian Slavophiles were Germany trained intellectuals who attempted to define Russianness by building a national canon based on the Russian spirituality and Russian village.<sup>68</sup> The difference between the Romanian case and the Russian case was the fact that there was a great emphasis on Orthodox spirituality which was never present in the minds of the Romanian Conservatives. The struggle for the Romanian national canon from a cultural perspective was a phenomenon disseminated across the Balkans. As in the Serbian case, the 20<sup>th</sup> century Romanian traditionalists became deeply involved in different fascist movements. After 1933, Nae Ionescu became the Iron Guard's main ideologue and many Romanian intellectuals joined this fascist movement because of his influence.

From a personal point of view, the topic in itself is paradoxical. The Liberals who always tended to be more constant than the nationalists; the traditionalists issued two

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<sup>68</sup> Janko Lavrin, "Kiriensky and the Problem of Culture", *Russian Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1961, p. 112.

different expressions of the Romanian ethnicity and the interwar discourse about the Romanian ethnic canon cannot be considered definitive. Some further investigations regarding the building of the Romanian ethnic definition in the traditionalist manner are necessary. Again, the distinction between the secular and religious approach of the Romanian definition of ethnicity needs some further scrutiny. Christianity was depicted in a mythical manner and was deprived of any concrete connection with the city. For them, only rural Christianity matters not in itself, but because it was connected with a village's tradition which was used as the perfect enemy against the Liberal town-based cultural discourse.

I have to agree with Umut Korkuk<sup>69</sup> that Christianity and Orthodoxy represented for the traditionalists their ideological foundation which was later transformed into an efficient political weapon against the their Liberal and against any other right-wing claim for defining the Romanian ethnicity. Although Nae Ionescu and Nichifor Crainic were the spearheads of the traditionalist movement which started to radicalize and became the fifth column of the Iron Guard, there must be stressed out the fact that traditionalists were not always committed Christian believers. Lucian Blaga is only one example that crosses the minds of those who are focused on this issue. Again, what would be very useful to point out is the fact that this traditionalist attempt to offer a Christian grounded definition of the Romanian ethnicity ended up as a source of inspiration for the right-wing radical movements from Romania, namely the Iron Guard and the Romanian Fascia. Also, this traditional approach of the reality began to be critically approached especially by Mircea Eliade who developed their ethnical ontology into a much Christian "indigenization of the universalies" (Sorin Antohi) through which any category of being had to be Romanian and had to be Christian.

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<sup>69</sup> "Nationalism versus Internationalism: The Roles of Political and Cultural Elites in interwar and Communist Romania" in *Nationalities Papers* 34, No. 2, 2006, p. 135.

As a final remark, I would like to say that the cultural process of constructing a definition to the Romanian ethnicity was never fully finished. After 1927, the traditionalist speech was borrowed by the Iron Guard and some of the leaders of the traditionalist movement started to collaborate directly with the Romanian fascist movement because they thought that this was the direct political incarnation of their nationalist creed. This marriage between has led eventually to a total failure of the initial goal of the nationalist creed. Instead of defining the Romanian ethnicity, the traditionalist produced an exclusivist autochthonous view regarding the Romanian ethnicity which brought only derision towards the other minorities and violent radicalization of the terms used for defining Romanianness, but not a mutual accepted definition.

## 2. Nichifor Crainic and *Gîndirea*. Nationalism and Orthodoxy in interwar Romania

### 2.1. Abstract

After 1918, the struggle to define the Romanian ethnicity became more bitter than ever. A strong two-folded debate developed between the Westernizers and the traditionalists. People like Nichifor Crainic from *Gîndirea* started to publish extensively on the relation between Romanian culture, the Romanian specificity, the village and Orthodoxy in order to shape a traditionalist original view regarding the character of any future Romanian culture. Continuing the Junimist project emphasizing an organic culture starting from the village, Nichifor Crainic framed a new nationalist project and that project was the birth of the Romanian culture in the category of Orthodox spirituality.

The aim of this present chapter is to present the way in which Orthodoxy backed the nationalist discourse of Nichifor Crainic. I will point out that Orthodoxy played a major role in Nichifor Crainic's conception of nationalism providing a spiritual background for any definition of the Romanian nation. Another aim of this chapter is to prove that Romanian traditionalist camp as represented by Nichifor Crainic did not have a unitary discourse about the relation between Romanianess and Orthodoxy. The fact that Nichifor Crainic's speech about the relation between Orthodoxy, the village and the nation changed dramatically during the interwar period is a proof that behind the nationalist Orthodoxy of Nichifor Crainic there were strong political sympathies.

The chapter will be divided into four parts. In the first part I will look on the foundation of *Gîndirea* in 1921 and its originality and I will prove that in that particular stage the cultural agenda behind *Gîndirea* was not nationalist at all, but rather a cultural eclectic agenda with Nichifor Crainic as one of the many contributors. The second section of chapter will focus on the early years of Crainic's career in *Gîndirea* between 1921 and 1926 and his Orthodoxist claims which already took shape in this particular period. Although he advocated for a national culture built on the basis of the Romanian Orthodox spirituality as reflected in the Romanian village, Crainic stood away from any political involvement and he kept his mind on the cultural matter at stake.

The third section of the chapter deals with what happened with Nichifor Crainic's discourse after 1926 and the radicalization of his Orthodoxist claims with the emphasis on the Romanian peasantry, especially between 1926 and 1929. In the context of the emergence of the National Peasants Party of Iuliu Maniu, Nichifor Crainic calibrated once more his discourse by focusing his attention on the Romanian peasantry. He wanted to become the ideologue of the Romanian Peasantism, but in failing he orientated towards the Romanian fascist movement, the Iron Guard. His articles from *Gîndirea* and *Calendarul* were directed towards the youth and they popularized the need for a spiritual revolution grounded in the Orthodox spirituality of the Romanian village.

The fourth section of this chapter looks at the last stage in Crainic's career in the interwar period. After 1934, disappointed by the regimes for which he wanted to become an official ideologue, he had to come up with his personal political utopia named ethnocracy in which Orthodoxy, Italian corporatism, anti-Semitism, nationalist and authoritarianism were mixed into a challenging view regarding the future of the Romanian state. As a stumbling coincidence, his utopian view will become reality in the government of General Antonescu, after 1940.



The conclusion will tell the fact that despite his political opportunism which was reflected in his writings, Crainic expressed the most coherent version of the Romanian traditionalist which was associating Orthodoxy with the Romanian nation.

## 2.2. *Gîndirea*

*Gîndirea* was first issued on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1921 by a group of young Romanian intellectuals coming from the Transylvanian city of Cluj–Napoca like Lucian Blaga, Adrian Maniu, Gib I. Mihăiescu, Emil Isac, Radu Dragnea, D. Tomescu, D. I. Cucu and Cezar Petrescu. As Dumitru Micu has pointed out, quoting Cezar Petrescu, one of the first directors of the publication, *Gîndirea* was supposed to become a Romanian response on the cultural market to the Hungarian and Saxon cultural publication with a long tradition in sustaining a national culture<sup>70</sup>. As Keith Hitchins has pointed out, “it was largely sociologists, literary critics, theologians, and poets who carried on the speculative and prophetic traditions in the Romanian thought and who, consequently, found themselves in the forefront of a great debate over the nature of Romanian ethnicity and culture.”<sup>71</sup>

Although the purpose of the journal was not declared as a nationalist rostrum from which the Romanian nationality should be proclaimed, it was obvious that confronted with superior cultures like the Saxons and the Hungarians with a long printing press tradition, the Romanian elite attempted to frame a nationalist cultural speech. The words of one of the leading founders of *Gîndirea* are enough proof for the previous statements: the country

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<sup>70</sup> Dumitru Micu, *Gîndirea și gîndirismul* [The Thought and the thoughtism] (Bucharest: Minerva, 1975), p. 12.

<sup>71</sup> Keith Hitchins, “Gîndirea: Nationalism in a Spiritual Guise” in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania 1860–1940. A Debate on Development in a European Nation* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978), p. 140.

[Transylvania]” needs the light of *Gîndirea* as it needed at one time the comforter of the *Luceafărul* [Vesper]...because some of the messengers of *Luceafărul* have died, others are ministers, and others do not write it is a duty in a new Romania to try to publish a review as good as in the times of foreign oppression.”<sup>72</sup>

On a larger scale, the first efforts of the people gathered around this journal were to fit into an already existing national paradigm of ethnic homogenization and to build a concept of a unitary Romanian culture based on common national grounds. Despite the old generation that completed the union depicted as satisfied by the total success of 1918 and who thought that unification meant the end of the hardships for the Romanian nation, the lack of a unitary Romanian culture and literature seemed to be the main focus of the early collaborators from *Gîndirea*<sup>73</sup>. Accordingly, the literary program of the contributors of the journal is deliberately missing in order to insure a larger representation of all the literary trends of the age. As one of the contributors pointed out,

Once more we enlighten the eager ones that we did not want to represent a current or a trend. We wait for their crystallization around us or around others, we will see about that. Until then and maybe from that particular point to the future we will open widely the columns for all the writers and all the talents who would feel comfortable under the covers of our poor journal. In our undeveloped literary movement there is place only for eclectic publications.<sup>74</sup>

As Dumitru Micu has shown, the trends in the review were almost contradictory<sup>75</sup>: Nicolae Iorga’s texts in which he defied the “modernist spirit” contrary to the autochthon tradition and prophesied its diminishment<sup>76</sup>, Pamfil Șeicaru’s *neosemănătorist* approach

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<sup>72</sup> Adrian Maniu, “Cuvinte pentru drum” [Words for the Road], *Gîndirea* I, no. 1/ 1921, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> Keith Hitchins, “Gîndirea: Nationalism in a Spiritual Guise”, p. 147.

<sup>74</sup> “Cronica mărunță” [Finely Chronicle], *Gîndirea* I, nr. 2/ 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1921, p. 38.

<sup>75</sup> Dumitru Micu, *Gîndirea și gîndirismul*, p. 18.

<sup>76</sup> Nicolae Iorga, „Elementele culturii românești” [The Elements of the Romanian culture] in *Gîndirea* III, no. 7/ 5<sup>th</sup> December 1923, p. 145 - 147.

which tended in Iorga's direct tradition to praise the contribution of *Semănătorul*<sup>77</sup> and to dismantle the wish of the Romanian culture towards the Western culture depicted as the worse that could happen to the Romanian people<sup>78</sup>, and the anti – Catholic contributions of G. M. Ivanov who preached for a “third dictatorship”, namely “the only possible democracy – the Christian one.”<sup>79</sup>

Nichifor Crainic was one of the first non – Transylvanian intellectuals invited to join the editorial board of *Gîndirea* by some of his acquaintances, Lucian Blaga and Cezar Petrescu.<sup>80</sup> Also, he will prove the most important theoretician of traditionalism in an Orthodox key.

Ioan Dobre a.k.a. Nichifor Crainic was born on December 24<sup>th</sup> 1889 in a small village called Bulbucata (Vlașca). Between 1908 and 1912 he studied at the Central Seminary from Bucharest hoping that he could fulfill his family ambitions and become a priest. During this period he was influenced especially by Nicolae Iorga, a Romanian neo-conservator, history professor at the University of Bucharest and its nationalistic discourse which followed closely the 19<sup>th</sup> century aversion of the Junimists against the cultural imports from Western countries, especially from France. The influence of Nicolae Iorga over the young Ioan Dobre continued to be intense during his years of studentship at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest (1912–1916). In 1916 he published his first volume of poetries named *Șesuri natale* (Native fields). Between 1916 and 1918 he was concentrated on the Romanian army fighting in the WWI and during this period he became even more influenced by the personality of Nicolae Iorga which was one of the main artisans of the Romanian entrance into the war. After the war, Crainic published in 1920 another volume of poetry called *Darurile pământului* [The Gifts of the Land] and in the same year, following Lucian Blaga's

<sup>77</sup> “Pe marginea unui volum omagial” [Regarding an Anniversary Tome], *Gîndirea* I, no. 20/ 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1922, p. 383.

<sup>78</sup> “Literatura neînsuflită” [Inanimate Literature], *Gîndirea* II, no. 9/ 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1922, p. 73–74.

<sup>79</sup> G. M. Ivanov, “A treia dictatură” [The Third Dictatorship], *Gîndirea* III, nr. 14/ 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1924, p. 341.

<sup>80</sup> Nichifor Crainic, *Zile albe. Zile negre*, p. 171.

advice he went to Viena to study Philosophy. After 1921 he started to collaborate with *Gîndirea*.

I will argue in this chapter that, although he was one of the first intellectuals invited to publish, because of the historical and cultural context there are three stages of development in Nichifor Crainic's activity in *Gîndirea*. In the first stage, between 1921 and 1926 Crainic had a moderate position towards the relationship between nationalism and Orthodoxy. Because he was not in charge of *Gîndirea*, but only one of its main contributors, he had to cope with the demands of the editorial board from Cluj. In this period Crainic seemed preoccupied with a broader theme. How a Romanian authentic culture which was genuine and autochthon was possible. It is a period for a larger scale exploration for a discourse of the elites according to the principles stated by the initial eclectic program of the journal. A second stage in Nichifor Crainic's *gîndirism* was between 1926 and 1933. In 1926 he became the sole director of the journal and the *Gîndirea* moved to Bucharest. A greater cultural visibility, the emergence of rightist movements and the obvious failure of the nationalist ideology of the official Liberal government, the coming into existence on the Romanian political scene of the National Peasants Party with a strong Greek-Catholic elite support, the affair relating the Concordat between the Romanian state and the Vatican were all motifs for a renegotiation of *Gîndirea*'s cultural environment. There is an obvious shift in both Crainic's understanding of Romanian nationalism and its connection with spirituality and Orthodoxy and people behind *Gîndirea* because in this period Crainic started to develop into a politicized intellectual.<sup>81</sup> Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Vasile Băncilă or Dragoș Protopopescu became the leading voices of a young generation revolted against the governmental patronized pro-Western culture.

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<sup>81</sup> Keith Hitchins, „Orthodoxism: Polemics over Ethnicity and Religion in interwar Romania” in Ivo Banac & Katherine Verdery *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995), p. 154.

As for Crainic, he started to button up the whole details of his ethno–theological discourse about the Romanian nation. It is no wonder that his most programmatic text “Sensul tradiției” [The Meaning of Tradition] was written in this particular period of time. For this period it would be also challenging to compare the texts of Crainic from *Gîndirea* with others published in pro–fascist journals like *Calendarul* and *Sfarmă–Piatră*. For this particular age I argue that there is a noticeable parallel discourse in Crainic’s texts: when he wrote in *Gîndirea*, generously sponsored by the Romanian Royal Foundation and thus an official supporter of the State’s national building process, the tone of Nichifor Crainic’s texts was moderate and presented itself only as an anti–modern alternative to the Western–orientated nationalism of the State. In the legionary publications, according to his “racist” principles, Crainic became the censor of the Romanian political life, and supported openly the political and the electoral progress of the fascist Iron Guard led by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu.<sup>82</sup>

After 1934<sup>83</sup>, although he continued to publish extensively in *Gîndirea*, Crainic is framing a different project of building a Romanian nation and culture. The Gordian knot was represented by the publication of his most influential book called *Ortodoxie și Etnocrație*<sup>84</sup> [Orthodoxy and Ethnocracy] (1936) in which, following the Italian fascist model of corporatism, he is shaping a genuine Orthodox definition of fascism quite dissimilar with the ones produced by the intellectual sympathizers of the Iron Guard<sup>85</sup>. What is most puzzling is that they were hired and trained by Crainic in the period when he was director of the *Calendarul* journal. A direct comparison on the one between Crainic from *Gîndirea* and the one from *Ortodoxie și Etnocrație* and on the other hand between the

<sup>82</sup> For this aspect, please see Armin Heinen, *Die Legionen “Erzengel Michael” in Rumänien, Soziale Bewegung und Politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus*, (München: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 1986), Romanian edition (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), p. 173.

<sup>83</sup> For the significance of this date please see Dumitru Micu, *Gîndirea și gîndirismul*, p. 30.

<sup>84</sup> Nichifor Crainic, *Ortodoxie și Etnocrație*, (Bucharest: Albatros, 1997).

<sup>85</sup> Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel. Fascist Ideology in Romania* ( Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990), p. 57–59.

fascist view of Crainic and the discourse of other Romanian fascist ideologues will be challenging.

### 2.3. 1921–1926. *The Early Orthodoxist Quest for Romanianness of Nichifor Crainic*

In the first period of *Gîndirea* Nichifor Crainic was a regular contributor in the pages of the Transylvanian journal. Despite his being in Viena during 1920 – 1922, he was involved in many of the administrative and cultural tasks which arose during the process of transforming *Gîndirea* from a provincial cultural journal into the mainstream voice of Romanian culture. I will focus on three major articles from this period in which Crainic already proposed to his reader on a moderate scale the ideas and concepts which would make a long career in his personal convictions. What is specific in this period is that there are two orientations within the *Gîndirea* contributors: a left wing gathered around Lucian Blaga, Cezar Petrescu, or Gib I. Mihăiescu which were advocating for traditionalism and a cultural alternative starting from the spirituality of the Romanian village, but a secular one similar with their pro–Western opponents from *Zburătorul* and *Viața Românească*. They were also more opened towards exploring new literary genres and tackling with different new realities coming from the West but not always in a critical understanding.

On the other hand, there was the right wing direction in *Gîndirea* represented by Nichifor Crainic, Dumitru Stăniloae or Radu Dragnea which underlined the capital influence of Orthodoxy and spirituality preserved in the Romanian village and patriarchal

society during the ages.<sup>86</sup> In this particular period although Crainic used his influence to move *Gîndirea* from Cluj to Bucharest and to insure a minimal economic stability, he is just one among other ideologues. Nevertheless, he has published in this period three of its most important texts which will constitute the later base for his ethno–theological approach. The texts are “Isus în țara mea” [Jesus in my country]<sup>87</sup>, “Politică și Ortodoxie” [Politics and Orthodoxy]<sup>88</sup> and Parsifal<sup>89</sup>. As Dumitru Micu accurately pointed out,

from the beginning it must be said that the Orthodoxism from *Gîndirea* was something different than Orthodoxy. Against Eugen Lovinescu... the publication has elaborated and applied over the years its program in a total independence from the Holy Sinod, sometimes even expressing contrary ideas with the ecclesiastical official opinion. ‘This review – writes Crainic in a polemical observation from 1928 – is not the official journal of the Holy Synod’<sup>90</sup>.

I argue hypothetically that Crainic presented no interest for the Church in this particular period; being directly involved in the State’s patronized process of defining the Romanian ethnical specificity, the Romanian Orthodox Church behaved according to its interests and political ideology and embraced the project of the State which was paying the salaries and taxes<sup>91</sup>. On the other hand, I will suggest that Crainic is shaping this Orthodoxist approach of Romanian nationality as a competing alternative for the one offered by the Church for different personal reasons: rejected from priesthood and religious teaching activities by the ecclesiastical hierarchy for divorcing his first wife shortly after the

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<sup>86</sup> Please see Dumitru Micu, *Gîndirea și gîndirismul*, p. 39: practically, Dumitru Micu is using an article of Lucian Blaga called “Începuturile și cadrele unei prietenii” [The beginnings and the framework of a friendship], *Gîndirea*, XIX, no. 4/ 1940, p. 226.

<sup>87</sup> *Gîndirea*, 11–12/ 1923, p. 117–120.

<sup>88</sup> *Gîndirea* 5/ 1924, p. 77–83.

<sup>89</sup> *Gîndirea*, 8–10/ 1924, p. 181–186.

<sup>90</sup> Dumitru Micu, *Gîndirea și gîndirismul*, p. 60–61.

<sup>91</sup> For the details regarding the humiliating position of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the interwar Romania, please see Fr. Alexandru Moraru, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română între anii 1885 și 2000. Biserică, Națiune, Cultură* [The Romanian Orthodox Church between 1885 and 2000. Church, Nation, Culture] Vol. 3, I (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 2006), p. 92.

end of WWI, Crainic had no other option but to engage in a literary and journalist career in order to earn his living. Because of his nationalist past, but also because of the ideas circulating in the intellectual circles, his interest in the fusion between Orthodoxy and nationalism is nothing more than a continuation of his pre war intellectual project.

The first of his programmatic texts “Iisus în țara mea” [Jesus in my country] was published in *Gîndirea*.<sup>92</sup> From the beginning, Crainic draws a parallel between the spirituality of the Romanian Christmas carols and Jesus by implying that during the ages of history Christianity was interpreted and constructed in a Romanian way.<sup>93</sup> After that Crainic deplored the unworthiness of the Romanian Orthodox Church to fulfill “its national mission”<sup>94</sup> as opposed to the rural Christianity characterized by

Orthodoxy rooted strongly in the psychological reality of the Romanian people and enlightened by the fire of the evangelical truth would have provided our inner grounds of resistance, stability, and continuity which neither our politics, neither our culture had. It would have been the fountain from which the religious thought would have fertilized our religious thought. In these circumstances, it appeared in the struggles of the Romanian intellectuality here and there without the power to fecundate prodigally the crops.<sup>95</sup>

Accordingly, laying himself in a close connection with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Junimists and Nicolae Iorga critiques against the French imports in the Romanian culture, Crainic launched into a generalized attack against the “Latin tribe” idolized by the Romanian 1848 generation and in the end reached the matter at stake. Crainic did not think as the Junimists and Nicolae Iorga that French cultural imperialism and unbalanced imports bared the fault of the failure of the Romanian culture in becoming original. In Crainic’s view, “the

<sup>92</sup> „Iisus în țara mea”, *Gîndirea* II, nr. 11–12/ 1923, p. 117 and passim.

<sup>93</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Iisus în țara mea”, p. 117 – 118.

<sup>94</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Iisus în țara mea”, p. 118.

<sup>95</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Iisus în țara mea”, p. 119.



Orthodoxy could and had to inspire a new vitality through the usage of the deposits of religious spirituality kept inside the popular culture, in legends and carols.”<sup>96</sup>

Nichifor Crainic became even more radical in his following texts about the relation between Orthodoxy and Romanianness. “Politică și Ortodoxie”<sup>97</sup> [Politics and Orthodoxy] established a principle for any political approach of the Romanian government, a principle which was disregarded by almost all political ideologies of his age (Bolshevism, Liberalism, Conservatorism, etc) and especially by the Peasants Party:

Agrarian peoples are religious peoples. And if the peasants represent three quarters of the Romanian population, than Romanian orthodoxy is, by all means, peasant orthodoxy. Any political doctrine which intends to define the cardinal needs of this social class and a politics which tends to turn to account not only political and economical point of view but also cultural and national must take into consideration this social reality. Therefore, a specific national culture from which the industrial minorities tempted for economical internationalism exclude themselves must draw its inspiration from the traditional deposits of the agrarian majority.<sup>98</sup>

Against any State-controlled or political process of defining the Romanian ethnicity, Crainic is arguing for a return to the traditional innocence of the village described by its commitment to moral values and its affinity with the faith of the Eastern Christianity. As Keith Hitchins has poignantly noticed,

Crainic’s assessment of Romanian culture and his hopes for its development rested upon a Christian philosophy of history. Drawing upon the Fathers of the Church and such modern theologians as Vladimir Soloviev, Serghei Bulgakov, and Nikolai Berdyaev, Crainic saw history as the unfolding of the divine plan to restore man to his original place in creation through the intermediary of Jesus Christ—a process that would end with the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Dumitru Micu, *Gîndirea și gîndirismul*, p. 64.

<sup>97</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Politică și Ortodoxie”, *Gîndirea* 5/ 1924, p. 77–83.

<sup>98</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Politică și Ortodoxie”, p. 78.

<sup>99</sup> Keith Hitchins, „Gîndirea: Nationalism in Spiritual Guise”, p. 149–150.

According to this perspective, Crainic engaged into a complete assault against the 1848 legacy and its malefic influence over the Romanian Orthodox Church which was depicted in the past as the receptacle of the national messianic mission of the Romanian people, namely the creation of a Romanian culture and preservation of Eastern Orthodoxy as a whole.<sup>100</sup> In his opinion, from 1848 the Church was prevented by different secular regimes from playing its seminal role in the formation of a Romanian culture and a Romanian definition of ethnicity. At this point of the aforementioned article, Crainic replied in his article to one of the most capital questions which arose in the articles from this particular period: why Orthodoxy is a key issue for building a Romanian national culture as the expression of Romanianness? The answer of Nichifor Crainic already anticipated his later developments of his view between nationalism and Orthodoxy: “Orthodoxy do not rely exclusively on the conservative formalism to which was forced by the troubles of history; in its bosom burns deep the missionary forces for the inner renaissance of the Romanian people and other peoples.”<sup>101</sup> In other words, Crainic emphasized the revolutionary idea that was first proposed in “Isus în țara mea”, namely that rural Orthodoxy was the expression of the Romanian soul and the focal point from which any attempt to build a Romanian culture had to take into consideration.

Also, Crainic proposed the rural Orthodoxy in order to establish a difference between him and the other traditionalist fold represented by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Junimists and their follower Nicolae Iorga which were advocating for the return to the Romanian traditional society, but this return was depicted from a secular perspective:

The unfortunate effects of the laicization of the Romanian society could be found in those manifestations of the Romanian national spirit of which Crainic otherwise approved. For example, he spoke admiringly of the writers who had grouped themselves around *Semănătorul* and especially of their leader Iorga. Crainic praised

<sup>100</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Politică și Ortodoxie”, p. 78.

<sup>101</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Politică și Ortodoxie”, p. 82.

the ‘national tendency’ they represented and in particular approved of their part in rallying the nation behind the goal of the political unification in the decade before World War I. Yet, in the final analysis, he found the Semănătorist movement wanting. It erred in placing man in the centre of the rural world and in portraying him merely as an ‘irruption of elemental forces’; it ignored entirely what was to Crainic the most important aspect of the rural life: the profound [Orthodox] religious consciousness of the peasantry.<sup>102</sup>

The charge against Iorga’s exhausted, metaphysical-free version of nationalism was one of the most radical decisions of Nichifor Crainic’s career. On the one hand, he was attacking one of the most prestigious supporters of Romanian nationalism, who attempted to cultivate a sense of the Romanian nationality by encouraging a Romanian literature based on the realities of the Romanian village. When Crainic dismissed Iorga’s literary movement for being too rationalist and deprived of “metaphysical light” which was obviously present in the rural life in the form of the Eastern Christianity, he was sacrificing one of his most important sources of inspiration before the World War I.

On the other hand, by mixing Orthodoxy and nationalism in a traditionalist view, Crainic proposed a new alternative for the Romanian cultural environment. In order to achieve visibility, Crainic had to delimit programmatically his innovative approach from all other trends in the Romanian culture. It is less surprising that his future article, “Parsifal”<sup>103</sup> was a direct blow against the modernist trend in the Romanian culture. Inspiring himself from Oswald Spengler’s revolutionary insights from the *Der Untergang der Abendlandes*<sup>104</sup> [Decline of the West] which had an excellent press in *Gîndirea*<sup>105</sup>, Crainic applied to the

<sup>102</sup> Keith Hitchens, „Gîndirea: Nationalism in a Spiritual Guise”, p. 152 – 153.

<sup>103</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Parsifal”, *Gîndirea* 8–10/ 1924, p. 181–186.

<sup>104</sup> For the impact of the book on German culture, please see Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism. Technology, culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 49 - 69; for the impact of Spengler in the Romanian culture, please see Keith Hitchens, *Rumania, 1866–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 299.

<sup>105</sup> The book was reviewed by Lucian Blaga in his article “Spengler, un Copernic al istoriei” [Spengler a Copernicus of history] in *Gîndirea* 1/ 1921, p. 6.

Romanian case the antinomy set by Spengler between culture and civilization<sup>106</sup>. Arguing that Western civilization with its world city was a sign of the decaying West and quoting extensively and uncritically from Spengler's statements, Crainic sets a cultural antithesis between a mechanized, moribund Western culture represented by huge cities like Berlin and New York depicted as "centers of death" and built by "a man without any metaphysics" and the "Christianity of Dostoievski" which is for Crainic "the orthodoxy of the simple, peasant soul."<sup>107</sup> By stating that the resistance of Russia against the Western culture was the right path towards modernity, Crainic introduced in the text a metaphor of the blessed Orthodox Orientalism which will appear later in his writings:

A great river of orientalism, then, flowed in the riverbed of our people's soul. Byzantium and Kiev took their toll as it passed by, flowed underneath Orthodoxy – that import, which in time developed into the reservoir of our primitive forces. [Orthodoxy] thus forms part of our people's wealth and constitutes yet a power by which our patriarchal mentality, our native genius, differentiates itself from and resists the currents of European civilization, so fresh in their historical origin.<sup>108</sup>

Crainic established the existence of a cultural tradition in Eastern Europe which confounded itself with the Eastern Orthodoxy. Therefore, according to him, any interference of a Western culture threatened to cut off the flow of this millenary culture which for Crainic identified with Orthodoxy preserved by rural spirituality.

In the context of the quest for defining the character of the Romanian nation, Crainic's insistence on the relevance of Eastern Orthodoxy as a cultural and spiritual tradition was another side of an ongoing debate in the Romanian culture and history at that particular time about the origins and the character of the Romanian people.<sup>109</sup> As Katherine

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<sup>106</sup> For an explanation about Spengler antinomy between civilization and culture, please see Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic*, (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 49.

<sup>107</sup> Nichifor Crainic, "Parsifal", p. 184.

<sup>108</sup> Nichifor Crainic, "Parsifal", p. 185.

<sup>109</sup> For a complete summary of the debate, please see Thomas J. Kiel, *Romania's Tortured Road towards Modernity* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2006), p. 128–129.

Verdery states, in front of the revisionist claims coming from the regimes from which after 1918 annexed large territories and which contested the Romanian legitimacy over that territories from both a historical and ethnical perspective, three historical theories were developed – the Daco-Thracian, the Roman and Daco- Roman theories – attempting to provide a historical explanation for the origins of the Romanian people.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, these archeological theories brought another dilemma in the cultural realms: according to Eugen Lovinescu, if the Romanian people were a Latin people, it meant that they had to adjust their civilization according to other Latin peoples like the French.<sup>111</sup>

If on historical grounds the debate was closed by opting for the third theory and demonstrating it, the debate over ethnicity remained open because the Romanian state did not have a coherent ethnical frame in which all the minorities from the newly acquired provinces could be assimilated because a definition of the Romanian character was lacking from the toolbox of the Romanian government. Crainic's appeal to Orthodoxy and rural traditionalism was shaped as a reactionary alternative to the modernist pro-Western project of the Romanian nation.

#### 2.4. 1926–1933. *Nichifor Crainic between the Sense of the Tradition and Idol of the Nation*

After 1926, Nichifor Crainic became the sole director of *Gîndirea* journal in Bucharest. If before this date he was just one of the leading editors of the journal, from this

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<sup>110</sup> Katherine Verdery, “National Ideology and National Character in interwar in Romania” in Ivo Banac & Katherine Verdery (eds.), *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995), p. 111–112.

<sup>111</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right. The Nineteen Thirties* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1999), p. 22.

year he became the main figure behind the editorial staff. Another reason for selecting this date was the fact that in this particular year Eugen Lovinescu published the last volume of his masterpiece *Istoria Civilizației Române Moderne*<sup>112</sup> [The History of the Romanian Modern Civilization]. Coming from the pro–Western intellectual faction, Eugen Lovinescu launched his theory on the cultural synchronism between Romania and the Western culture.<sup>113</sup> This was one of the turning points in *Gîndirea*'s development.<sup>114</sup> Another reason for tacking into consideration this particular year relates to the fact that the editorial board of *Gîndirea* started to change its contributors.

From 1926–1928 there is an obvious shift from the former contributors (Cezar Petrescu, Lucian Blaga, Alexandru Busuioceanu, etc.) to young people like Mircea Eliade, Vasile Băncilă, Radu Dragnea or even Nae Ionescu who began to write in the pages of this journal. The shift was a direct result of the radicalization of Nichifor Crainic's traditionalism. Although Crainic supported Orthodoxism even before 1926, after this year his option became permanent. The infusion of new people and Nichifor Crainic's commitment to Orthodoxism had tremendous consequences: from this moment, Crainic assured himself the leading position as the main ideologue of *Gîndirea*.<sup>115</sup>

Why Crainic began to radicalize his Orthodoxist view lies on the fact that Crainic is an intellectual who wanted to become a political regime's ideologue. This idea was common in the particular period. Heidegger's or Carl Schmitt's rapprochements with the Nazi regime took place in this particular period and so did the ideological involvement of Marinetti's avant–gardist circle in Mussolini's fascist party.<sup>116</sup> These are the sign of an intellectual trend of the interwar period: the intellectual serving the political regime. Heidegger's *Introduction*

<sup>112</sup> Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria Civilizației Române Moderne*, (Bucharest: Minerva, 1997).

<sup>113</sup> For details about this theory please see Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, p. 293 and Zigu Ornea „Introduction” to Lovinescu, p. VI.

<sup>114</sup> Dumitru Micu, *Gîndirea și gîndirismul*, p. 76.

<sup>115</sup> Dumitru Micu, *Gîndirea și gîndirismul*, p. 98.

<sup>116</sup> For Marrinetti intellectual impact, please see Zeev Sternhell, Mario Sznajder & Maia Asheri, *The Birth of the Fascist Ideology. From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 28–30.

to *Metaphysics*<sup>117</sup> in which the intellectuals had as a task the “guidance of the leader” or Giovanni Gentile’s major political role in Fascist Italy are enough proof of the formative functionality of the intellectuals in the totalitarian regimes.

Crainic makes no exception and his career after 1926, although not a Fascist sympathizer yet, reflects this intellectual tendency already present in the other countries from the Western Europe. His shift from the condition of a intellectual disinterested in politics in the 1921–1926 to his election as a deputy in the Romanian Parliament in 1927 demonstrates without doubt that something has changed in Nichifor Crainic’s perception of politics and of its importance in the nationalist and cultural agenda. I think that his editorial efforts and his programmatic zeal to legitimize his understanding of the Orthodoxist traditionalist welcomed the National Peasants Party’s eclectic ideology<sup>118</sup> which was addressed to the Romanian peasantry, subjected to economical unevenness caused by problematic management of the Romanian economy, a peasantry neglected between from 1921 to 1927 by the economical Liberal initiatives of the Romanian governments<sup>119</sup>.

Although Dumitru Micu considers that Nichifor Crainic by assuming the leading role in the journal offered a certain sense of cohesion to the review, it must be argued that people like Mircea Eliade, Dragoş Protopopescu, or Lucian Blaga although they supported the traditionalist agenda behind *Gîndirea* cannot be labeled as exponents of Crainic’s Orthodoxism. At this stage their option was purely aesthetic and they did not involve in any kind of politics by the turn of the decade. Nevertheless I argue that before 1926, Crainic is

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<sup>117</sup> For a commentary on Heidegger, please see Julian Young, *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) which tends to consider the entire philosophical work of Heidegger dominated by a subordinate position towards Nazism.

<sup>118</sup> The National Peasants Party’s ideology never presented itself in a unitary key: Maniu’s centrists were mixing populist ideas coming from the Left in the garments of Peasantism which was obviously addressed to the majority of Romanian population and corporatist ideas inspired by the Italian Fascism. Vaida-Voievod’s rightist wing adopted a proto – fascist and highly nationalistic discourse in which all the Jews and the alien minorities had to be subjects to a *numerus clausus* in the Romanian administration and schools. The leftist wing of the Party was highly populist and its political opportunism in the interwar period proved their political instability.

<sup>119</sup> Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania. Political Problems of an Agrarian State*, p. 112.

not interested at all in involvement in politics. He is simply content to criticize a cultural direction from the Romanian culture which was different than his, namely the intellectual circle gathered around Eugen Lovinescu, or to disapprove the official politics of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

After 1926 Crainic calibrated his articles on a political agenda focused on the relevance and the future role reserved to the Romanian peasantry in the future development of the Romanian state and culture. This type of cultural discourse was not innocent; in that year Iuliu Maniu and his followers from the National Peasants Party challenged the political hegemony of the Liberal government with an electoral offer directed towards the peasantry.<sup>120</sup> The ideological consanguinity between the two discourses<sup>121</sup> is too evident to be just a coincidence and Crainic's election in 1927 as deputy in the Romanian Parliament on the electoral lists of the National Peasants Party confirms this hypothesis as well.<sup>122</sup>

Therefore, the texts of Nichifor Crainic from this period are either bitter criticism addressed to Eugen Lovinescu<sup>123</sup>, either programmatic texts about the role of the traditionalist culture in shaping the true Romanian culture. One of the most charismatic pieces of text ever written by Crainic in *Gîndirea* is "Sensul Tradiției"<sup>124</sup> [The Meaning of the Tradition] which best reflects Crainic's crystallization of the traditionalist ideology as Orthodoxy and the future career of this text only comes to prove its impact over the Romanian understanding of ethnicity.<sup>125</sup> By criticizing bitterly the European intellectuals from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries for fabricating a Romanian culture deprived of any

<sup>120</sup> Stephen Fisher – Galați, "The Interwar period: Greater Romania" in Dinu C. Giurescu & Stephen Fischer-Galați, *Romania. A Historical perspective* (Boulder, East European Monographs, 1998), p. 302.

<sup>121</sup> Although I think it is too much to claim that Maniu and the Peasantist ideology were traditional at all.

<sup>122</sup> Armin Heinen, *Die Legionen "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien, Soziale Bewegung und Politische Organisation*, p. 168.

<sup>123</sup> "A doua neatîrnare" [The Second Independence], *Gîndirea* V, no. 11/ 1926.

<sup>124</sup> Published initially in *Gîndirea* 4/ 1927. I will use the text from *Puncte Cardinale în Haos*, (Iași: Timpul, 1996), p. 123 and passim.

<sup>125</sup> Nicoleta Sălcudeanu, „Present Day Reverberations of the Traditionalist–Nationalism–Orthodoxy Synthesis professed by *Gîndirea* Magazine" in Maria Crăciun & Ovidiu Ghita, *Ethnicity and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe* (Cluj–Napoca: Cluj University Press, 1995), p. 338–344.



spirituality<sup>126</sup>, Crainic argued against this trend that they had shaped the Romanian culture only as culture of consummation of the French culture neglecting the possibility of a cultural assimilation of the West<sup>127</sup>.

For the traditionalists, the everlasting issue of Westernization or the relationship with the West which bothers and disorients so many Romanian intellectuals reduce to a naturally process of cultural assimilation. But beyond this assimilation, the higher target is national creation. A Nicolae Bălcescu, a Mihail Kogălniceanu, a Bogdan–Petriceicu Hașdeu, a Mihai Eminescu, a George Coșbuc, a Vasile Pîrvan, or Nicolae Iorga appear to us under both aspects of vast assimilation of the foreign culture and the monumental autochthon creation. Traditionalism sees in them historical revelations of the substance of permanent life which lies in the depths of this people. If the mission of the Romanian people is to create a culture after its image and likeness, this implies also how its orientation must be resolved. Whoever recommends an orientation towards the West speaks nonsense. ‘Orientalism’ contains within itself the notion of ‘Orient’ and means directing ourselves toward the Orient, in accord with the Orient. Altars face toward the Orient, the icons of hearth face us from the Orient; the peasant who kneels in the field faces the Orient. Everywhere it is said light comes from the East. And for us, who find ourselves geographically in the Orient and who, through the Orthodox religion, hold to the truths of the eastern world, there can be no other orientation than toward the Orient that is toward ourselves... Westernization means the negation of our orientalism; Europeanizing nihilism means the negation of our creative potential. This means to negate in principle, a Romanian culture, to negate a destiny proper to Romanians, and to accept the destiny of a people born dead.<sup>128</sup>

What Crainic meant was that Western imports in the Romanian culture had no meaning because this was an inorganic process which did not take into account the cultural tradition which, although imported some cultural features from the West have assimilated that features and created an original autochthon culture. Practically, Crainic brought again in the discussion the Junimist idea that any future national culture had to take into account the

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<sup>126</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Sensul Tradiției”, p. 123–125.

<sup>127</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Sensul Tradiției”, p. 126. This principle I have to argue that Crainic’s understanding of cultural assimilation of the West can be very closely associated to Lovinescu’s synchronism.

<sup>128</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Sensul Tradiției”, p. 126 - 127. The translation of the text *apud* Katherine Verdery “National Ideology and National Character in interwar in Romania” in Ivo Banac & Katherine Verdery (eds.), *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995), p. 112.

presence of the Romanian culture. But Crainic had this idea reinterpreted and he brought his own contribution. If for Junimists national culture was only an ideal, Crainic enjoyed the privilege of having an intellectual legacy which became normative for the Romanian culture before him. He named this continuity tradition and presumed that this cultural tradition was intimately associated with the Christian autochtonist tradition. Accordingly, he understood that a future process of creating an original culture had to take into account the rural Oriental civilization that is the mixture between Orthodoxy and the rural culture and this is Crainic's main achievement and element of novelty: unlike the Junimists, he took into consideration the relevance of the Orthodoxy as a decisive factor in building an authentic Romanian culture which would have kept the organicity between the past, the present, and the future untouched.

According to Keith Hitchins Crainic foresaw little hope for the West:

but Romania could avoid the ruin if it would commit itself to the cultivation of higher spiritual values – namely those set forth in the gospel as interpreted by the Eastern Orthodox Church and those in the deeper layers of the folk culture. In other words, Romania would have to cleave to tradition and avoid the leveling and uniformity of civilization which was being pressed upon the new generation by Westernizers like Eugen Lovinescu with his theory of synchronism. Using the theory of cultural style, Crainic attempted to demonstrate the organic nature of culture and the sterility of imitation.<sup>129</sup>

Crainic considered that any future Romanian culture was related to a Christian Orthodox horizon which was presented in an Oriental key with maximum moderation because of the Bolshevik phobia which circulated among Romanians.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, Orthodoxy together with the traditional reality of the village from which any cultural

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<sup>129</sup> Keith Hitchins, „Gîndirea: Nationalism in Spiritual Guise” in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation*, (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978), p. 153 – 154.

<sup>130</sup> For the relation between Bolshevism and traditionalist orientalism in Romania, please see Katherine Verdery, “National Ideology and National Character in interwar in Romania”, p. 111.

development of Romanian future culture had to return to an already present expression of the Romanian character which was depicted at its best by a generation of the aforementioned intellectuals. By privileging two elements through which he could frame the concept of tradition, language and blood,<sup>131</sup> Crainic proposed an interwar variant of the Junimist idea on the organic character of the Romanian culture. As Zigu Ornea pointed out<sup>132</sup>, there was a huge difference between traditionalism as a cultural trend which advocated for a return to an uncorrupted culture and tradition in which Crainic saw the organic character of the Romanian culture about which spoke before him the Junimists.

However, there are certain point of departure between what the Junimists had in mind and what Crainic intended to achieve. First of all, for Crainic “organic” means a Christian tradition disseminated in the Romanian rural culture which, in comparison with the Junimist intention, has nothing in common. Again, Crainic applied the concept of a Christian, rural tradition as the ultimate expression of an authentic Romanian spirituality in front of a generation of intellectuals which were not supporters of this idea. What could surprise the reader is the presence among the prophets of Romanianness of Nicolae Bălcescu and Nicolae Iorga which were both famous for their secular views regarding Romanian character and culture. Nevertheless, after this programmatic text, Crainic wrote two articles dedicated both Bălcescu<sup>133</sup> and Iorga<sup>134</sup> in which he presented both Bălcescu and Iorga as precursors of Orthodox traditionalis, although Bălcescu, for example, did not fit in Crainic’s traditionalist and Orthodoxist pattern.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Although as Zigu Ornea had pointed in *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p.94–95 that Gobineau’s theories about the relation between blood and ethnicity were at that time were proved wrong by biologists.

<sup>132</sup> Zigu Ornea, *Tradiționalism și modernitate în deceniul al treilea* [Tradition and modernity in the 1930s] (Bucharest: Eminescu, 1980), p. 25.

<sup>133</sup> “Nicolae Bălcescu”, *Gîndirea* 12/ 1927, p. 340–347.

<sup>134</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Estetica lui Nicolae Iorga” [The Aesthetics of Nicolae Iorga], *Gîndirea* 6 –7–8/ 1931, p. 341 and passim.

<sup>135</sup> For example, in „Nicolae Bălcescu”, *op. cit.*, p. 340, Crainic described the 1848 revolutionary and historian as the materialization of the “twofold ideal: reunited nationality [naționalitate reîntregită] and demophil democracy.”

Therefore, Crainic fabricated an intellectual tradition with appealing names for his contesters which were quoting in their defense Crainic's most important references (Măiorescu, Iorga, the Junimist movement from Iași) to demonstrate that Crainic was proposing an alternative which lacked one of its fundamental features, namely its "organic" character. Although Nicolae Bălcescu was a representative of the 1848 secular generation that he criticized heavily in his previous texts for forcibly Europeanizing an Oriental/Orthodox traditional culture, Crainic's preferred Bălcescu because he was one of the first Romanian historians who advocated openly for the ethnical unity of all Romanians and because Crainic saw in the 1848 historian a messianic feature characteristic for the young generation, a generation to which Crainic was addressing then. Nicolae Iorga represented the linkage between the Junimists and Crainic's generation and the nationalist impact of Iorga before World War I assured him a place in Crainic's intellectual tradition. Thus, though it was a cultural and ideological paradox, Crainic was reframing himself as the continuator of the 1848 generation and the Junimists, both interpreted in a traditionalist Orthodoxist key.

In 1929, Crainic added to his previous discourse another feature whose presence was determined by the emergence of a generation of young Romanian intellectuals: the youth. He started to propose his ethnotheology to the young elite which began to appear especially at the end of 1920s in Romania. The first text of Crainic which was consecrated to the Romanian young generation was "Spiritualitate"<sup>136</sup>[Spirituality] and this text became paradigmatic for the future evolution of Nichifor Crainic's speech at the turn of the decades. I will suggest that the motives of Crainic's interest towards the Romanian youth are manifold; nevertheless, this period in Crainic's writing, after the conclusion of his ideological program has as main cause of Crainic's depart from the National Peasants Party in which he failed to become a leading ideologue in the absence of a political radicalization

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<sup>136</sup> Nichifor Crainic, „Spiritualitate” [Spirituality] in *Gîndirea*, No. 8–9/ 1929, p. 307–310.

of Iuliu Maniu's political ideology and the transfer of his interest towards a new generation of intellectuals of whom ideologue Crainic hoped to turn into.

The feeling of young, revolutionary generation was close with Fascist ideology, especially with the Iron Guard's electoral offer from the beginning of the 1930s. I will not go that far as to claim that in this particular period, the end of 1920s Crainic had any pro-Iron Guard sympathies. Rather, Crainic attempted to attract the adhesion of the Romanian young elite to his Orthodoxist ideology and, accordingly, to transform, as Iorga before him, in the foremost ideologue of the Romanian young generation. The fact that a number of young intellectuals like Mircea Eliade, Vasile Băncilă or Dragoș Protopopescu started to publish in one of the most prestigious cultural journals in Romania under Crainic's supervision is another sign about Crainic's intentions to advertise his traditionalist ideology among the young generation of late 1920s.

In "Spiritualitate" Crainic started with a dismissal of the secular academic life from Bucharest before the beginning of World War I, including Iorga and his professors in the Faculty of Theology and the main reasons for this was the "positivist [secular] spirit" and "the political subjection of the Romanian culture and its strict limitation around the ethnical, historical egoism."<sup>137</sup> The only escape for the present generation, argued Crainic, was "to return to the people's soul, that soul which our ancestors identified with religion... Our traditionalism wants... the alliance of our ephemerality with eternity."<sup>138</sup>

Crainic continued his meditations about nationality, Orthodoxy, traditionalism and the mission of the young generation in another article "Puncte cardinale în haos"<sup>139</sup> [Points of the compass in Chaos]. Crainic returns to his initial preoccupation which gravitates around

<sup>137</sup> Nichifor Crainic, „Spiritualitate”, p. 309.

<sup>138</sup> Nichifor Crainic, „Spiritualitate”, p. 310.

<sup>139</sup> Nichifor Crainic, *Puncte cardinale în Haos*, (Iași: Timpul, 1996).

the concept of demophil<sup>140</sup>. In both texts, Crainic made use of this concept which summarizes a Romanian definition of nationalism which leads to Orthodoxy:

the demophil feeling is one of the methods through which we can reach to the thinking of the spiritualism about which I have spoke about. Because our people is not materialist or idealist; in his soul live exist alive the elements of the spiritualism, in instinctive form, in form of nature. They only wait to be reflected by the scholarly keenness and to acquire the blazing form of culture.<sup>141</sup>

The new nationalist catechism of the Romanian young generation represents the peak of Nichifor Crainic's interwar career. Fighting on double fronts – both King Carol the II and the new generation – Crainic hoped that he could catch the eye of the new generation. After 1932, there is another shift in Crainic's ideological discourse regarding his involvement in the new generation. He became director of *Calendarul* newspaper, recognized as one of the first daily advocating openly in favor of the Legion of Archangel Michael led by Zelea Codreanu. Many of the young contributors from *Gîndirea* like Dragoş Protoponescu, Radu Dragnea, but also new figures like Toma Vlădescu, Vasile Vojen, Emil Cioran, or Mihail Polihroniade, the later ideologue of the Iron Guard and director of *Axa* were the main contributors of this newspaper. In 1932 it was plain for everyone that Crainic changed his speech from *Gîndirea* for a more fascist focalized discourse and the reason for this attitude was related to the collapse of democracy and economic crisis in Romania, but also with the dissipation of the National Peasants Party in different wings under the instigations of King Carol II.<sup>142</sup> The affinity between fascism and the Romanian King and the fact that after his coronation he started to encourage financially the Iron Guard hoping that he could

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<sup>140</sup> The concept was created by putting together two Greek words: *demos* which meant people with political rights and *phile* which is a synonym for love.

<sup>141</sup> Nichifor Crainic, "Puncte cardinale în haos", p. 26.

<sup>142</sup> Please see Stephen Fischer-Galați, "The interwar Period" in Dinu C. Giurescu and Stephen Fischer-Galați (eds.), *Romania. A Historical Perspective*, (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1998), p. 307.

subordinate the movement to his authoritarian purposes together with Nichifor Crainic's sympathy towards King Carol, determined Crainic to understand that his last gambling on National Peasants Party and Carol II failed to institutionalize Crainic as the official ideologue of any political regime.

In 1932 the fact that the Iron Guard succeeded to secure two seats in the Romanian parliament and this first electoral success, although without much impact on the Romanian political scene<sup>143</sup>, together with Hitler's political rise in Germany gave Crainic the feeling that the tide had turned. Consequently, he commenced to reframe his intellectual discourse from *Gîndirea* to a more fascist influenced speech in journals like *Calendarul* (The Calendar) and *Sfarmă – Piatră*. To the fascist adhesion of Crainic contributed also the fact that some of his collaborators (Toma Vlădescu, Mihail Polihroniade, Dragoș Protopopescu, etc.) from *Calendarul* chose to join the Iron Guard in the last months of the 1932.<sup>144</sup>

In *Calendarul*, Crainic is no longer the apolitical intellectual which up to 1926 considered that framing a authentic Romanian culture was the matter at stake for any nationalist, but rather he expressed his political convictions clearly in his first articles in which he advocated for economical corporatism according to the Italian fascist model<sup>145</sup>, against Liberal or Communist view on property to which he opposed a "Christian function of the property" that is "the allotment of the wealth has to be changed according to imperative of social justice and love for the neighbor"<sup>146</sup>, by advertising indirectly for the redemptive young generation of the Romanian Iron Guard<sup>147</sup>, by sending the Romanian intellectuals to earn their living through agriculture.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>143</sup> Armin Heinen, *Die Legionen "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien, Soziale Bewegung und Politische Organisation*, p. 161.

<sup>144</sup> Armin Heinen, *Die Legionen "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien, Soziale Bewegung und Politische Organisation*, p. 173.

<sup>145</sup> "De la conștiința profesională la corporatism" [From professional consciousness to corporatism], *Calendarul* 176/ 1932, p. 1.

<sup>146</sup> „Drama proprietății” [The tragedy of property], *Calendarul* 177/ 1932, p. 1.

<sup>147</sup> „Alte măști–aceeași față” [Other masks – the same face]: „Romania's redemption cannot come only through the young and unblemished generation, though those who grew up in the profound repugnance

One of his most penetrating texts of Nichifor Crainic from *Calendarul* seemed to be “Spre noul Bizanț. Epilog la o conferință balcanică”<sup>149</sup> [Towards the new Byzantium]. Epilogue to a Balkan conference] in which Crainic supported the idea that, for the societies from the Balkans “Orthodoxy civilization and its ideal for universal harmony are the political platform” of a “pan – Orthodox politics” of the states from the region. Although he often spoke about Orthodoxy and its political implications, culture was neglected by Crainic and the only initiative he had on this subject was an article from 1932 in which he spoke about “the spiritual assets created by the artistic, reasoning, and scientific elites of this people”<sup>150</sup> should have kept alive the national culture.

Another issue of interest on Nichifor Crainic’s agenda was the young generation. What was different from *Gîndirea* lies on the fact that in *Calendarul* Crainic did not propose a Christian alternative for the young generation, but he has already noticed that his project was taken into account by the young generation: “a young generation who believes in the dogma of race’s purity and proclaims the absolute of the religious faith do not wander” because “From its beginnings Romania is built on these two great ideas: the national idea with its earthly substance and the Christian idea with its heavenly essence.”<sup>151</sup>

In this period from *Calendarul* Crainic’s shifted towards an anti-democratic and anti-Bolshevik, pro-ethnocratic and corporatist discourse which was directed towards the young generation sympathizing with the fascist ideology of the Iron Guard. The intellectual discourse of Crainic which in *Gîndirea* was ideologically traditionalist and highly dominated by an aesthetical ideal was abandoned by the ideologue Crainic for a more journalistic and inquisitorial approach of his own ethnocratic stance and of the political and

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towards the politician regime [ politicianismului] thievish and destructive, through those who endured in their own flesh and nerves the afflictions of this politicianism through which some have been martyred from one side of this country to the other by the ruthless revenges of the club’s bandits.” *Calendarul* 182/ 1932, p. 1.

<sup>148</sup> „Fenomenul canadian. Intelectualii se reîntorc la plug” [The Canadian phenomenon. The intellectuals get back to the plug], *Calendarul* 193/ 1932, p. 1.

<sup>149</sup> *Calendarul* 202/ 1932, p. 1

<sup>150</sup> „Faliții și senatul cultural” [The Bankrupts and the cultural Senate] in *Calendarul* 330/ 1932, p. 1.

<sup>151</sup> “Congresul studențesc” [The Students Congress] in *Calendarul* 230/ 1932, p. 1.



social context of the interwar Romania. This choice had as a consequence a broader audience for Crainic's intellectual ideas which were presented in a more abridged and uncomplicated form.

From a different angle, although Crainic had a cultural ideology behind his statements, the director of *Gîndirea* chose to become also director at *Calendarul* because he wanted to back up a political ideology without which his Orthodoxy would have remained only an idealist project destined to obscurity and oblivion<sup>152</sup>. By conducting the editorial efforts of *Calendarul*, Crainic played his cards double-handed: on the one hand, he maintained himself as the undisputed ideologue of the Orthodoxy but, on the other hand, he decided to leave his political seclusion after the coronation of the King Carol II and to embrace the political ideology of the young generation: the movement led by Corneliu Zelea – Codreanu.

## *2.5. After 1934. Nichifor Crainic between Fascist ethnocracy and Anti-Semitism*

After the assassination of Prime Minister I. G. Duca by three legionaries of Codreanu on 29<sup>th</sup> of December 1933, both *Calendarul* and *Gîndirea* were prohibited from publishing on the accusation of Fascist propaganda for the Iron Guard. More, Nichifor Crainic was imprisoned for a few days without trial for his pro-Fascist articles and he was released afterwards. Accordingly, his first article after his imprisonment is a return to his

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<sup>152</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 29 confirms that Crainic was offered a place for the Romanian Parliament on the electoral lists of the Iron Guard.

ethnic Orthodoxism and a reply to Nicolae Iorga who accused Crainic of being “irresponsible” for his fascist sympathies. After writing his public defence, Crainic produced a public defence of the Iron Guard as well.

Entitled programmatically “Tineretul și creștinismul”<sup>153</sup>[The Youth and Christianity], Crainic’s first article after the days spent in prison started with a clear statement which leaves no doubt about the real intentions of the author: ”our age is the age of the youth.”<sup>154</sup> Crainic changed again his political agenda and I would dare to argue that this text is the first sign of his adherence towards the Romanian Iron Guard. By making reference to the Romanian youth, to abyss between the “old world” and the “new world” which is about to come<sup>155</sup>, the psychology of death<sup>156</sup>, “the metaphysical meaning of existence”<sup>157</sup>, anti-Semitism, the new “Romanian Christian Students Association”, the introduction of the Christian element in the University as a reply to both Judaic element and academic positivism are all elements already present in the incipient ideology and in the political speech of the Romanian Iron Guard.<sup>158</sup>

What confirms in my view the suspicions about a certain remaining affinity between Crainic and the verdant Iron Guard is another eloquent paragraph from the same text in which he practically framed a hagiographic account of the Iron Guard’s leaders who were locked together with him. By imitating Codreanu’s text from Crainic framed a link between the 1924 and 1934 young generations of the Iron Guard, although he was not supporting

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<sup>153</sup> Nichifor Crainic, „Tineretul și creștinismul” [The Youth and Christianity], *Gîndirea* 3/ 1934

<sup>154</sup> Nichifor Crainic, „Tineretul și creștinismul”, p. 65.

<sup>155</sup> This was a metaphor dear to Benito Mussolini who in an article about “the world to come” written apparently by Giovanni Gentile for the *Enciclopedia italiana* in 1931 spoke about “the new principle in the world, the clear, the final, and categoric antithesis of democracy, plutocracy... The fascist conception of the State is all-embracing, and outside the State no human or spiritual values can exist, let alone be desirable.” The information is from George Lichtheim, *Europe in the Twentieth Century* (London: Wedenfeld and Nichols, 1972), p. 159.

<sup>156</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Tineretul și creștinismul”, p. 66.

<sup>157</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Tineretul și creștinismul”, p. 66.

<sup>158</sup> For this please see, “Tinerii și creștinismul”, p. 67–68.

anymore the Iron Guard movement after the entrance of Codreanu under the influence of Elena Lupescu, the mistress of Carol II<sup>159</sup>

Thrown into prison, the heads of the student's movements have time to analyze better their souls. Some chose to hunger, some to write everyday their thoughts and their feelings. They fast and gathering in a single group began to pray to God... In their religious exaltation, the imprisoned young men have religious visions. It seems to them that Archangel Michael himself, the commander with the blazed sword of the celestial legions reveals himself and takes them under his protecting wings. From this moment, religious mysticism will descend in the tormented soul of this youth and some of them will put their organizations under the protection of the archangel and his icon will patronize their meeting houses.<sup>160</sup>

Although it is obvious that Crainic spoke about the famous group<sup>161</sup> imprisoned in 1924 in Văcărești penitentiary for plotting against the political regime and preparing a number of assassinations against the Jewish and Liberal elites and which later on will become in the “charismatic group” of the Iron Guard<sup>162</sup>, Crainic had something else in mind when he wrote this text. Even though he was a mere sympathizer of the Iron Guard, he used this example in the text to prove that his nationalist convictions attracted social support and nationalism as Orthodoxy had finally found a social incarnation in the new generation represented by the Iron Guard, depicted as a new stage in Romanian nationalist tradition:

religious mysticism becomes from now on [from the moment when Iron Guard came into existence] a constitutive element of nationalism and this new nationalism, which until yesterday crawled on earth, today bathe its upsurges in the unseen world of the angels.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> According to Crainic's own testimony from *Zile albe. Zile negre*, p. 72.

<sup>160</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Tineretul și creștinismul”, p. 68.

<sup>161</sup> It was formed by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Ilie Gîrmeață, Radu Mironovici, Ion Moța, Tudose Popescu and Corneliu Georgescu. They were all acquitted of all the accusations brought to them in March 1924.

<sup>162</sup> Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, p. 280 and passim.

<sup>163</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Tineretul și creștinismul”, p. 70.

For the new generation to reach Crainic proposed the new values of the new Romanian nationalism: “Christ, the King, the Nation meaning the religion of the Fatherland, the national monarchy and the demophily, namely the deep feeling of love towards the Romanian people and its institutions.”<sup>164</sup> The presence of the King among the fundamental values of the spiritualist nationalism of Crainic can be deceitful: although Romania had a King in the person of Carol II, Crainic chose to use a principle in order to show to his reader the respect towards the idea of authority embedded in concept of monarchy, despite of a person who disappointed him first by neglecting him as the official ideologue in detriment of Nae Ionescu, and second by sending him to prison.

“Titanii Ateismului”<sup>165</sup> [The Titans of Atheism] and “Rasă și Religione”<sup>166</sup> [Race and Religion] represented a double shift in Crainic discourse. On the one hand, as Keith Hitchens noticed, it seemed that Crainic was more and more interested in the Western realities which he had rejected earlier. They became for Crainic political patterns as Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. By considering the Mussolinian state “created according to the principles of Christianity” and by contradicting the viability of a German religion, a Nazi Christianity, Crainic expressed his preference for the Italian fascism and his disagreement with Nazism. “Crainic emphasis upon ethnicity and his admiration for fascism caused him to turn away from the venerated East towards the secular Rome.”<sup>167</sup> On the other hand, Crainic practically uttered publicly his dissatisfaction with the Romanian Iron Guard, now in the influence of Nae Ionescu and, accordingly, he felt excluded from his leading position

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<sup>164</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Tineretul și creștinismul”, p. 70.

<sup>165</sup> Nichifor Crainic, „Titanii ateismului” [The Titans of Atheism] in *Gîndirea* XIII, 7/ 1934, p. 257–263.

<sup>166</sup> „Rasă și religione” [Race and Religion] in *Gîndirea* XIII, 2/ 1935, p. 57–66.

<sup>167</sup> Keith Hitchens, „Orthodoxism: Polemics over Ethnicity and Religion in interwar Romania” in Ivo Banac & Katherine Verdery *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995), p. 155.

in the Iron Guard. I argue that up 1944 Nichifor Crainic's texts continued to dwell on the same topics as before<sup>168</sup> with only one exception: his growing interest in Italian fascism.<sup>169</sup>

Dissatisfied with Codreanu and Carol II, Nichifor Crainic, "with his traditionalism with an Orthodox shade, created a direction in the interwar movement of ideas. This is not little, though its founder wanted more. He wanted to turn this ideological direction into a political one. He did not succeed although—as we shall see—he went as far as to set up a program."<sup>170</sup> Accordingly, inspired by Italian fascism<sup>171</sup>, he shaped his own definition of the state which was for him the ethnocratic state hoping that someone would eventually embrace his idea and put it into practice. This was mixture between some elements already present in Crainic thought (cultural Orthodoxism, traditionalism, nationalism) with whole new elements: fascist corporatism<sup>172</sup> which was popularized by Mihail Manoilescu in a book named *Secolul corporatismului* (1934)<sup>173</sup> but in a dissimilar manner<sup>174</sup>, anti-Semitism and xenophobia. I will not focus on the ethnocratic state because many of its features are nothing more than a summary of the articles and ideas already advertised by Crainic in his

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<sup>168</sup> "Naționalitatea în artă" [The Nationality in Art] *Gîndirea* 3/ 1935, p. 113–116; "George Coșbuc, poetul rasei noastre" [George Coșbuc, the poet of our race], *Gîndirea* 5/ 1935, p. 258–267.

<sup>169</sup> "Roma universală" [Universal Rome], *Gîndirea* 4/ 1935, p. 169 – 175; "Omul eroic" *Gîndirea* 6/ 1936; "Creștinismul și fascismul", *Gîndirea* 3/ 1937.

<sup>170</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 103.

<sup>171</sup> For Giovanni Gentile's influence over Crainic, please see Dumitru Micu, *Gîndirea și gîndirismul*, p. 96. For Gentile in general please see Alastair Hamilton, *The Appeal of Fascism. A Study of Intellectuals and Fascism, 1919 – 1945* (New York: MacMillan, 1971), p. 57–58.

<sup>172</sup> Crainic added to fascist corporatism a characteristic which made his ethnocratic state different from the Italian definition: the Ethnocratic State "differs from corporatism because in the professional legislation of the ethnocratic state it is introduced the principle of the numerical proportionality between Romanians and other minorities." (p. 249)

<sup>173</sup> After 1934, when he lost his political influence in front of King Carol II, he started to advocate for Italian corporatism hoping that he could approach the Romanian Iron Guard. However, the Iron Guard through the voice of Ioan Moța, rejected corporatism as hidden Marxism. For Manoilescu's economical doctrine, please see Philippe C. Schmitter, „Reflections on Mihail Manoilescu and the political consequences of the Delayed–Dependent Development on the Periphery of Western Europe” in Kenneth Jowitt(ed.), *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation*, (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978), p. 117–139. For the rejection of corporatism by the Iron Guard, please see Armin Heinen, *Die Legionen "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien, Soziale Bewegung und Politische Organisation*, p. 169.

<sup>174</sup> Keith Hitchins argued that shaping the concept of ethnocracy, "unlike Manoilescu, Crainic based his sociology on the philosophy of religion and culture rather than upon economics, and he placed ethnicity at the center." in "Gîndirea: Nationalism in a spiritual Guise", Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: A Debate on Development in a European Nation*, (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978), p. 156.

previous articles. The most striking consequence of his Orthodoxism is the anti-Semitic characteristic of his discourse which was much moderate before.

Some of his later texts were later included in *Ortodoxie și Ethnocrație* together with an interesting annex named “Program of the Ethnocratic State”<sup>175</sup> which I think is the most fascist text ever written by Crainic and contained the most interesting statements regarding anti-Semitism. In his early years, Crainic had stated that: “We have not been, we are not and shall not be antisemites, because there is no cruelty in our souls against so many needy people who are suffering as we do, although they do not have our blood.”<sup>176</sup> However,

after 1933, the term enjoyed renewed popularity, however. To declare oneself an anti-Semite and openly praise anti-Semitism no longer dishonored an intellectual. Crainic did not hesitate to use anti-Semitism as a slogan of the new direction he represented; it became a guarantee of its validity: ‘Our spirit is healthy because it is anti-Semitic: anti-Semitic in theory and anti- Semitic in practice.’<sup>177</sup>

Crainic radicalization of his position can be seen best in two texts, one dedicated to Nicolae Păulescu<sup>178</sup> and the other written as a critique addressed to Constantin Rădulescu – Motru.<sup>179</sup> Placing himself in the continuation of Nicolae Păulescu’s Christian defensive against Jewish aggression<sup>180</sup>, Crainic stated that

Europe today is not stirred by a simple social war, nor by an ideological war. Today Europe is stirred by the war of the Talmud against the Gospel of Christ. The

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<sup>175</sup> Initially published in *Calendarul* in 1933, after his severance from the Iron Guard, “The Program of the Ethnocratic State” is an original application of the fascist corporatism to the Romanian society: “The Ethnocratic State sees the nation composed from different work social categories and professions... The professions and the work categories are organic, consequent categories of the national life.” (p. 248)

<sup>176</sup> Nichifor Crainic, „În marginea unei sărbători” in *Gîndirea*, 11/ 1931, p. 458.

<sup>177</sup> Leon Volovici, *National Ideology & Antisemitism*, p. 97.

<sup>178</sup> Nichifor Crainic, „Nicolae Păulescu, fondatorul naționalismului creștin” [Nicolae Păulescu, the founder of the Christian nationalism] in *Ortodoxie și Ethnocrație*, p. 127–138.

<sup>179</sup> “Mistificarea românismului” [The Mystification of the Romanianness] in *Ortodoxie și Ethnocrație*, p. 95–111.

<sup>180</sup> Noticed by Leon Volovici, *National Ideology & Antisemitism*, p.99.

democratic regime of the last century, its unlimited liberties in paroxysm after world peace, has given the Jewish people an insane courage and the messianic frenzy of the White Horse. ... Since the French revolution, Judaism has won success after success, and its progressive domination in the world is blinding it to its limitations. However, these excesses of an immoderate people will be the downfall of Judaism.<sup>181</sup>

For Crainic anti-Semitism was something borrowed from a cultural tradition went to the Junimists and especially their followers, namely people like Nicolae Iorga<sup>182</sup> and A. C. Cuza<sup>183</sup> and he felt somehow responsible to continue this tradition. Another factor which led to the radicalization of Crainic's speech against the Jewish minority was the rise of the Iron Guard movement with its highly anti-Semitic doctrine. Therefore, Crainic remained faithful to the intellectual tradition to which he always saw as a direct continuator, but on the other hand, although his political and cultural options were influenced by the Italian fascism which was known for its moderation regarding anti-Semitic measures, he embraced fully the anti-Semitism in order to remain in the sight of the Iron Guard which was gaining new political successes in the Romanian political sphere.

Accordingly, in "Mistificarea românismului" Crainic stood up as the defender of the true Junimist tradition which was anti-Semite against one of Iorga and Maiorescu's disciples, namely Constantin Rădulescu-Motru. In this article, after he resumed his view about Orthodoxism against a secular nationalism of Motru<sup>184</sup>, Crainic added one more feature to this Orthodoxism that is anti-Semitism:

Ethnocracy to which Romania from today tends is implicit xenophobe and anti-Semite because its domination in culture, politics, and in the social life postulates the reduction of the foreigners's influence, the most modest case, according to the

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<sup>181</sup> "Naționalismul sub aspect creștin" [Nationalism under Christian image] in *Ortodoxie și Etnocrație*, p. 143.

<sup>182</sup> For Nicolae Iorga's anti-Semitism, please see Răzvan Pârâianu, "Culturalist Nationalism and Anti-Semitism in Fin-de-Siècle Romania" in Paul Weindling & Marius Turda, *'Blood and Homeland': Eugenics and Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), p. 363

<sup>183</sup> Leon Volovici, *National Ideology & Antisemitism*, p. 22.

<sup>184</sup> He criticized Motru's book in another article "Românismul Dlui Motru" [The Romanianness of Mr. Motru], *Gîndirea* 7/ 1935, p. 192. As Zigu Ornea showed in *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 110-111, Crainic's critiques were both "false and slandering."

principle of numerical proportion. What kind of ethnocracy would be in the realm of culture when the press is in the hands of Jews and minorities who simulate our ideals replacing in reality with the ideals of their own race? If every nation is a *unicum*, how can we recognize ourselves in the thought in of the Jews which is determined by their own ethnical genius?<sup>185</sup>

Crainic's position about the minorities and the Jews is quite clear: in the best case a *numerus clausus* had to be introduced in order to reduce the influence of the foreigners in internal matters of Romania. Anti-Semitism remained in a principal characteristic of Crainic discourse in the "Program of the Ethnocratic State". After stating that "The law of the State is the law of Christ"<sup>186</sup> and "the life conception of the state is spiritualist"<sup>187</sup>, he came back to the one of his main themes which was expressed in the last of his ethnocratic principles, namely "the destruction of the Judaic parasitism."<sup>188</sup> This principle becomes manifest in chapter relating with the "ethnic policy" where Crainic in last point stated that Romanian state had "colonize Romanian people in the place of the Jews dispelled from the land properties" and that "medicines would be removed from the hands of the Jewish profiteers." Nevertheless, someone has to disagree with Dumitru Micu who stated that "Crainic embraced fully and integrally Nazism in his next years"<sup>189</sup>; Crainic always rejected Nazism for its unchristian character and after 1940 he was elected Ministry of Propaganda and became a leading intellectual during the regime of General Antonescu. Despite his pro-Nazi discourses, it is doubtful if Crainic converted to Nazism or if he believed in the validity of Nazi ideology.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Nichifor Crainic, *Ortodoxie și Etnocrație*, p. 109.

<sup>186</sup> Nichifor Crainic, „Programul statului ethnocratic”, *Ortodoxie și Etnocrație*, p. 245.

<sup>187</sup> Nichifor Crainic, „Programul statului ethnocratic”, *Ortodoxie și Etnocrație*, p. 251.

<sup>188</sup> Nichifor Crainic, „Programul statului ethnocratic”, in *Ortodoxie și Etnocrație*, p. 245.

<sup>189</sup> Dumitru Micu, *Gîndirea și gîndirismul*, p. 202.

<sup>190</sup> A poignant critique of Nichifor Crainic was issued by Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* [History and Myth in Romanian Conscience] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997), p. 53–54.



## 2.6. *Final remarks*

Nichifor Crainic's work is just a brief example of the way in which a mutation of the theological discourse on to the public and cultural sphere was possible in the interwar Romania. Although he was not interested in politics at the beginning of his career at *Gîndirea* journal and he framed nationalism from the perspective he knew best, namely Orthodox spirituality, Crainic wrote different texts especially after 1926– 1927 in which he suddenly changed his apolitical view to a more partisan view towards either the electoral progress made by Iuliu Maniu's Peasants Party, either to the emerging Iron Guard. The reasons behind Crainic's options were connected to his traditionalist philosophy which placed an important emphasis on peasantry and the identification between Christian spirituality and the Romanian village.

After 1933 Crainic became both pro-Legionary and a detached Legionary supporter. Crainic from *Calendarul* and *Gîndirea* was at the beginning of the year wrote in favor of the Iron Guard because he fell under the influence of his pro – Gardist colleagues from *Calendarul*, but also because he saw in the electoral progress of the Iron Guard among Romanian people and elite the incarnation of his philosophical traditionalism. After the assassination from 29<sup>th</sup> of December 1933 of the Prime Minister I. G. Duca, Crainic had to make a choice dictated by the reality that Iron Guard became a terrorist organization, but also to maintain his Christian prestige untouched. For his exit from the Legion contributed also the fact that among the Iron Guard's heterogeneous elite he could never become a leading ideologue and that after November 1933 Nae Ionescu became the official Mentor of the Legion.

After 1934, Crainic wrote extensively and he took refuge in a utopian political system which he called ethnocracy. Mixing together corporatism, Orthodoxism and anti-Semitism, Crainic proposed to his reader an original alternative to both Romanian fascism and the democratic regime. Because he believed in the idea of the monarchy and he anticipated the dictatorial wishes of King Carol II, the publishing of his most controversial book in 1936 was not a coincidence and he maybe was intending to become Carol's personal ideologue. Nevertheless, he will turn to General Antonescu who would later propose him to become Minister of Culture.

Crainic represents only one face of the Romanian traditionalism, a side which was receipted by the young generation only through the other mediations. Despite he was a leading theologian who joined the public sphere to defend his views and understandings of the Romanianness, Nae Ionescu would have the most durable impact of the young generation of Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran or Constantin Noica.

### 3. Nae Ionescu: the Radicalization of the Debate

#### 3.1. *Abstract*

The counter–alternative of the traditionalist camp was represented by Nae Ionescu, a Romanian philosopher and professor from Bucharest University. The aim of the present chapter is to present the radicalization of the ethnic definition offered by the Nichifor Crainic in the same age. To see if there is any connection between the two camps of the interwar nationalist discourse is another aim of this chapter. I will argue that the two camps represented by Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu, although it is obvious that Nichifor Crainic influenced deeply Nae Ionescu, never engaged into a seminal dialogue about the character of the Romanian nation. Several reasons for this lack of dialogue between the two intellectuals among which the most important were the separation between the Church and the State, the different approaches in understanding Orthodoxy and its connection with the Romanian nation, the fact that Ionescu was an institutionalized intellectual and a reputed professor at the University of Bucharest when Crainic struggled to impose himself as a leading intellectual and as an ideologue of the youth, different intellectual backgrounds, all of these factors insured that Nae Ionescu never engaged in a discussion about Romanian ethnicity with its homologue.

The last target of the chapter will be to underline the Orthodox features of Nae Ionescu’s ethnic ontology. The fact that Ionescu interconnected Orthodoxy and nationality against the National Peasants Party of Iuliu Maniu with a massive base of Greek-Catholic supporters brings another issue on this agenda: the political implications behind the

nationalist speech were present and influenced Nae Ionescu's intellectual option. The fact that ethnic ontology was shaped by a philosopher reflects also the fact that Romanian nationalist discourse entered into a new phase, that is, from a cultural definition of the Romanian ethnicity to a radical ontology of the nation in which the ontological feature which assured the Romanian character was to belong to the Orthodox confession.

The chapter is divided into two parts. On the one hand, I will deal with the intellectual career of Nae Ionescu before 1930. Although he collaborated with Nichifor Crainic's *Gîndirea* journal where he published two texts and he was deeply involved in a serious meditation about religion and Orthodoxy, I will argue that Nae Ionescu's understanding of Orthodoxy was philosophical, rather than theological. Major themes from Nae Ionescu's language are also present in this part of his career: the contempt against democracy and positivism seen as related phenomena, the emphasis on lived experience as the only criterion of authenticity, the primacy of the spiritual over reason, etc.

The second part of the chapter engages in a close analysis of Nae Ionescu's ethnic ontology and the reasons behind it. Statements like "we are orthodox because we are Romanians and we are Romanians because we are Orthodox" appeared in Ionescu's language after 1930, when he already supported King Carol II against Iuliu Maniu's party. On the other hand, the ethnic ontology which Ionescu developed linked Orthodoxy and Romanianess so closely that his formula proved to be very successful in the intellectual environments of the Iron Guard. His texts from the late 1930s proved that Ionescu's radical syllogism regarding Romanianness was invested in the Church in an attempt to politicize the sacred, namely to transform the Romanian Orthodox Church into a political ally for the emerging Iron Guard.

### 3.2. *The First Years*

Born on June 16, 1890 in Brăila, a small port on the Danube Nae Ionescu studied at the University of Bucharest (1909 – 1913), continued in München, Germany for a doctorate in Philosophy and Logics.<sup>191</sup> During 1913 up to 1919 Ionescu was a student in Germany at the University of Muenchen where he prepared his doctoral dissertation in Logics. Among his professors, there were Oswald Külpe (d. in 1916) an epistemological realist, founder of the “Würzburger psychologische Schule”, Klaus Baeumker (1853–1924), specialist in the philosophy of the Middle Ages, Erich Becher (1882–1929), a supporter of “psycho-vitalism”, Ernest von Aster a specialist on Kant and psychoanalysis and also two Husserlians: Moritz Geiger (1880–1937) specialist in aesthetics and the philosophy of science and Alexander Pfänder. I will argue that Husserlian philosophy opened to Ionescu the taste for a new kind of philosophy and namely ontology. As Husserl tried to emphasize, ontology became the main target of the Philosophy and every constitutive element of the reality had to be rebuilt according to ontological rules.

Another capital influence from the same period was the intellectual circle led by Stefan Anton George, an esoteric poet which advertised himself as a messianic person representing a new kingdom which will be led by intellectual or artistic elites, bounded by their faithfulness into a strong leader. Some writers sympathizing with George’s ideas congregated around him in a *Georgekreis* (George circle) which would have a tremendous effect over the rising Nazis and the elite who was sympathizing with Hitler’s camp. I will argue that is possible from this cultural trend very popular Ionescu took his idea about the intellectual leading the state.

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<sup>191</sup> It is interesting that his academic title had been contested by some in the interwar period.

Returned from Germany, he taught at the Faculty of Philosophy from University of Bucharest as professor of metaphysics and logics. His first lectures delivered were entitled “The Reality of Spiritual Life” (1921-22), “Metaphysics and Religion” (1923–1924), “The Phenomenology of Religious Practice” (1924-25), “The Philosophy of Protestantism” (1927–28), “The Philosophy of Roman Catholicism” (1929–30).<sup>192</sup> From this period the most touching memory of Nae Ionescu came from his student, Mircea Eliade:

Structurally anti – oratorical, he introduced the Socratic technique into the University – in the form of familiar, warm, dramatic lectures. He quickly created a style which the students imitated: direct speech, short sentences, humorous illustrations... Ironic rather than prophetic, familiar rather than sober, Nae Ionescu does not dominate like an oracle nor thrill like a Pythia. His word conquers and his thought troubles<sup>193</sup>

Professor of Metaphysics and Logics, Nae Ionescu thought together with Constantin Rădulescu–Motru, one of the most known disciples of Titu Maiorescu, two of the most interesting course from the Faculty’s curricula. Unlike Nichifor Crainic who after graduating from the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest experienced World War I and its immediate aftermath went to study Philosophy in Viena without being accepted as a professor in any of the Romanian universities, Nae Ionescu succeeded to become a lecturer at one of Romania’s finest university, the University of Bucharest.

The aim of the present chapter is to provide a descriptive framework of another side of the debate about the Romanian ethnicity in interwar Romania, that represented by Nae Ionescu. His search for spirituality behind culture and the troubled historical context in which he lived led him to a radical definition in which Romanianness was based on the Orthodox characteristic of the Romanian people. To state that Romanianness was a feature only of the Orthodox citizens of Romania and that no other Christian denomination had the

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<sup>192</sup> For informations regarding this side of the activity please see Mac Linscott Ricketts, *Mircea Eliade. The Romanian Roots*, I (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1988) p. 94.

<sup>193</sup> Mircea Eliade, “Introduction” to Nae Ionescu, *Roza vânturilor 1926 – 1933* [The Winds Cross] (Bucharest: Roza vânturilor, 1990), p.3.

right to consider itself as the “national” confession of the Romanian people was a direct assault on both Greek–Catholic claims for the Romanian national culture and against the Westernizers camp who considered Orthodoxy as the worse thing that could happen to the Romanian people. The last section of the present chapter will look on the institutionalization of the Nae Ionescu’s ethnic ontology (Sorin Antohi).<sup>194</sup> More precisely, taking into account some of later texts of Ionescu I will try to point out that his cultural, non–ecclesial identification between Orthodoxy and Romanianness as fundamental categories became more addressed to a Church supporting vividly the electoral program of the Iron Guard.

In the context of King Carol II restoration on the Romanian throne and the Iron Guard’s political emergence, I will argue that, though Nae Ionescu was influenced by Nichifor Crainic’s ethno–theological speech, there is no other detectable connection between *Gîndirea* as an intellectual movement advocating for an Orthodox traditionalism and Nae Ionescu’s later writings. This is paradoxical: even though Crainic started to popularize in writing his ideas after 1921, and Nae Ionescu started in 1919 to teach at the University of Bucharest it seemed that he already was contaminated with an anti–positivist, anti–rationalist trend which at that particular time was the cultural mainstream in Europe. By the time when Crainic published already his main texts concerning views about the Orthodox traditionalism, Nae Ionescu did not produce any solid text from which a concise, clear option for the traditionalist camp could be detected. After 1926, when he started to write regularly in *Cuvîntul* [The Word] newspaper, he began to popularize his convictions regarding the connection between nationalism and Orthodoxy. As a coincidence, it is the same year when Nichifor Crainic finally took over *Gîndirea* as a director and began to spread his ideas.

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<sup>194</sup> See Sorin Antohi, “Romania and the Balkans From geo - cultural bovarism to ethnic ontology”, *Tr@nsit online*, Nr. 21/2002, Internet accessed June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007.

The apparent lack of communication between Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu is better explained by the differences between them. First and most important there is an obvious difference regarding the intellectual sources of these intellectuals. If Crainic's intellectual expertise relied mostly on theological and mystical sources like Merejkovski, Berdyaev, Dostoyevsky, Rainer Maria–Rilke and the Fathers of the Church<sup>195</sup>, Nae Ionescu's intellectual background seemed to be more secular and oriented towards intellectual variety which lacked in Crainic's case.

Crainic's theological training and his solitary readings in Philosophy could not match an expert in the field like Nae Ionescu. This is one of the explanations why Crainic and Ionescu, despite the fact that they were contemporaries and wrote almost in the same key never quoted each other or found the other's work relevant. Regarding the relevance of their training, I will also have to point out that Romanian Constitutions from 1866 and 1923 stipulated the complete separation between the State and the Church which had as a direct consequence the rejection from the public sphere of theologians and clerics. The separation brought about their complete disappearance from the printed press or universities and Nichifor Crainic's efforts in *Gîndirea* came to eradicate this prejudice still present in interwar Romanian culture. Nae Ionescu, although he published in the late '30s in *Predania*, *Iconar*, or other Christian orientated magazines, never overcame this separation between theology and intellectual life and continued to see Crainic as a theologian, rather than an intellectual constructing a solid nationalist perspective grounded in the spirituality of the Romanian village. Also I think that spirituality had different meanings and different sources for the two. As Keith Hitchins has pointed out,

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<sup>195</sup> Please see Keith Hitchins, „Gîndirea: Nationalism in a Spiritual Guise” in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania, 1860 – 1940. A Debate on Development in a European Nation* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1978), p. 149.



...Ionescu sensed the advent of a new age of spirituality, which, for him, had had its origins in the revolt against positivism in the 1890s and was approaching maturity in the post – war Europe. Everywhere Ionescu saw man struggling to achieve a new ‘spiritual equilibrium’, to ‘return to God’ in order to escape the ‘frightening emptiness’ of scientism and technology and of the remote supreme being of the rationalists. For a decade he had observed this great ferment of the human soul, as he called it, with a critical eye until at last, in 1931, he declared himself that a genuine spiritual revolution was underway in Europe...”<sup>196</sup>

Like Crainic, Nae Ionescu integrated in the anti-positivist generation of intellectuals that after 1890s, under Nietzsche and Spengler and later on also Einstein, Jung or Freud’s influence decided to break up with the acknowledged, old-style positivist approach of Philosophy and to expand his knowledge by proposing something innovative both to his students and fellow-colleagues from the University. Unlike Nichifor Crainic who would remain always encapsulated in the theological categories of his education, Nae Ionescu had a more cultural and seductive approach. He was member of a generation of young intellectuals who were in the academic mainstream and represented the cultural elite of Europe which, in its revolt against the positivist approach of the 19<sup>th</sup> century attempted to set bridges to unfamiliar territories like mysticism, the unconscious or physical relativity and to propose this into university curricula. As Mac Linscott Ricketts has accurately underlined,

...while Nae Ionescu was a ‘revolutionary’ in Romania’s leading university, he was in accord with the spiritual mood of postwar Europe in general. In such men like Rudolf Otto, Karl Barth, Giovanni Papini, the French Neo-Thomists, Nikolai Berdyaev, etc., there was than a decided swing away from positivism, historicism, and scientism, in the direction of religious problems and concerns<sup>197</sup>.

Nae Ionescu approached this “spiritualist” trend in Europe from a cultural and intellectual position, namely as a PhD student and lecturer at Faculty of Philosophy from

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<sup>196</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866 – 1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 315

<sup>197</sup> Mac Linscott Ricketts, *Mircea Eliade*, p. 98.

Bucharest. Crainic was influenced by the stream of these ideas during his Viennese years, but his exposure to these ideas was probably filtered through his theological training. On the other hand, Nae Ionescu perceived mysticism and spirituality as characteristic landmarks of his fundamental concept called *trăire*<sup>198</sup> [living - experience] which meant an emphasis on experience rather than on reason. This was also a motif for braking up with the obsolete Romantic approaches on culture, philosophy and mysticism.

Also, different from Nichifor Crainic's freelancer career, Ionescu's rapprochement with a spiritualist direction in culture was a direct consequence of the fact that immediately after the end of World War I he became an institutionalized intellectual, with a chair in the University. Here, he was confronted with the Junimist secular approach of his mentor, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru who expressed publicly his views regarding the evolution of Philosophy as a science: "Contemporary philosophy is characterized by the fight against mysticism and romanticism: those two currents which have oppressed European thought from the rise of Protestantism."<sup>199</sup> Ionescu's reply to Rădulescu-Motru's skepticism was an obvious shift from the positivist position of his former professor: "I am sure that very soon the separation of philosophy from religion will be a point won, and I cannot believe, consequently, that the reaction against mysticism... will characterize the philosophy of the near future."<sup>200</sup>

Another issue which has to be clarified is the fact that Ionescu was never a traditionalist in the true sense or close to *Gîndirea*. Although some of Ionescu's interpreters like Keith Hitchins found him to be a member of the *Gîndirea* traditionalist camp<sup>201</sup>, I will argue that he was never a sympathizer and his adhesion was formal. Although he published

<sup>198</sup> A Romanian translation of the German *Erlebnisphilosophie* which was a reaction towards positivism in last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning the of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>199</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, "Filosofie contemporană" [Contemporary philosophy] in *Societatea de mîine*, 18 May 1928, p. 298-299.

<sup>200</sup> Nae Ionescu, *Roza vînturilor*, p. 47.

<sup>201</sup> See also Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, p. 315.

two texts in *Gîndirea*<sup>202</sup>, he can be considered neither a supporter of the traditionalist project because as an intellectual whose area of action was the city I do not think that he cared much for the importance of the Romanian village, nor a direct disciple of Crainic, although there are obvious affinities between their speeches and careers. Furthermore, his polemics with Radu Dragnea<sup>203</sup> and the fact he was criticized severely in *Gîndirea* show an evident difference of opinion and attitudes between the Orthodoxist right-wing side of *Gîndirea* and Nae Ionescu spiritualist, but Christian-free articles.

Last but not least, the reasons behind Ionescu's involvement in the debate regarding the definition of Romanianness are different from Nichifor Crainic's motivations. He is attacking a Greek-Catholic minority on political and not on theological grounds. Unlike Crainic, Nae Ionescu used an apparent theological framework to deal with a politicized confession, namely the Greek - Catholic faction of the National Peasants Party. Ionescu's definition of ethnicity was a direct result of a political feud and not just of a cultural and theological undertaking.

Crainic on the other hand, until 1927, remained a right-wing intellectual warning about the risks of a cultural crisis in which Romania could go into if the Romanian elite would not develop an authentic and nationalist culture. After this date, Crainic entered politics supporting Maniu Peasants Party and after the braking of the party in different factions he was one of the most fervent supporter of the restoration on the throne of Carol II in 1930 because he never believed in the efficiency of democracy depicted as a product of a positivist spirit and because he knew about the authoritarian plans of the future monarch.

Between 1930 and 1933 there is a certain period of transition in which Nae Ionescu, unlike Crainic who attempted to become the official ideologue of the young generation, remained the mentor of his students and attempted to convince Carol II to appoint him

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<sup>202</sup> „Despre Individualismul englez” [About English individualism] in *Gîndirea* 2/ 1924, p. 33-37 and „Juxta Crucem” *Gîndirea* 4/ 1927, p. 121–124.

<sup>203</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 24.

Prime Minister. It seems that in Nae Ionescu's case the temptation for politics prevailed over being a mere ideologue serving the regime or the leader as Crainic. His illusions would be soon shattered by the King's unsympathetic position to Nae Ionescu's wish to overcome the democratic system for a more authoritarian government. Feeling betrayed by the King and seeing that many of his former students beginning with Mihail Polihroniade joining the Iron Guard, Ionescu started to advocate in favor of the Iron Guard. After a visit in Germany in 1933 he became even more convinced that Iron Guard was the right solution and opened the pages of *Cuvîntul* to legionary propaganda. After 1933, Ionescu became the official ideologue of the Iron Guard<sup>204</sup> and guided his former students to join the Iron Guard.

I will argue that in Nae Ionescu's articles there are two stages of development. First, between 1919 and 1930 there is a stage of intellectual quest and he is obviously calibrating his discourse relating to a large sum of topics. He wrote on topics which went from complicated logics and mathematics to mystic and religious texts published mainly in some journals from Bucharest among which the most important were *Ideea Europeană* and *Gîndirea*. In this particular period, Ionescu is not very found of an Orthodoxist background and he is attempting to popularize his intuitions on the existential character of philosophy or the need for a deep spirituality against the Cartesian spirit which, according to Ionescu, was at the root of positivism.

In the second half of Ionescu's career, the mixture between Orthodoxy and nationalism came into picture, making Nae Ionescu one of the actors of the interwar debate concerning the character of Romanian ethnicity. His texts were motivated by several factors including his rapprochement to the Iron Guard and the nationalist and Orthodox milieu that influenced his conception and he began to back a nationalist ideology which legitimized his position as the main politician of the most radical political movement. I will argue that Nae

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<sup>204</sup> Please see Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914–1940* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1995), p. 281 & Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1990) p. 83.

Ionescu radicalized the Orthodoxist definition of Romanianness up to a point where not even Nichifor Crainic would take it. The radicalization of the nationalist trait in Nae Ionescu's speech relied on the fact that he wanted to comply with the political expectations of the Iron Guard which were highly mystical and a Christian heresy.

### 3.3. Ionescu's Quest for Spirituality

Nae Ionescu started his intellectual path with a lecture on the "Funcția epistemologică a Iubirii"<sup>205</sup> [The Epistemological Function of Love] in which he advocated for the mystical character of culture and philosophy. He stated that "the goals of knowledge are unquestionable in God; but the beginning and the course of the process of knowledge relies on God. Accordingly, it is the will of a God full of compassion for us to redeem ourselves by knowing him and this is not a spontaneous action of ours, undertaken by us, from reasons established from us."<sup>206</sup>

Again, "the strict logical consequence of Orthodoxism is the hermit. And this is in fact the characteristic of our religious life against the West... None will contest the social superiority of the Catholic; but again we cannot ignore the immediate spiritual highness of Orthodox faith, also his therapeutic force."<sup>207</sup> Nae Ionescu and his interest in Orthodoxy from this lines seemed to be connected with the two fundamental words from Nae Ionescu's vocabulary: authenticity and spirituality.<sup>208</sup> Nevertheless, the discourse of Nae Ionescu was

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<sup>205</sup> „Funcția epistemologică a iubirii” [The Epistemological Function of Love] in *Neliniște metafizică* [Methaphysical unrest] (Bucharest: The Publishing House of the Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1993) p. 75.

<sup>206</sup> Nae Ionescu, *Neliniște metafizică*, p. 87.

<sup>207</sup> Nae Ionescu, *Neliniștea metafizică*, p 93

<sup>208</sup> Mac Linscott Ricketts, *Mircea Eliade*, p. 81.

not associated with an attempt to define Romanian nationality or to engage into a cultural debate regarding Romanian culture and the perceptions of the Romanian nation.

On the other hand, it seemed that for Nae Ionescu started to anchor the scientific knowledge from God which was quite innovative taking into account the positivist secular experience of Rădulescu–Motru and P. P. Negulescu and this was quite seductive for a generation searching for something new. It is believed that Ionescu already started to crystallize a spiritualist approach about Romanian culture, although Ionescu’s speech was not a traditionalist or an Orthodoxist approach of the Romanian culture or Romanian nation. Ionescu continued his criticisms against Western philosophy in another article published in the same period.<sup>209</sup> By proposing philosophy as a “spiritual attitude in front of the Universe”<sup>210</sup>, Nae Ionescu revolted against Descartes’ understanding of philosophy<sup>211</sup> which although considered God as functional concept and used in its developments, shaped an egotistic system based only on human reason and not on spirituality which guaranteed an access to transcendence. Therefore, Ionescu considered this egotistic approach of Descartes as the philosophical ground for the emergence and the growth of democracy as a political system.<sup>212</sup> It did not seem that even from that period Ionescu engaged himself in a strong–minded fight against democracy in which he never believed as a politician, nor as an intellectual, by contesting what he thought was the very source of democracy, namely Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*.

As Fritz Stern has argued in the case of Benn<sup>213</sup>, Nae Ionescu was a typical intellectual who, in his first intellectual stage decided to charge every aspect of the

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<sup>209</sup> „Descartes–părinte al democratismului contemporan” [Descartes – Father of contemporary democracy] in *Neliniștea metafizică*, p. 94 – 98.

<sup>210</sup> „Descartes – părintele al democratismul contemporan”, p. 95.

<sup>211</sup> What is interesting that Spengler was highly criticized in *Ideile* (1923)[The Ideas] in *Neliniștea metafizică*, p. 112 – 113.

<sup>212</sup> Nae Ionescu, „Descartes–părintele democratismului contemporane”, p. 96.

<sup>213</sup> George Mosse, “Fascists and the Intellectuals” in George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution. Towards a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999), p. 99. Also, Fritz Stern, *Politics of Cultural Despair. A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (New York: Anchor Books, 1965), p. 52 and following.

bourgeois society and democracy with a problematic load. I will argue that as Fritz Stern's case studies show, Ionescu's initial revolt against democracy was backed by a religious agenda as well. A first text in which Ionescu tackled the religious/ Orthodox agenda was published in *Gîndirea*.<sup>214</sup> It is strange that Ionescu decided to write a text into a journal in which there was already a theologian like Nichifor Crainic who already published by 1923 numerous texts about how Orthodoxy back a Romanian nationalist agenda and it seems from the text that although Crainic spoke about Orthodoxy as well, they have never perceived each other as potential allies.

Ionescu contested again the validity of Western individualism and he introduced in the text Orthodoxy, in general sense: "Less jealous on her political rights and freedoms— manifesting often mostly under the form of a passive resistance – [individuality] has a consequence on the one hand the asocial character of orthodoxy, creative values in the political order." Ionescu argued that individuality and specificity were somehow characteristic for the Orthodox world. He is asking a difficult question which Crainic never dared to ask: what was the contribution of Orthodoxy as such?

Despite Crainic's mixture between orthodoxy and nationalism, Ionescu's usage of the Christian concepts and Christian revelation has nothing in common with Crainic's understanding and view mainly because Ionescu did not have in mind a theological purpose which is evident from his text. Another reason for mixing mysticism as Zigu Ornea has pointed out quoting Ionescu was the fact that anti-rationalism was associated perfectly with anti-democracy.<sup>215</sup>

Another issue on the agenda of Nae Ionescu from this period was a critique of the 1848 spirit as Zigu Ornea has poignantly pointed out by setting Nae Ionescu into a

<sup>214</sup> N(icul)ae Ionescu, „Individualismul englez” in *Gîndirea* 2/1924.

<sup>215</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p.59.

comparative framework in which Crainic and Mircea Florian were also included.<sup>216</sup> One of most interesting text of Nae Ionescu was “Intre statul de drept și instituțiile de fapt”<sup>217</sup> [Between the State of Law and the Actual Institution] in which, as Crainic before him, Ionescu voiced a bitter critique against the 1848 generation of Romanian intellectuals: “when the Romanian revolutionaries transplanted the European systems to their countries they were met with skepticism and raillery: this looked like braking off with the past, doing violence to continuity of evolution. Worthless is the detail that reaction kept up its criticism only at the upper layer of the social life: culture and politics; it did not touch the economic revolution which equally meant a break–off of continuity but which no one minded.”<sup>218</sup> Practically, without knowing, Ionescu assumed unconsciously the same critiques as the Junimists and Crainic before him<sup>219</sup> on the basis that 1848 generation brought with it a lack of authenticity in Romanian culture. It is not clear if Ionescu as Crainic and the Junimists taunted to the 1848 generation an inadequate, inorganic, cultural and political path for Romania; Ionescu was even more preoccupied with the fact that Romanian authenticity could be harmed by irrational imports coming from the West.

### *3.4. After 1926. The intermingle between Orthodoxy and nationalism*

After Ionescu became a permanent journalist for *Cuvîntul* [The Word] May 2, 1926, with the departure of Nichifor Crainic who was promoted as high–official in the Ministry of

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<sup>216</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romania Extreme Right*, p. 19 – 20.

<sup>217</sup> *Cuvîntul* VI, 1886/ 1930, p. 1.

<sup>218</sup> Apud Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 20.

<sup>219</sup> For Crainic’s please see chapter II of the present paper.



Religious Denominations, Nae Ionescu started to publish extensively on different matters. What puzzles mostly was his interest in theological issues about which he wrote extensively in this period, especially in his page at *Cuvîntul* called *Duminica* [The Sunday].<sup>220</sup> Here Nae Ionescu issued his first articles in which he conned Romanianess and Orthodoxy. The reasons behind his attitude are numerous, but two are the fairly consistent. First the historical context in which Nae Ionescu lived and in which the Greek–Catholic Peasants Party from Transylvania took over power in 1929.<sup>221</sup> Champions of democracy against the Liberal financial and political oligarchy, Iuliu Maniu and his Party were against a future return of the abdicated Prince Carol and they did what stood in their power to maintain the Regency as it was established by King Ferdinand before his death. Ionescu wrote several articles<sup>222</sup> against Maniu especially after the return of Prince Carol and his enthronement as Romania’s King (7 Iunie 1930) in whose favor Nae Ionescu advocated bitterly.<sup>223</sup> Nae Ionescu’s deep interest in promoting Carol was related with the fact that he believed that Carol would encourage an authoritarian regime with Nae Ionescu as a Prime Minister. Another reason for encouraging Carol was the fact that Ionescu did not believed in democracy and the system of political parties and he wrote extensively about their failure under the pressure of Bolshevism and Fascism<sup>224</sup>.

Another issue on Ionescu’s agenda was the affair of the Concordat between the Romanian state and Vatican. If in Crainic’s case this had as consequence the radicalization of his Orthodoxist discourse which emphasized the relation between Nation and Orthodoxy, in the case of Nae Ionescu the Concordat brought another issue in his attention. By taking

<sup>220</sup> Please see „Pentru reîntrirea în Ortodoxie” (1926) [For the re-entrance into Orthodoxy] in *Neliniștea metafizică*, p. 64 – 67 or „Ce este Predania” (1937) [What is the Tradition] in *Neliniștea metafizică*, p. 70–73.

<sup>221</sup> Please see Ioan Scurtu & Gheorghe Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX (1918 – 1848)* [The History of Romanians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century] (Bucharest: Paideea, 1999), p. 194.

<sup>222</sup> “Iuliu Maniu, om politic” (15 July 1930) [Iuliu Maniu as a politician] in *Roza vînturilor*, p. 148–151; “Eroarea inițială” [The Initial Error] (16 July 1930) in *Roza vînturilor*, p. 152–156; „Problema restaurației” [The Problem of Restoration] (19 July 1930) in *Roza vînturilor*, p. 160–163; „Între dictatură și sugrumarea vieții” (23 of July 1930) [Between dictatorship and the strangulation of Life] in *Roza vînturilor*, p. 167- 171.

<sup>223</sup> Scurtu – Buzatu, *Istoria românilor în secolul XX*, p. 212.

<sup>224</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 30.

into account the emergence of the National Peasants Party which was formed mainly from Greek–Catholics which began to create their own historiographical canon and claimed for their Church the same status as the Orthodox Church had, that of “national” church, Nae Ionescu tried to conserve the unique character of the Romanian people. Underlining the inner–connection between Orthodoxy and Romanianness, Nae Ionescu entered into a debate regarding the character of the Romanian people which had been already prepared by Nichifor Crainic.

Orthodoxy for Nae Ionescu was something different as for Nichifor Crainic. If in the case of the latter there is an obvious theological understanding of Orthodoxy as the Romanian Orthodox Church, because he came from a different intellectual background, Nae Ionescu had a philosophical understanding of Orthodoxy depicted in the categories of mysticism which was characterized by a cultural expression of the human experience and supra–knowledge which was accessible only through experience<sup>225</sup>. Nevertheless, I will argue against Dora Mezdrea when saying that Theology and the Church for Nae Ionescu played only a secondary role, Ionescu being revolted by the Church subordination to the state and of the incapacity of the faculties of Theology to approach a cultural understanding and exposition of the Christian dogma. Also, Ionescu never wanted to become a theologian or a representative of the Church in the secular sphere. One can easily note that he did not played with the usual categories of Orthodox theology, but rather he made a personal selection, using them in his personal interests.

One of the first texts in which Nae Ionescu adhered to the nationalist approach of Orthodoxy was “Biserica țăranilor”<sup>226</sup> [The Church of the Peasants] in which Nae Ionescu

<sup>225</sup> Dora Mezdrea, „Nae Ionescu - teologul”, p. 6 in Nae Ionescu, *Teologia. Integrala publicisticii religioase* [The Theology. The Integral of his Religious Articles] (Sibiu: Deisis, 2003).

<sup>226</sup> Nae Ionescu, “Biserica țăranilor” (8 Noiembrie 1926) in *Roza vînturilor*, p. 34 – 36.

explained “why our peasant Orthodoxy<sup>227</sup> is not a religion with a guiding church in the matters of faith, but rather a kind of cosmology in which the elements of doctrine stringently orthodox incarnate in concrete realities; why Christianity has descended in our everyday life contributing at the formation of a specific Romanian universe, presented so specifically by our folklore.”<sup>228</sup> When someone reads Ionescu he immediately thinks at Lucian Blaga’s meditations about primitive Christianity, non–ecclesial and, disseminated in the Romanian culture, assured the complete originality of traditional culture from Romanian villages and a Romanian way in understanding the nation. In this text the only difference between Blaga and Nae Ionescu is that the last one believed that Orthodox dogmas were the starting point of a specific Romanian culture. Ionescu is also different from Crainic who in his early texts considered that Romanian culture was created up to a point in and by the Orthodox Church. Ionescu rejected the relevance of the institution of the Church in this process and it seems he suggested that traditional culture was a direct mixture between Orthodox dogma and the Romanian genius as expressed by the Romanian rural culture.

Ionescu’s conclusion to his article expressed also in his future articles and the radicalization of his future diatribes regarding the Romanian nation: “Christianity is an essential part of our national being.”<sup>229</sup> Nae Ionescu’s statement needs more clarifications in order to understand it according to the author intentions. Christianity for Nae Ionescu meant always Orthodoxy, although, as I already mentioned, this concept was used in a different sense than that of the theology of the Church. Again, one can note that, as Nichifor Crainic

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<sup>227</sup> As Irina Livezeanu has pointed out in *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation building, & Ethnical Struggle, 1918 – 1930* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.311: “To stress the organic links binding ethnic Romanians together, Ionescu increasingly, after 1930, used the spelling *Rumân* instead of the standard *Român* for the ‘Romanian’ in his newspaper columns in *Cuvîntul* the independent opposition newspaper he directed and which turned decisively toward the Iron Guard in the 1930s. In its 1930s usage, *Rumân*, a medieval term for enserfed peasant, suggested that those who had not shared the ancestral experience of the Romania peasant could not be part of the Romanian political community. Thus through his arguments and semantics Ionescu invoked the ideal Romanian state: peasantist, ethnically pure, Eastern Orthodox, and economically self–sufficient.”

<sup>228</sup> Nae Ionescu, „Biserica țăranilor” in *Roza vînturilor*, p. 35.

<sup>229</sup> Nae Ionescu, „Biserica țăranilor” in *Roza vînturilor*, p. 35.

before him, Ionescu also associated Orthodoxy with the essence of the Romanian nation which was seen in the traditional categories of the Romanian village. Like Crainic, it seemed that for Nae Ionescu the Romanian nation was identified with the peasantry seen not as an electoral mass, but rather in the cultural categories in which other traditionalists (Blaga, for example) used to perceive the Romanian rural population.

Following 1927 Concordat affair in which he criticized everyone involved, including Vasile Goldiș, the Romanian artisan of this treaty<sup>230</sup>, Nae Ionescu engaged in bitter critique against the Greek–Catholic, Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, trying to privilege Orthodoxy as he depicted it and its relation with the Romanian people. The most interesting text about this relation was published in 1930s, a direct reply to Greek–Catholic intellectuals who claimed that not only the Orthodox majority were Romanians, but the Greek–Catholic minority as well. Ionescu’s reply was prompt and it represented a landmark for the construction of Romanian nationalism.<sup>231</sup> Answering to a Romanian Greek–Catholic<sup>232</sup> who accused the Romanian Orthodox Church of discrimination, Nae Ionescu charged the Greek Catholics (represented in Ionescu’s text by Samuel Micu<sup>233</sup>) and the Catholics (represented by I. C. Brătianu<sup>234</sup>) which in comparison to a Jew citizen of Romania (named in the text Bercu Solomon) could be labeled as “good Romanians” but not as true Romanians because of their affiliation to a different Church, other than the Orthodox Church. Ionescu defined nationality even more flagrant and clear as Nichifor Crainic did before him:

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<sup>230</sup> Nae Ionescu, „Concordatul” [The Concordate] in *Roza vînturilor*, p.51–54. In this article is interesting that Ionescu is reiterating once more his convictions regarding the relation between Orthodoxy and Romanianess: “The [Romanian Orthodox] Church - more clearly some who militate in their favour – use to identify the Romanian people with Orthodoxy. In this matter we stand together.” (p. 53).

<sup>231</sup> The article was „A fi bun român” [To be a good Romanian] (30 octomber 1930) in Nae Ionescu, *Teologia*, p. 392–394.

<sup>232</sup> The Greek Catholic that Ionescu was debating was professor I Frolo.

<sup>233</sup> Samuel Micu was an 18<sup>th</sup> century Romanian Greek–Catholic bishop who struggled for the rights of the Romanian people in Transylvania under the Habsburg rule. For Samuel Micu, please see Keith Hitchins, “Samuel Clain and the Romanian Enlightenment in Transylvania” in Keith Hitchins, *Studies in Romanian National Consciousness* (Rome: Nagard Publisher, 1983).

<sup>234</sup> I. C. Brătianu was a Romanian Prime Minister belonging to the National Liberal Party and was considered to be the artisan of Great Romania, but also the one who send into exile Prince Carol, the political option of Nae Ionescu. Brătianu converted to Catholicism on his death bed.

To wish to be a Romanian does not mean also to be a Romanian. To be a Romanian means a natural state, an equilibrium formula of existence from which flow, through the course of the life itself, certain forms... To be Romanian means to have a certain essence from which flow with an absolute necessity certain attitudes and gestures. Our will has nothing to say in these circumstances because we cannot overcome naturally ourselves unless by stopping to be ourselves<sup>235</sup>.

Writing these statements, Ionescu had in mind was to set aside Romanianness from Catholicism and Greek–Catholicism whose believers received only the appellative of “good Romanians”. I will argue that this portion of text which Ionescu wrote in his polemic with some Greek–Catholic intellectual was the base for a Romanian ethnical ontology in which Orthodoxy would have played a major role. At that particular age, by stating that Greek–Catholics were not ontologically “Romanians”, but only “good Romanians” as citizens of Romania, he was practically denying the right to call themselves Romanians to almost a half of Transylvania’s population. The reasons behind such a radical attitude against the Greek–Catholics were varied but in Ionescu’s case this was related with his constant disaffection with one of the most known Greek–Catholics from Transylvania, namely Iuliu Maniu, the leader of the Romanian Peasants Party. As a Prime Minister, Iuliu Maniu had an uncompromising position in the case of Prince Carol’s restoration as the rightful heir of the Romanian crown after he abdicated in favor of his infant son, Mihai. Nae Ionescu supported Carol through all means and the negation of the Romanian character of almost 50% of Transylvania’s population who were confessionally Greek–Catholic was a direct attack against Maniu’s own electorate and Maniu himself.

Although he never mentioned in the text the word Orthodoxy, Ionescu responded to other reactions to his inflammatory text by furthering his statements and by linking even

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<sup>235</sup> „A fi bun român” in Nae Ionescu, *Teologia*, p. 393.

clearer nationality with confession. Answering to another Greek–Catholic<sup>236</sup> who saw the statements of Ionescu as a historical injustice, the philosopher from Bucharest decided to take another step: to introduce Orthodoxy in the line of debate. In his text “Noi și catolicismul”<sup>237</sup> [Us and Catholicism], Ionescu stated that:

For the matter at stake it is not sufficient to see first that Orthodoxy and Roman–Catholicism exist as distinct historical realities; and second that naturally, historically, the Romanians are most of them – in their *normality* - in their past and present reality Orthodox... As soon as the confession as a historical reality is a part from the other historical reality, namely the nation, it follows that in the definition of the concept “Romanian” and, consequently, in the constituency of the reality of “Romanian” enters as a note, an essential component, Orthodoxy. To be “Romanian” not just “good Romanian”, but purely Romanian, means also to be Orthodox.<sup>238</sup>

Ionescu’s statements came close to what Crainic said about the relation between Orthodoxy as a spiritual reality with the indication of the fact that Crainic meant by Orthodoxy a certain spirituality filtrated through the peasant culture of the Romanian people. Against a substantial Greek–Catholic camp in Transylvania, Ionescu applied to his definition of ethnicity an Orthodox character, but I will rather argue that Ionescu’s position to downplay Orthodoxy, even if this Orthodoxy was just a prefabricated concept, in order to discredit Iuliu Maniu in favor of King Carol. The fact that in these statements Ionescu associated Orthodoxy and nationality, confession and ethnicity, reflected the process of an ethnical crystallization in Ionescu’s view without which no Romanian authenticity or unique Romanian character was possible. Ionescu went far beyond Crainic’s most optimistic expectations and offered to the Romanian traditionalist camp a perspective which will be later radicalized and extended to other minorities. What is the most interesting and

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<sup>236</sup> Bishop L. Russu.

<sup>237</sup> Initially published in *Cuvîntul*, VI, 1988/ 1931, p. 1 under the title „A fi bun român” [To be a ,good Romanian’] in Nae Ionescu, *Teologia*, p. 395.

<sup>238</sup> „Noi și catolicismul” in Nae Ionescu, *Teologia*, p. 395.

paradoxical aspect of Ionescu's exclusive definition of Romanianness was the fact that he deprived of Romanian ethnical character a confession, namely the Greek–Catholics who were responsible in shaping a Romanian identity in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning 19<sup>th</sup> century, namely the *Transylvanian School* (Școala Ardeleană) which was composed by Greek-Catholics.<sup>239</sup>

Ionescu substantiated his argument in another article<sup>240</sup> which defines even better Ionescu's argument why he chose Orthodoxy and not Roman – Catholicism and Greek–Catholicism as the main confessions characterizing Romanian ethnicity. When he compared Romanianness<sup>241</sup> and Catholicism, Ionescu found between them an irreconcilable gap because, he argued, “Orthodoxy and Catholicism are not just different confessions, but also... *two fundamentally different capitalizations of existence as such.*”<sup>242</sup> Practically, Ionescu claimed with this sentence that Romanians could not be Catholics because it was destined in their own being to be Orthodox, namely the Orthodox spirituality was encapsulated in the ontological categories of the Romanian people<sup>243</sup>. What Ionescu did by stating that Orthodoxy and nationality were ontologically interconnected in the Romanian being was basically to establish a sacralization of the ethnical categories by including Orthodoxy and nationality as ultimate criteria in determining the authenticity of Romanian ethnicity, namely of being “good” or “true” Romanian.

I think that this is the most flagrant difference between Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu. If Crainic understood Orthodoxy as a mark of Romanian spirituality which was

<sup>239</sup> Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* [History and Myth in Romanian Conscience] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997), p. 53.

<sup>240</sup> „Sorții de izbândă ai ofensivei catolice” in *Cuvîntul*, 1991 (5 noiembrie 1930), p. 1 in Nae Ionescu, *Teologia*, p. 396–397.

<sup>241</sup> Ionescu is using an interesting term, namely *rumînie* to describe Romanian character. I will argue that a *rumîn* in the Middle Age meant a peasant with little or no land at all. I think that by using this term Ionescu associated Orthodoxy and a peasant reception of it which had nothing to do with the official Church. For the original meaning of the term please see Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral society: The Formation of a Balkan Colony* (New York: Academic Press, 1976), p. 51.

<sup>242</sup> Nae Ionescu, „Sorții de izbândă ai ofensivei catolice” in Nae Ionescu, *Teologia*, p. 397.

<sup>243</sup> Zigu Ornea, p. 81 stated that: „Catholicism and Orthodoxy are not mere denominations with a certain dogmatic and cultural difference, but two fundamentally different utilizations of existence, in general.”

disseminated in the culture of the Romanian village and was not denying the Romanian character to Romanians of other Christian confessions, Ionescu built a definition of Romanianness which considered that Orthodoxy was an ontological feature of every true Romanian citizen. “We are Orthodox because we are Romanians and Romanians because we are Orthodox”<sup>244</sup>, stated Ionescu and by this affirmation he issued a confessional based ontology of the Romanian ethnicity which is the most radical in the debates on defining Romanian ethnicity. This remained a theorem which was not even applied by the Iron Guard.

### *3.5. After 1933. Nationalism and Orthodoxy in the Context of the Iron Guard*

After November 1933 when he opened *Cuvîntul* to the Iron Guard<sup>245</sup>, Nae Ionescu started to be considered the Mentor of the movement, its ideologue<sup>246</sup> in order to punish King Carol II’s willingness to listen to his counselors and his friends from the *camarilla*.<sup>247</sup> As Mircea Eliade has pointed out, Ionescu “was always in a continuous and opened contradiction with the Palace. For a long time Carol did not listen his advices and in his articles from *Cuvîntul* Nae Ionescu was criticizing elegantly but accordingly the royal

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<sup>244</sup> Nae Ionescu, „Sortii de izbîndă ai ofensivei catolice” in Nae Ionescu, *Teologia*, p. 397.

<sup>245</sup> Armin Heinen, *Die Legionen “Erzengel Michael” in Rumänien, Soziale Bewegung und Politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus*, (München: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 1986), (Romanian edition București: Humanitas, 1999) p.171

<sup>246</sup> For this hypothesis please see Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel*, p. 84.

<sup>247</sup> *Camarilla* was a number a close friends of Carol among which were industrial magnats like Auchnit and Malaxa, bankers like Aristide Blank, officers like Urdăreanu, etc. They started after Carol’s return on the throne to influence his political decisions and to support his dictatorial dreams. For more details please see Misha Glenny, *Balkans. Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers* (London: Granta Books, 1999), p. 446.



politics, alluding clearly to the camarilla.”<sup>248</sup> As Nichifor Crainic who was Iron Guard’s ideologue before him, Ionescu, thorough his students or directly, as a close advisor to Codreanu, continued to export his ideas about the connection between Orthodoxy and Romanianness in the ideology of the Iron Guard movement<sup>249</sup>. Although he was involved in the Nazi investments in Romania, he continued to write and thus support the Iron Guard’s rise to power despite the latter’s adoption of the Italian version of fascism.

Two articles continued Nae Ionescu’s line before 1930, “Biserică, stat, națiune”<sup>250</sup> and “Naționalism și Ortodoxie”.<sup>251</sup> In the first article Nae Ionescu, after the famous burial from 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1937 of Ioan Moța and Vasile Marin killed on the front during the Spanish civil war, reacted against the State’s decision to ask the Romanian Orthodox Church not to involve in politics.<sup>252</sup> Against the intrusion of the State to which the Holy Synod replied with a decision in which it was stated that Romanian Church’s implication into politics was a national duty, Nae Ionescu made some stumbling statements which confirmed that his ideas from 1930 were not a coincidence.

“1. The Church has *the right* to support those actions – even political actions – which militates for the ‘conception of existence’ and the ‘ethic program’ of Orthodoxy; 2. *the right* of our Church to ask the Romanian state to impress upon the Romanian state a national character which emanates from the Orthodoxy of this Church.”<sup>253</sup>

Nae Ionescu is applying his confessional understanding of the Romanian nation to the Orthodox Church and this institution becomes, together with the Iron Guard, the guarantee

<sup>248</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Memorii* [Memories] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1991), p. 286.

<sup>249</sup> See also Claudio Mutti, *Le penne del’ Arcangelo. Intellettuali e la Guardia di Ferro* (Nae Ionescu, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Constatin Noica, Vasile Lovinescu) [The Plumes of the Archangel. The Romanian Intellectuals and the Iron Guard] (Milan: Barbarossa, 1994); Romanian edition (Bucharest: Anastasia, 1997), p. 45.

<sup>250</sup> Nae Ionescu, „Biserică, stat, națiune” [Church, state, nation] in *Predania 4/ 1937*, p. 1–3.

<sup>251</sup> Nae Ionescu, „Naționalism și Ortodoxie” [Nationalism and Orthodoxy], *Predania 8–9/ 1937*, p. 1–3.

<sup>252</sup> About the Moța–Marin burial and its implications in the fascist ideology please see Valentin Săndulescu, „Sacralised Politics in Action: the February 1937 Burial of the Romanian Legionary Leaders Ion Moța and Vasile Marin” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 8, No. 2 (2007), p. 259 and following.

<sup>253</sup> Nae Ionescu, „Biserică, stat, națiune” [Church, state, nation] in *Predania 4/ 1937*, p. 1.

of the Romanian character. This shift in the cultural development of Nae Ionescu's view on the relation between Orthodoxy and the nation to an institutionalized form embodied in the Romanian Orthodox Church as the rightful censor of the Romanian nationality. Practically, Ionescu transferred his ethnical, confessional ontology and transformed it into a clerical ideology in the relation between the Church and the State. By asserting to the Church a "right" which the Church never had in the Romanian state, Nae Ionescu struggled for the right of the Church to have a political opinion, namely to sustain the political camp which, according to Nae Ionescu, supported best the creed of the Church, namely the Iron Guard.<sup>254</sup>

In his second article<sup>255</sup>, Nae Ionescu polemized about the relation between Orthodoxy with one of Nichifor Crainic's pupils, namely Radu Dragnea and he tried to show once again that "nationalism is the attitude which draws all the consequences from the understanding of the naturally and necessary fact that every man belongs without the possibility of abstraction to a nation... nationalism is not just a political attitude as Mr. Dragnea wants us to believe, but a polyvalent attitude which covers in the same way the spiritual and economical, the political or the cultural-aesthetic sectors of our activity."<sup>256</sup> Therefore, for Nae Ionescu the nation and nationalism became the main political attitude possible in which Orthodoxy was nothing more than a fundamental category; I will argue that nationalism mixed with Orthodoxy in Nae Ionescu view remained the only alternative for a Romanian cultural and political attitude. Orthodoxy remained for Nae Ionescu synonym with a Christian spirituality which came to back a nationalist political ideology in a secular public sphere. Basically, Nae Ionescu, despite Nichifor Crainic who wanted to infuse a cultural essence to his ethno-theological discourse in order to approach the laic space, came across Orthodoxy from the academic secular space wishing to reframe the

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<sup>254</sup> The most recent investigation on this topic was made by Mirel Bănică, *Biserica Ortodoxă Romană. Stat și societate în anii '30* [The Romanian Orthodox Church. State and Society in the '30s] (Iassy: Polirom, 2007), p. 124.

<sup>255</sup> Nae Ionescu, „Naționalism și Ortodoxie” [Nationalism and Orthodoxy], *Predania* 8-9/ 1937, p. 1-3.

<sup>256</sup> Nae Ionescu, „Naționalism și Ortodoxie” [Nationalism and Orthodoxy], *Predania* 8-9/ 1937, p. 2.

nature of the nationalist discourse trying to achieve a new approach in defining the Romanian character.

Therefore, one of the last statements of Nae Ionescu from the end of his article states that “the community of the love of Church identifies itself structurally and spatially with the community of destiny belonging to the nation. This is Orthodoxy.”<sup>257</sup> Orthodoxy identified for Nae Ionescu with the Orthodox Church which was the only institution which could reunite both the nation and its spirituality under the same roof. I suggest that Nae Ionescu’s interest in the Orthodox Church does not mean that Nae Ionescu was giving a vote of confidence to the Romanian Orthodox hierarchy or the Holy Synod, but rather to the almost 3 000 Orthodox priests who joined by that hour the Iron Guard. This religious presence in the Iron Guard assured a great prestige to the movement and I think that at this particular time Ionescu had already started to identify the Church and Orthodoxy with the clerics who supported the Iron Guard.

On the other hand Ionescu ended up in the point from which Nichifor Crainic started the debate about the connection between Orthodoxy and the definition of the nation: namely to the Church. The blend of the confession and nationality was the next step on Nae Ionescu’s agenda: from a spiritual mode of existence of the true Romanian, Nae Ionescu derived his ethnical, confessional ontology and institutionalized it. The consequence was that Ionescu transformed also the Church into an institution which supported Romanian nationalism on social and political grounds. If Orthodoxy served as a conceptual tool in order to better specify Romanianness and to produce a radical, innovative definition of the Romanian nation, the Romanian Orthodox Church was transformed into a homologue supporting the social and political realization of the nationalist project of Nae Ionescu

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<sup>257</sup> Nae Ionescu, “Nationalism și Ortodoxie”, *Predania* 8 – 9/ 1937, p. 3.

according to which all other Christian denomination and especially the Jews<sup>258</sup> had to be persecuted and be deprived of the Romanian ethnicity which was a privilege reserved only to the Orthodox majority.

### 3.6. *Final remarks*

Nae Ionescu was an intellectual marked by a deep revolt against modernity and the positivist spirit which governed the Romanian university and academic life. In his early years he became interested into an alternative to the Romanian ossified academic life and proposed an emphasis on spirituality and mysticism conceptualized in a cultural and apolitical key. In this period an aesthetic approach on religion and an exploration on political grounds made Ionescu an intellectual who, as Crainic in the same period, attempted to find his way by constructing an innovative approach of philosophy and religion through the lance of the need for a deep spirituality, as a cure against the mechanized civilization coming from the West. Nae Ionescu popularized his ideas about the necessity of a spiritual background behind any act of authentic culture from his rostrum in University and his intellectual discourse had a huge impact on the young generation coming to his lectures.

After 1926, when he was hired at *Cuvîntul* and after the affairs of the Concordat, the emerge of the National Peasants Party with his Greek–Catholic elite, and the restoration of Prince Carol II as King, he approach another stage into his intellectual speech in which Orthodoxy and nationalism were intermingled in the most radical definition in the Romanian interwar debate. Stating that Romanianness was tied with Orthodoxy or that ethnicity was connected strongly with a certain Christian confession was a base for the

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<sup>258</sup> Nae Ionescu, *La question juive et le réponse de 'n orthodoxe des années trente* (Paris: Librairie Roumaine Antitotalitaire, 1997), p. 13–56. Also, Leon Volovici, *National Ideology & Antisemitism. The Case of the Romanian intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford : Pergamon Press, 1991), p. 105 – 107.

direct contestation of any political, territorial and civil right of the religious minorities living in Romania. If Nichifor Crainic never questioned the authentic Romanian character of minorities in Romania on religious grounds, but rather said that any future Romanian culture had to be shaped from rural culture in which folklore and Orthodox dogma were interconnected, Nae Ionescu approached a more extremist stance and excluded from the relation between Orthodoxy and nationality any other individual who did not share the first criteria of his theorem. As Lucian Boia has observed, Orthodoxy “like any other religion, is not, a national, but a trans–national religion. More, the orthodox idea has represented for almost two centuries the main propagandistic argument of Russia in its expansionist politics towards Constantinople and, obviously, across the Romanian space.”<sup>259</sup> As other critics from the interwar period who had pointed out the same critique against Ionescu and Crainic, Boia noticed the main problem of Ionescu’s and Crainic’s theory.

The last stage of Ionescu’s career was marked by the export of his ethnic ontology to the Church which was seen through the lance of the fascist commitment of Ionescu. By applying to an institution a definition of the Romanianness which transformed the Church from a passive into an active role on the Romanian political scene, I will dare to argue that Ionescu was fabricating a political legitimizing ally which could help the Iron Guard in its bid for power. The Church through his 3 000 priests and many high clerics sympathizing with the movement sniffed this ideology and supported directly the Iron Guard as if the Church was annexed and became a legionary cell. In this context, one of Codreanu’s statements from 30 of March, 1938, when King Carol assumed full power and instituted his authoritarian regime with Patriarch Miron Cristea as Prime Minister, that “from now on, we [the Iron Guard] are the true Church” is a direct consequence of Nae Ionescu’s ethnical ontology.

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<sup>259</sup> Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, p. 53

## 4. The debate after the debate. The Posteriority of the 1930s Generation

### 4.1. *Abstract*

The 1930s Romania became a battlefield between different political forces backed by different intellectual directions. The traditionalist orientation became more radical and the interwar nationalist project imbued in the highly flamed intellectual discourses joined the extremist forces of the right wing parties in the political arena. In this political process both Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu gave a helping hand building and shaping ideologically the discourse of the traditional nationalists as expressed by the Iron Guard led by Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu.

The aim of the present chapter is to look at the posteriority of both Nae Ionescu and Nichifor Crainic after 1948. In Nae Ionescu's case the generation of intellectuals of the 1930s represented the continuation of his intellectual project, although their understanding of ethnic ontology was Orthodox-free. More precisely, by exercising his infectious charisma over his students Nae Ionescu determined his former students to join the Romanian fascist movement, namely the Iron Guard. I argue that the 1930s generation of Romanian intellectual joined the Iron Guard for several personal reasons like unemployment or their political convictions. I will provide two explanatory case studies, namely Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran whom I consider to be the most representative of the new generation of intellectuals whose discourses express best the failure of Nae Ionescu radical formula even among his students. Though they had highly nationalist convictions, their

rapprochement with Corneliu Zelea–Codreanu’s movement was a continuation of a nationalist cultural understanding of the nation and not a direct continuation of Nae Ionescu confessional ethnic ontology.

After 1948, Nae Ionescu became a *persona non grata* for the new regime in power and his intellectual succession could not stand to an arbitrary totalitarian regime wanting to limit any access to a plurality, even on cultural grounds. The failure of Nae Ionescu’s intellectual project through his succession is explained by several factors. These include his support for a fascist organization which turned, together with the other democratic parties, into the main enemy for the totalitarian Communist Party. The fact that Ionescu died in 1940 and he did not survive to see the emergence of the Communist regime transformed him into a wasted possibility for a regime which downplayed even its enemy intellectuals for its own profit. Another major factor in Nae Ionescu’s lack of appeal for the Communist regime was the fact that even in his own age Ionescu’s radical definition of the Romanian nation based exclusively on the Orthodox character of the people had no intellectual succession, people like Constantin Noica constructing an ethnic ontology without the confessional character which stressed the relevance of Orthodoxy as the ultimate criteria in discerning the true character of the Romanian nation.

For Nichifor Crainic I argue that there was no future generation to continue his nationalist project after 1948 but himself. In support of this statement comes the fact that 1932 generation educated and created by Nichifor Crainic fell under the influence of Nae Ionescu and ended up in the Iron Guard just as the generation who came later. Unlike Nae Ionescu, Nichifor Crainic survived World War II and hard years of imprisonment and was able *to sell* his intellectual expertise to the new regime. What was more interesting was the fact that in *Glasul Patriei* all the former collaborators of Crainic from the right–wing of *Gîndirea* (Radu Dragnea, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Petre–Marcu Balș, Radu Gyr, etc.) together

with Crainic started to back the Communist regime in its search for a Communist national approach. Nichifor Crainic and his former collaborators had no choice but to write what the regime was asking even if this meant sometimes texts which were against their own convictions. Nevertheless, the shift of Nichifor Crainic's intellectual discourse from 1962 in *Glăsuł Patriei* contained only allusive statements about Orthodoxy and its relation with the Romanian nation, mostly because there was no debate concerning this aspect and the Romanian state through its instruments (The Securitate, Uniunea Scriitorilor, etc.) controlled the intellectual development of a unique ideology of Romanian nationalism. Although the topic is challenging, it is not the purpose of the present chapter to engage in a close analysis of the motivations or the mechanism employed by the Romanian Communist State in its attempts to shape a nationalist approach of Marxist–Leninist ideology. The present chapter will analyze only two case studies, Nichifor Crainic and Lucian Blaga, and I will attempt to see how their intellectual speech changed, or not in the Communist era under the influence of the totalitarian regime.

The chapter will be divided into three parts. In the first part I present the alignment of the 1930s generation influenced by Nae Ionescu to the Iron Guard and its discourse regarding the Romanian nationality as the first step in Nae Ionescu legacy. Two case studies will be considered in this first part of the chapter that of Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran to demonstrate that although Ionescu's charisma determined both to join the Iron Guard, his ethnic ontology remained a project with no continuity among his disciples in Nae Ionescu's formula. Despite the radicalization of their discourse under the influence of their fascist sympathies, both Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran intellectual discourses, though they spoke about the need of a spiritual background for a national culture and for defining the Romanian nation, remained uninfluenced by the Orthodox category of their Mentor's ethnic ontology. Therefore, their Legionary convictions and the lectures of their Mentor about an



ontological interconnection between Orthodoxy and Romanianness did not succeed to catch the attention of Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran.

Furthermore, I will investigate the reintegration of Nichifor Crainic in *Glusul Patriei* and the inflation of nationalistic motifs borrowed from the interwar period which is proof enough of the fact that Ceausescu's regime tried to reshape its approach to Communism in a nationalist manner by using the "interwar experts". Despite his former condemnation for being an enemy of the People and a fascist supporter, after 1968 Crainic's reinsertion in the country cultural elite is a typical political maneuver of the totalitarian regimes: when one wants to avoid a problematic foreign tutelage, one has to reinvent its ideology on a different political angle. Regarding Nichifor Crainic's discourse one can notice that Crainic although is writing about monasteries and the spirituality of the Romanian village, the relevance of Orthodoxy for Crainic's undertaking was irrelevant because issues like religion and Orthodox Church played an insignificant role for the Romanian Communist Party.

For the Romanian political regime the nationalist version of Communism was the proper line to follow in order to achieve political independence from URSS and international prestige. Inside this section of the chapter another example of intellectual of *Gîndirea*, namely Lucian Blaga will be brought into discussion. Formerly engaged in the traditionalist debate regarding the character of the Romanian nation, Lucian Blaga has almost the same intellectual trajectory as Crainic by attempting to adjust his discourse according to the expectations of the Communist regime.

These two sections of the paper will be followed by a comparative analysis between Ceausescu's nationalism and the nationalism of the interwar period. The communist regime imported nationalism not from abroad, but rather from their political hinterland much like

Katherine Verdery argued in her book.<sup>260</sup> This process was not engineered in a single stage. From making journals like *Glusul Patriei* in the mid-1960s to publishing Eliade's writings in the beginning of the 1980s there was a long road in the conscious attempt of Ceausescu's regime to bring to life a national Communist canon. The process was complex and needs further investigations. My final conclusion is that Romania's modern and contemporary history is still heavily influenced by the traditionalist national creed which had different metamorphoses and was interpreted by different communities of readers for different historical purposes and in different political contexts.

#### *4.2. The 1930s generation. Mircea Eliade and Emil Cioran facing the Iron Guard*

In early 1930s, the general feeling of the Romanian young elite was pessimistic. Economical problems and the great depression led to a high rate of unemployment among functionaries and especially among graduated students.<sup>261</sup> Fighting against Communism and attempting to involve themselves in the Romanian political life were the alternatives given to the Romanian youth.<sup>262</sup> If they did not embrace the official discourse of different political parties or the Royal House, the Romanian youth started to slope towards the competition: the traditionalists represented by Nichifor Crainic's circle gathered around *Gîndirea* and *Caledarul*. Crainic advocated for traditionalist nationalism, based on village's spirituality,

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<sup>260</sup> Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990)

<sup>261</sup> See Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 29–48.

<sup>262</sup> Hitchins, Keith, *Rumania 1866–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Romanian translation (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), p. 268.

on a primacy of Orthodox Christianity in front of the secular regime proposed by the Romanian state after 1918 and an emphasis on the necessity of a true Romanian culture, deprived of any imports from the West.<sup>263</sup> Crainic's synthesis from *Gîndirea* proved to be very seductive in the 1920s and most of the 1930s intellectuals started to publish and to make their way in the Romanian public sphere under Crainic's patronage.<sup>264</sup>

Nae Ionescu's charisma was even more mesmerizing than Crainic's. Ionescu's anti-modern lectures were a stage in the formation of Eliade and Cioran as young intellectuals.<sup>265</sup> He welcomed and proposed in the pages of *Cuvîntul* his prestigious students among which the most important were Mircea Eliade or Mihail Sebastian. After 1933, when he decided to unofficially join the Iron Guard, his option had tremendous consequences over his students.<sup>266</sup>

In the case of Mircea Eliade things are not as clear cut as everybody thought they will be. The Romanian roots of the intellectual remained fairly unknown to the West until several scholars started to point out his political itinerary which led Eliade from a moderate nationalism to openly-declared fascism. If one looks at the articles written by Eliade in the beginning of the 1930s one can see the ambiguity of Eliade's position for both Communism and fascism. He states that "the Communist arsonists of churches are hooligans – and so are the fascist persecutors of the Jews... Look to the right: men beheaded in Germany, thinkers persecuted in Italy, Christian priests tortured in Germany, Jews expelled. Look to the Left: Christian priests stood in front of the firing squads in Russia, freedom of thought punished

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<sup>263</sup> Please see Keith Hitchins, "Gîndirea: Nationalism in Political disguise" in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), *Social Change in Romania 1860–1941. A debate in a European country*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 141.

<sup>264</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right. The 1930s*, (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1999), p.86.

<sup>265</sup> For this aspect, please see Matei Călinescu, "The 1927 Generation in Romania: Friendships and Ideological Choices (Mihai Sebastian, Mircea Eliade, Nae Ionescu, Eugen Ionescu and E. M. Cioran)" in *East European Politics and Societies* 15, No. 3 (2001), p. 650.

<sup>266</sup> Matei Călinescu, "The 1927 Generation in Romania: Friendships and Ideological Choices (Mihai Sebastian, Mircea Eliade, Nae Ionescu, Eugen Ionescu and E. M. Cioran)", p. 653.

by death, the hooliganism of Communism in Paris...”<sup>267</sup> Eliade wrote his diatribes against communists and fascists alike because in this particular period Eliade was not interested in politics, but rather he considered all political systems destined to an imminent annihilation in front of a spiritual revolution. Influenced probably by Nae Ionescu, Eliade embraced this ideal of a spiritual national revolution which had nothing in common with the democratic order.

In 1934 he wrote an important text in which he declared that:

We are sick of political and politicizing revolutions, we are sick of the revolutions imitating Lenin or Hitler. I think there no sentient young person who had not had enough of Karl Marx, Mussolini, communism, fascism, and I don't know what else. We should like to hear something different from the same subtle distinction between 'right-wing' and 'left-wing' between proletarian revolution and national revolution.<sup>268</sup>

He even condemned the Iron Guard together with all other parties advocating a spiritual revolution: “Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, reactionary advises his legionaries to vote for a democrat like Iuliu Maniu. The democrats become the suppressors of freedom, while the theoreticians of violence complain of violence... The year 1933 began with a threatening sympathy for Communism and movements of the Left and it has ended with the popularity of the Iron Guard.”<sup>269</sup> In another article<sup>270</sup> Eliade describes a certain conflict between the intellectuals of the young generation and the politicians of the Romanian Liberal regime. As Florin Țurcanu has pointed out<sup>271</sup>, 1935 represented for Eliade the turning point in his views towards fascism; although he condemned Communism as bitterly

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<sup>267</sup> *Credința* 3/1932.

<sup>268</sup> Mircea Eliade, “Cîteva cuvinte mari” [Some Great Words] in *Vremea* VII, no. 341, June 10 1934.

<sup>269</sup> *Vremea*, VII, no. 343, June 15 1934.

<sup>270</sup> Mircea Eliade, “Realități Românești” [Romanian Realities] in *Vremea*, 16 June 1935

<sup>271</sup> Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade. Le Prisonnier de l'Histoire* (Paris: Editions la Decouverte, 2003); Romanian edition (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007) p. 312.

as ever, he started to advocate strongly for international fascism<sup>272</sup> and for the mission of the Romanian people in history.<sup>273</sup> The change in Eliade's speech is obvious. The reasons behind this are still obscured by historical dimness and insufficient scholarly analysis. If in the previous years Eliade wrote about fascism and in favor of the Iron Guard and continued to publish extensively in the *History of religions*<sup>274</sup>, Eliade's rapprochement with the Guard became obvious in 1937 when he published extensively in support of the electoral campaign of Codreanu and his movement. At this particular point of the paper a certain remark must be made: although Eliade is advocating for a spiritual revolution against fascist, nationalist or political revolutions, what he has in mind is a different cultural project from his mentor, Nae Ionescu. Although Eliade confessed that Nae Ionescu's classes determined him to reconsider the problem of faith, for Eliade in this period under the direct influence of Nae Ionescu, "religion, consequently Christianity, could not have been a question of *faith* or dogma, but rather a question of *personal experience*."<sup>275</sup> It means that Orthodoxy did not play any role at all for the young Eliade who was obviously more preoccupied to become a believer. I argue that this was the peak of the religious experience which he will later see embodied in the Iron Guard mysticism.

There are many factors involved in the fascist conversion of Eliade. This is the moment when several scholars entered the debate. Zigu Ornea considers that Eliade's involvement can be explained only through a certain process of fulfillment by the Guard of a certain messianic expectation.<sup>276</sup> In the case of Eliade this kind of presupposition is rather insufficient and it does not explain his later evolutions. Zigu Ornea tried to exonerate Eliade by pointing out that the 1937 involvement and membership in the Iron Guard was a moral

<sup>272</sup> Mircea Eliade, "Romania in eternitate" [Romania in eternity] in *Credința*, 13 October 1935.

<sup>273</sup> Mircea Eliade, "Popor fara misiune?!" [People without a mission?!], *Vremea*, 1 December 1935.

<sup>274</sup> For Eliade's prodigious career, please see Mac Linscott Ricketts, *Mircea Eliade. The Romanian roots*, Vol. 2, (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1988), p. 713 and passim.

<sup>275</sup> Florin Ţurcanu, *Mircea Eliade. Le Prisonnier du l'Histoire* (Paris: Editions la Decouverte, 2003), p. 51.

<sup>276</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 166.

duty of a man who considered that the task of his generation was embodied in the spiritual revolution. Relying on primary sources, Ornea disregards the historical context and other possible explanations for this kind of attitude.

Mac Linscott Ricketts provides a historical and textual context in which Eliade chose to join Codreanu's party.<sup>277</sup> What is more interesting in this perspective is the interconnection between the anti-democratic trends flowing in the Romanian culture from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards<sup>278</sup>. But what singles out Linscott Ricketts from all Eliade's interpreters is the accent he places on the Romanian messianic mission. Starting from a quote from Eliade<sup>279</sup>, Mac Linscott Ricketts develops this theory of messianic character, but this theory does not explain why Eliade joined the Iron Guard. Rather,

...his beliefs coincided at many points with those of Codreanu. He did not share the Guard's anti-Semitism, but he was able to overlook it as an almost inevitable concomitant of the Romanian nationalism. Undoubtedly, his admiration and friendship for Nae Ionescu – who had been closely associated with the movement since late 1933, though he was never a member – had the effect of drawing him towards the Legion. When he became convinced in the fall of 1936 that the Legion's aims are non-political, that its purpose was to transform life and "resurrect" the nation, and that it was indeed capable of setting a Christian revolution in Romania – Eliade began to lend his moral support.<sup>280</sup>

It is clear that the American exegete of Eliade embraced the traditional core of interpreters who drew a direct connection between Nae Ionescu's intellectual project, imbued with nationalism and the belief in messianic character of the Romanian people. His influence both on the Iron Guard and the young generation determined Eliade to take a final

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<sup>277</sup> Mac Linscott Ricketts, *Mircea Eliade. The Romanian Roots*, p. 792 and passim.

<sup>278</sup> Mac Linscott Ricketts, *Mircea Eliade. The Romanian Roots*, p. 900.

<sup>279</sup> "We must create so much and on so many planes that every Romanian will have the consciousness of belonging to a chosen people. We have plenty of evidence that the Romanian people can be a chosen people. It has created, throughout the course of the history, lasting forms of government, it has created a distinctive style of collective rural life, it has been amazingly fertile in folkloric and artistic creations, and in a hundred years of modern life it has produced at least three geniuses of universal structure."

<sup>280</sup> Mac Linscott Ricketts, *Mircea Eliade. The Romanian Roots*, p. 921- 922.

decision regarding the movement. This perspective was embraced by most scholars working on the Romanian Iron Guard<sup>281</sup>, Eliade and the 1930s generation. This influence of Nae Ionescu was also highlighted by some other contemporaries<sup>282</sup>, but it does not fully explain Eliade's actual decision. Mac Linscott Ricketts seems to forget some other important factors from the interwar Romania. I argue that spiritual revolution and the messianic character of the Romanian people had nothing in common with the ethnic ontology which Nae Ionescu professed. Dissimilar to Mac Linscott Ricketts who spoke about a "Christian revolution" caused by the Iron Guard and in which Eliade believed, I must underlined that, although it was messianic and nationalist, as someone can see from Eliade's religious interests<sup>283</sup>, Orthodoxy never played an important role for him. Accordingly, Nae Ionescu's radical definition of the Romanian ethnicity had no appeal to the young Eliade.

Florin Țurcanu<sup>284</sup> in his monograph dedicated to Eliade considered him "a prisoner of history". Țurcanu emphasized a stunning conclusion: Nae Ionescu's legacy was not the only factor responsible for Eliade's later political decision. Rather, Țurcanu assembles some neglected explanations for Eliade's political behavior. Beside Ionescu's infectious charisma or the Romanian messianic feeling, there were other decisive factors for joining the Iron Guard. Political opportunism<sup>285</sup>, the friendship with Mihai Polihroniade<sup>286</sup> and the ideal of new political elite<sup>287</sup> were important factors in taking the final decision. Another decisive moment for joining the Iron Guard was Moța and Marin's death and their funerals in 13

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<sup>281</sup> Francisco Veiga, *La Mistica del ultranacionalismo. Historia de la Guardia de Hierro*, (Bellaterra: Publicacions de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1989)/ Romanian edition (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House, 1995), p. 230 – 231 & Armin Heinen, *Die Legionen "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien, Soziale Bewegung und Politische Organization. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus*, (München: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 1986); Romanian Edition (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), p. 293.

<sup>282</sup> Please see Mircea Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu asa cum l-am cunoscut* [Nae Ionescu how I met him] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993), p. 56.

<sup>283</sup> Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade. Le Prisonnier du l'Histoire* (Paris: Editions la Decouverte, 2003), p. 83–85 : in this pages the Romanian author has point out that Eliade religious interests went from religious indifference in the mid–1920s to Buddhism in the beginning of the 1930s.

<sup>284</sup> Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade. Le Prisonnier du l'Histoire*, p. 326 and passim.

<sup>285</sup> Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade. Le Prisonnier du l'Histoire*, 344.

<sup>286</sup> Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade. Le Prisonnier du l'Histoire*, p. 346.

<sup>287</sup> Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade. Le Prisonnier du l'Histoire*, p. 347.

January 1937<sup>288</sup> and reflected in the first openly pro–Iron Guard article<sup>289</sup> after which nothing could stop him from becoming an active member, involved in the legionary propaganda in Prahova county and elected as deputy on the electoral lists of the Party *All for the Fatherland*.<sup>290</sup> From this stance of writing in the support of a “new legionary aristocracy”<sup>291</sup> to advocating for a legionary regime was just a step.

His later political career leaves no doubts about Eliade’s involvement in the legionary regime before and after 6<sup>th</sup> of September 1940. After the murder of Codreanu in November 1938 and his imprisonment at Moroieni<sup>292</sup>, Eliade became a cultural attaché at the Romanian legations in London and Lisbon where he continued to hope for a nationalist/fascist victory over the Soviet Union during the war. His admirations for Salazar, the authoritarian leader of Portugal, his conviction that England and the democratic powers should lose the war are enough proof of the fact that Eliade’s involvement and contamination with the fascist doctrine was genuine.<sup>293</sup>

Emil Cioran’s rapprochement to the fascist movement is another case of a Romanian intellectual seduced by the Iron Guard that later preferred to hide his fascist past. Although 4 years younger than Eliade, Cioran entered under the same spell of Nae Ionescu whose student he also was in Bucharest University and became a fanatic supporter of the Iron Guard, although he never entered officially in the movement. As Marta Petreu has pointed out<sup>294</sup>, his fascination with fascism began in 1933 when he was in Germany.<sup>295</sup> The deep

<sup>288</sup> “I have joined the Iron Guard because of Moța and Marin’s deaths” [my translation] in Mircea Eliade, *Europa, Asia, America... Corespondență* [Europe, Assia, America... Correspondence] Vol. 3 (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004), p. 475.

<sup>289</sup> Mircea Eliade, “Ion Moța și Vasile Marin” [Ion Moța and Vasile Marin], *Vremea*, 24 January 1937.

<sup>290</sup> For more details, please see Armin Heinen, *Die Legionen “Erzengel Michael” in Rumänien, Soziale Bewegung und Politische Organization. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus*, Romanian edition, p. 306.

<sup>291</sup> Please see Eliade’s article “Noua aristocrație legionară” [New Legionnary Aristocracy] in *Vremea*, 23 January 1938.

<sup>292</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 209.

<sup>293</sup> Sorin Alexandrescu, *Mircea Eliade despre Portugalia*, Humanitas, 2006.

<sup>294</sup> Marta Petreu, *An Infamous Past. Emil Cioran and the Rise of Fascism in Romania*, (Chicago: Ivan. Dee, 1999) p. 8.



impression provoked by the Nazi seizure of power, the desolating political landscape of his home country, his deep attraction towards totalitarianism and towards the vitality of the Nazis all played along in his choice. The integration of intellectuals like Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Klages to the fascist goal was another striking feature of fascism which had convinced him that fascism was the best alternative for the Romanian political specter.

He expressed his fascination with Hitler and Germany in a series of articles. The most representative<sup>296</sup> expressed his admiration towards the Third Reich and its nationalist revolution, although in a moderate sense. As in Eliade's case, Cioran chose to enter the Iron Guard as a member of the Criterion circle. Influenced by Mihai Polihroniade, Cioran discovered the Iron Guard and he became a "heretical" sympathizer whose commitment for the Guard's leader and movement were linked with a deep inclination for a totalitarian regime or dictatorship as contemporary Germany and Italy had<sup>297</sup>. There is another track to follow and that was presented by Sorin Antohi in his *Civitas imaginalis*. Speaking about Cioran in terms of cultural stigmata characterizing a Transylvanian Romanian coming from his ethnical elite who had to acknowledge himself as being inferior to his German, Jewish and Hungarian colleagues whom he met in the time of his highschool years in Sibiu, Cioran developed a psychological obsession regarding Romania's cultural insignificance. His despair as depicted in his books and articles and his frustration towards the immobility of the Romanian state in developing an authentic cultural path towards its destiny in history paved the way for his inclination towards extremist solutions to these matters as Marxist, Nazism, fascism or dictatorship<sup>298</sup>. This sense of personal anguish led him eventually to the Romanian fascist movement seen as a possible salvation for Romania. Sorin Antohi's hypothesis is very seductive and explains much of the future political adventure of Emil

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<sup>295</sup> Sorin Antohi, *Imaginaire culturel et réalité politique dans la Roumanie moderne. Le Stigmate et l'utopie*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), p. 111.

<sup>296</sup> Emil Cioran, "Aspecte germane" [German aspects] in *Vremea*, 19 noiembrie 1933.

<sup>297</sup> Marta Petreu, *An Infamous Past. Emil Cioran and the Rise of Fascism in Romania*, p. 62.

<sup>298</sup> Sorin Antohi, *Imaginaire culturel et réalité politique dans la Roumanie moderne*, p. 129.

Cioran. Nevertheless, his optimism and his need for struggle rather different from Eliade's efforts: Cioran believed that he had found in the Legion a consequence and a direct copy of the Nazis and the Italian fascists.

Confronted with schematized political ideologies, unlike Eliade who has accepted entirely the legionary code except for the anti-Semitic doctrine, Cioran accepted anti-Semitism<sup>299</sup>, but rejected the legionary political doctrine thoroughly, including Iron Guard preference for Orthodox mysticism. Cioran took into consideration Orthodoxy as a moral code which was supposed to provide an ethic framework for the nation. He denied Orthodoxy the capacity of being the ferment of a future spiritual revolution of the Romanian nation.

What Cioran had in mind when he joined the Iron Guard was a kind of synthesis between political conservatism and radical fascism which went far beyond the most optimistic expectations of the Iron Guard's ideologues. Zigu Ornea has accurately seen that there was a clear incompatibility between what Cioran wanted from the Iron Guard and what the Iron Guard had to offer<sup>300</sup>. Cioran believed the Iron Guard to be an organization as strong as the Nazis or the Italian fascists through which he hoped he could reshape a colonial, backward, small culture as the Romanian. Thus never mentioned in the text of his famous *Transfiguration of Romania*, his target was to impose to the Iron Guard movement a specific fascist tempo in a revolutionary and conservative manner<sup>301</sup>. Mixing, in a provocative manner, different political trends, Cioran rejected modernity as the Romanian fascists did, but he crossed over the strong boundaries of the Legionary political creed

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299 For Cioran anti-Semitism and its functions please see Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Anti-Semitism: the case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930's* (Oxford: Pergamon Press 1991), p. 111; Alexandra Gruzinska, "(Anti-) Semitism 1890s/1990s: Octave Mirabeau and Emil Cioran" in *Rocky Mountains Review of Language and Literature* 55, no. 1 (2001), p. 18.

<sup>300</sup> Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, p. 177.

<sup>301</sup> Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionescu. L'oubli du fascisme*, (Paris: PUF, 2002), p. 97.

because he was disappointed with the lack of political interest inside the Iron Guard<sup>302</sup>. His involvement in the Romanian fascist movement was rather seen as unsubstantial and regardless of his numerous meetings with Codreanu, Cioran chose to leave the country and settle down in Paris<sup>303</sup>. Before he left the country he told Mircea Eliade: “What would I do if I stay in this country? As I cannot actively join the nationalist movement, there is practically nothing for me to do in Romania.”<sup>304</sup>

A comparison between the Romanian 1930s fascist generation and the intellectuals under the fascist dictatorships can be undertaken. As James McGregor points out, fascism became something like a generalized critique of the modern legacy of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution (1789) and the intellectuals who became fascists were deeply revolted against this problematic heritage.<sup>305</sup> Together with problems like modernization and the emergence of the Communist parties in Europe, the issue of democracy and democratic rights transformed for many intellectuals all across Europe into a political chimera. Again, there was this kind of political and economical crisis of the *petite bourgeois* which described best all the European countries before and after 1918.<sup>306</sup> The middle class lived a strange paradox: although it was against the proletariat and its claims for political power, they were advocating for political and economical progress which eventually led to social tensions and a certain feeling of discontent among the masses. These tensions had tremendous consequences over the political scene which was always shifting from left to

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<sup>302</sup> Marta Petreu, *An Infamous Past. Emil Cioran and the Rise of Fascism in Romania*, p. 74.

<sup>303</sup> Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionescu. L'oubli du fascisme*, p. 126.

<sup>304</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Mircea Eliade si corespondenții săi* (Mircea Eliade and his corepondents), (Bucharest: Minerva, 1933), vol. 1, p. 193.

<sup>305</sup> Please see James Gregor, *Mussolini's Intellectuals. Fascist Social and Political Thought*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 6.

<sup>306</sup> Michael Burleigh, *Earthly Powers. Religion and Politics in Europe from the Enlightenment to the Great War*, (New York: Harper &Collins, 2006), p. 66.

right and backwards.<sup>307</sup> In these circumstances, the intellectuals had to choose quickly and to set their minds for either the left or the right.<sup>308</sup>

The option of these intellectuals for Hitler or Mussolini and their strong support for a totalitarian regime had different motifs. If in Germany Martin Heidegger believed he can “lead the Leader” (führen the Führer)<sup>309</sup> and they thought that Nazism was the correct answer for the fulfilment of Germany’s destiny in history, in Italy the intellectuals backed the regime because they feared the Left and they were convinced that Mussolini was a opened spirit towards the development of arts and culture<sup>310</sup>. There was this feeling of Nazi modernism which attracted the elite<sup>311</sup>. The experience of the trenches and the feeling of a mutilated victory, or expansionist political views were other trends which lead the intellectuals in the welcoming hands of fascists<sup>312</sup>. In the case of Romania one must argue that, although there are striking similarities between the cases, the differences are strong and present. The intellectuals’ decision to join fascism under the influence of Nae Ionescu or Nichifor Crainic represented at that certain age the next step in developing an interwar nationalism.

The interwar debate between traditionalists and modernizers, who advocated that the future path of Romania should be built according to western standards, was a cultural one. The emergence in 1927 of the Iron Guard and its highly inflammatory rhetoric about the Romanian nation offered to some of the 1920s intellectuals the possibility to enter the political arena, to influence a certain movement which wanted to become and to take by

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<sup>307</sup> Please see, Dirk Berg-Schlosser&Gisele du Meur, “Conditions of Democracy in Interwar Europe: A Boolean Test of Major Hypothesis“ in *Comparative Politics* Vol. 26, No. 3 (1994), p. 261.

<sup>308</sup> Please see, Roger Griffin, *Fascism* in Roger Griffin (ed.), *International Fascism. Theories, Causes and the New Consensus* (London: Arnold Publishing House, 1998), p. 37.

<sup>309</sup> Please see his preface to the original edition of the *Introduction into Metaphysics* in Mark Lilla, *The Reckless Mind. Intellectuals in Politics*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003).

<sup>310</sup> For this please see James Gregor, *Mussolini’s Intellectuals*, p. 21.

<sup>311</sup> Paul Betts, “The New Fascination with Fascism: Nazi Modernism” in *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 4 (2002), p. 551.

<sup>312</sup> Aristotle Kallis, “To expand or not to expand? Territory, Generic Fascism and the Quest for an ideal ‘Fatherland’” in *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 2 (2003), p. 238–243.

storm the Romanian parliamentary regime. In the context of the great depression, of the bankruptcy and unemployment of the graduated students, some of these young intellectuals started to think whether the Iron Guard could be the providential party sent from above to save Romania from collapse. Together with the influence coming from Italy and Germany on the one hand and from Russia on the other hand, the issue of choosing transformed in a dilemma of taking sides with the lesser evil. For 1930s generation Iron Guard was the only party, who offered them more than a future, the illusion of a higher spiritual meaning and that was the greatest deceit to which Codreanu and his followers could apply in order to gather new followers<sup>313</sup>.

#### *4.3. Nichifor Crainic and Lucian Blaga after 1948. Glasul Patriei*

After a short period of Stalinization in Romania during Gheoghe Gheorghiu-Dej dictatorship there was a certain feeling of rapprochement between the nationalist creed and Communist ideology. In the wake of a de-Stalinization campaign initiated by Moscow, the Romanian regime had only one alternative left: to play the nationalist card and develop an independent stance towards Moscow. Especially at the beginning of the 1960s the claim became even more urgent because of the international problems in the Communist block. Tito's dissident regime in Yugoslavia and the conflicts between Soviet Russian and Maoist

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<sup>313</sup> See Stephen Fischer-Galați, „Codreanu, Romanian National Traditions and Charisma” in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* Vol. 7, No. 2, 2006, p. 245–250 or Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of the 'Archangel Michael' in interwar Romania*, (Trondheim: Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies), 2004.

China ensured the Romanian leaders of the fact that Soviet Russia will not tolerate any act of independence or ideological deviation inside the surrounding countries<sup>314</sup>.

The nationalist discourse was atypical for the Communist states, communism being an ideology based on internationalism with no connection to nationhood. Another huge problem for the Romanian communists were the origins of nationalist ideology<sup>315</sup>. Because they did not operate with any of the concepts used by the nationalist movements, it was an ethical problem inside the party if they were to use an ideology commonly labeled as fascism by the communist party. Furthermore, the inexistence of proper intellectual elite capable to use an academic language and the concepts of nationalism in a direct connection with the Communist ideology became rather problematic. Most of the intellectual elite were imprisoned and some of them were even deceased at that time.

The nationalist project of the Communist Party involved former–legionary members or sympathizers like Constantin Noica, Ioan Dumitrescu–Borșa or Radu Gyr, Orthodoxist nationalists like Nichifor Crainic or Dumitru Stăniloae, historians with strong ties with the right wing movement like Virgil Căndea or Constantin C. Giurăscu and some other intellectuals who were imprisoned during the first years of the Communist regime.<sup>316</sup> They made a living by joining hands in the attempt of the Romanian state to building a national definition of Romanian ethnicity. Rejecting the Russian impositions, these intellectuals had as main task a certain revitalization of the Romanian history and culture.<sup>317</sup> They were all grouped under the roof of the journal  *Glasul Patriei* [Fatherland’s Voice] which was designated to be the journal of the Romanians abroad. Through the ideas conveyed in this journal the Romanian regime wanted to show the world that there was no political

<sup>314</sup> Please see Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu’s Romania*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 13.

<sup>315</sup> Please see Vladimir Tismăneanu, “The Revival of Politics in Romania” in *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 38, No. 1, *The New Europe: Revolution in East – West Relations*. (1991), pp. 85–99.

<sup>316</sup> Trond Gilberg, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania. The Rise and Fall of Ceausescu’s personal Dictatorship* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), p. 48: the Communist regime from Romania used “those elements of the political discourse left out of the official speeches and documents.”

<sup>317</sup> Katherine Verdery, “Beyond the Nation in Eastern Europe” in *Social Text*, No. 38 (1994), pp. 1-19.

discrimination in Romania and the civil rights of the former fascists and enemies of the people were respected. Association with the former elite was thought of as legitimating the communist regime in Romania. It was a bold maneuver coming from the part of the Romanian state and the purpose was both to impress the foreign democratic countries and to silence the strong Romanian emigration which decried the unfair destiny of those who could not escape across the borders and were imprisoned for their political activities.

This section of the journal had a simple structure: on the first page there was always an important political matter (a Party meeting, a foreign official visiting Romania, etc.). The second page was always reserved for culture and here one can find all the aforementioned intellectuals who were trying to put the nationalist project once again on the road. The third page was devoted to economical and agricultural issues and the last was dedicated to sports and other miscellanea. It seems that *Glasul Patriei* was a perfect resume of Romania for a Romanian living abroad. The issue of the publicity for the regime never arises in the pages of the newspaper, but the reader has a feeling that there is a message behind the lines and that message presents Romania as a developed and prosperous country which treats well all his repented sons.

Nichifor Crainic's contribution to the newspaper starts in early 1960s. After the Communists took power in 1947, he became an enemy of the state and he was condemned in 1952 for plotting against the legal order. Nichifor Crainic was released in 1962 and soon afterwards he became an active member of the *Glasul Patriei*'s editors until his death in 1972.

If one takes a look at his articles, one would see that his activity in the pages of this newspaper was forcing to do something quite different from what he advocated in the interwar period. For example, in an article from 20 august 1965<sup>318</sup> Crainic praised the

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<sup>318</sup> Nichifor Crainic, "Cultura la îndemîna tuturor" [Culture available for everybody] in *Glasul Patriei. Organ al Comitetului Român pentru Repatriere*, an X, no. 25 (351), August 20 1965, p. 2.

implication of the State in the education of young children and believed that no progress was possible in education and in culture without the control of the State. Another issue which seemed to keep Crainic's frontline was the fact that culture was now more cheap and economic: "I took today an old book from the library and it has cost me 90 lei. I took the same book which was edited today and it has cost me 6 lei. In the actual regime, the cheapness of the cultural materials is the guiding principle for the maximum spiritualization of the masses."<sup>319</sup> The difference between the Nichifor Crainic who was writing during the interwar period at Gîndirea and the *Communist* Crainic is important: in the interwar period Crainic was more interested in finding and cultivating an authentic Romanian culture which was not destined to be consumed by the Romanian masses. In this case, when the culture was in the hand of the State which also controlled the public education all that remained for him was to praise the activity of the state and to advocate for a popular culture and not a culture of the elite.

In another article from the same year<sup>320</sup>, although Crainic is narrating one of his trips to a Romanian cave famous for its beauty, he praises the great achievements of the Romanian Communism in a small village from Oltenia. But his most striking comments were made in some particular articles.<sup>321</sup> It was obvious that Crainic was recuperating important figures from the interwar period and he was accommodating them with the new

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<sup>319</sup> Nichifor Crainic, „Cultura la îndemîna tuturor”, p. 2

<sup>320</sup> „Peștera Muierii” in *Glasul Patriei. Organ al Comitetului Român pentru Repatriere*, an X, no. 27 (353), 10 septembrie 1965, p. 2.

<sup>321</sup> „În amintirea lui Constantin Nottara” [In the Memory of Constantin Notara], *Glasul Patriei. Organ al Comitetului Român pentru Repatriere* X, no. 31 (357), October 20 1965, p. 2; „Retrospectiva Francisc Șirato” [Francisc Șirato's Retrospective], *Glasul Patriei. Organ al Comitetului Român pentru Repatriere*, X, no. 32 (358), November 1 1965, p. 4; „Nicolae Iorga. Omul și animatorul” [Nicolae Iorga. The Man and the Animator], X, no. 34 (360), November 20 1965, p. 1-4; „Ioan Creangă în documentele de arhivă” [Ioan Creangă in archival documents] in *Glasul Patriei. Organ al Comitetului Român pentru Repatriere*, X, no. 1 (364), January 1<sup>st</sup> 1966, p. 2; „Amintirea lui Ion Minulescu” [The Memory of Ion Minulescu], *Glasul Patriei. Organ al Comitetului Român pentru Repatriere* X, no. 2 (365), January 10 1966, p. 2; „D. G. Chiriac și cîntectul popular” [D. G. Chiriac and the folkloric song] in *Glasul Patriei. Organ al Comitetului Român pentru Repatriere* XI, no. 9 (372), March 20 1966, p. 2; „Octavian Goga” in *Glasul Patriei. Organ al Comitetului Român pentru Repatriere*, XI, No. 11 (374), April 10 1966, p. 2.; „N. Tonitza – pictor al vieții” [Nicolae Tonitza, painter of life] in *Glasul Patriei. Organ al Comitetului Român pentru Repatriere*, XI, no. 12 (375), p. 3.



socialist realities. For examples, Goga is depicted by Crainic as the peasant's poet and his zeal to write about the sufferings of the peasant who was oppressed by the landlords. Crainic did not mention the political role played by Octavian Goga and his proto-fascist government from 1938. This kind of Communist reinterpretation of the symbolical values or personalities can be seen when he approached other important topics like Romanian folklore<sup>322</sup>, but also the Romanian village which is the most poignant article written by Crainic in the pages of *Glazul Patriei*<sup>323</sup>.

I will attempt to compare the conception of Nichifor Crainic from this text with his conception as reflected in *Gîndirea*. The first statement from the text seemed to be copied from the interwar books of Crainic, but with a certain modification: “from ancient times, the city, but especially the village confers specificity to the Romanian landscape.”<sup>324</sup> If in the interwar period the village played the major role for establishing a national culture, now, according to the Communist social harmony, there is no conflict between the rural and the urban areas. Even more, stated Crainic, the city is civilizing the village without destroying it. This kind of interdependence between the village and the city was a part of the Communist utopia which was exported by the proletariat to the village in order to destroy the peasantry and to make possible the last stage of the Marxist revolution. The *conversion* of Nichifor Crainic to national Communism together with other former nationalists and legionaries represented an intelligent coup administrated by the Communist regime to the Romanian dissidence. Internally, Crainic's efforts were only the beginning of a communist regime of Nicolae Ceausescu who wanted to regain his strength via a nationalist mobilization of the Romanian people. In searching for a new cultural canon the Communist elite had to find the continuity between the historical moment when they came to power and

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<sup>322</sup> “Folclorul” [The Folklore] in *Glazul Patriei. Organ al Comitetului Român pentru Repatriere*, X, no. 34 (360), November 20 1965, p. 2.

<sup>323</sup> Nichifor Crainic “Satul de azi și de totdeauna” [The village from today and from always] in *Glazul Patriei. Organ al Comitetului Român pentru Repatriere*, X, no. 1 (364), January 1<sup>st</sup> 1966, p. 2.

<sup>324</sup> Nichifor Crainic “Satul de azi și de totdeauna”, p. 2.

the ages before them. The only available stratagem they could find was to recruit some former *enemies of the people* who knew how to develop a nationalist discourse in the language of the elite.

Another striking example of intellectual who assumed a cultural approach of the Orthodoxy was Lucian Blaga. Marginalized until 1960 by the Communist regime, he was allowed to publish only translations and no original text. However, in 1961, in the year of his death a collection of his articles was published under the name *Isvoade. Eseuri, Conferințe, Articole*.<sup>325</sup> What is striking in this collection is the fact that this collection of articles of Lucian Blaga presented to its reader a traditionalist approach in which traditionalism, Orthodoxy and the Romanian character are framed into a consistent discourse, almost as in *Gîndirea*. The first article from the book entitled suggestively “Elogiu satului românesc”<sup>326</sup> [Praise of the Romanian village] is a direct resume of the traditionalist position from the interwar period. Lucian Blaga stated in this article that “our village is built near the church from which God irradiates”<sup>327</sup> and that Romanian village “is worthy in an exceptional manner of the epithet named authenticity.”<sup>328</sup> Accordingly, as the old cultures of the world, the folkloric art of the Romanian village with its “minor” art is the most important premise for a future “major” culture shaped from the folkloric art.

In another text included in the same volume called “Isus-pămîntul”<sup>329</sup> [Jesus – the land] Lucian Blaga established a direct connection between the Romanianess, Orthodoxy and the peasant character of the Romanian people. Speaking about confessional conflicts and attempts of proselytism tried by the Protestant churches in Transylvania during the 16<sup>th</sup> century Lucian Blaga came to a strange and challenging conclusion:

<sup>325</sup> Lucian Blaga, *Isvoade. Eseuri, Conferințe, Articole* [Documents. Essays, Conferences, Articles] (Bucharest: Minerva, 1972).

<sup>326</sup> Lucian Blaga, „Elogiu satului românesc” in *Isvoade. Eseuri, Conferințe, Articole*, p. 33–48.

<sup>327</sup> Lucian Blaga, „Elogiul satului românesc” in *Isvoade. Eseuri, Conferințe, Articole*, p. 40.

<sup>328</sup> Lucian Blaga, „Elogiul satului românesc” in *Isvoade. Eseuri, Conferințe, Articole*, p. 41.

<sup>329</sup> Lucian Blaga, „Isus – pămîntul” in *Isvoade. Eseuri, Conferințe, Articole*, p. 212 – 217.

Deprived by any political rights and nobility which have benefited for social benefits, Romanian people did not raise to a high intellectual level. With the other peoples, they were slaves even from the time of the Hungarian royalty. The rights, freedoms and privileges which had opened the access to learning, Romanian people could obtain only by renouncing at their language and conscience as a people. In their majority Romanians preferred a minor existence, their ethnic life in the spiritual categories of an orthodoxy which was reduced to the murmuring of the ‘creed’ and the compliance according to the Christian calendar of the liturgy<sup>330</sup>.

In this passage, as Crainic in his texts from the interwar period, Lucian Blaga connected Orthodox confession with the peasant condition of the Romanian people attempting to issue a certain definition of the Romanian nation in the context of the 16<sup>th</sup> century religious plurality from Transylvania. The way in which Blaga is writing is striking because the book was published before Crainic started his collaboration with  *Glasul Patriei*.

In the age when Crainic was writing subordinate articles towards the regime Lucian Blaga chose to reframe his interwar discourse, although I have personally the feeling that some of his articles were excluded from this selection and only the one with a certain nationalist idea were printed. On the other hand, the fact that Lucian Blaga’s texts were written and published after he deceased, represent another interesting issue regarding the nationalist character of these texts. I think that in Lucian Blaga’s case the state agreed to publish this collection of articles for two reasons: first, the author was not alive and, accordingly, the selection of the articles was arbitrary.

#### 4.4. *Final Conclusions*

The finality of the traditionalist projects from the interwar period remains unfortunately insufficiently tackled with by the scholars in the field of historical studies. If

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<sup>330</sup> Lucian Blaga, „Isus – pămîntul” in *Isvoade. Eseuri, Conferințe, Articole*, p. 213–214.

in the case of Nae Ionescu's legacy which was recollected and deposited by the 1930s generation in the Iron Guard the things are starting to become clearer, in the case of Nichifor Crainic's rapprochement with the Communist propaganda during the late 1960s puts the credibility of its project into question. Although the legionary myths inspired by Nae Ionescu were used by different Romanian intellectuals including Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica, Emil Cioran, Petre Țuțea it seems that Ionescu's legacy was characterized by certain discretion. Involved in the Iron Guard because of Nae Ionescu's influence, active members and after that escaped in the West or imprisoned the continuation of the interwar project of Nae Ionescu was never taken seriously. Furthermore, all the late disciples of Ionescu chose to keep silence about their Mentor and his influence in transforming them in prototypes of the fascist new man. Eliade's case is the most famous of all and probably the death in 1991 of Professor Ioan Petru Culianu at Chicago is nothing more than another piece of this puzzle in which after 1948 the Romanian secret police and the former legionaries shook hands in order to punish or to keep under close surveillance any attempt to dig up this final secret.

Nichifor Crainic had a more *successful* career. His project was taken up by the Communist regime in a desperate attempt to create a national cultural canon. Because of his longevity and his disposition for a compromise, Crainic had the chance to enter in legality during his life time, being one of the key-architects of nationalist Communism. Through his influence and writing, all the common motifs of the interwar period entered the official language of the Communist propaganda and created a veritable nationalist discourse which was designed to be a reply to the internationalist Communist appeal coming from Moscow. By striking a deal with the Communist propaganda, Crainic joined hands in a project which in many respects was similar with the interwar fascist dream: a new man, a new intellectual, a new cultural canon. The only difference between the interwar Crainic and the Communist Crainic was that he lost his autonomy and he became a docile puppet in the hands of a

criminal regime. Despite Ionescu's legacy, Crainic's heritage was poor and he had no followers to his match. Both of these projects continued to live in seclusion until 1990s when they were once again reinvented by different political parties.

The use of Lucian Blaga's works in favor of the official nationalist ideology of the regime represents another face of this Communist project of producing a nationalist and, in the same time, a Communist definition of the nation. Publishing a collection of texts in which none could tell the criteria in selecting Lucian Blaga's text and the fact that these texts contained sufficient nationalist references I think it means that it was attempted a linkage between the traditionalism of the interwar period and the Communist age. Lucian Blaga was used by the Party's propaganda because, although he was involved in the debates regarding the character of the Romanian nation from the interwar period, he was one of the few major intellectuals who refused any collaboration with the Iron Guard. His intellectual legacy, tough it was bourgeois by origin, it was considered secure enough to be published in its original form.

## Finals Remarks

Charles Péguy used to say at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that “everything that starts in mystics ends up in politics.” The career of interwar nationalism in Romania with its multiple faces and permutations is the materialization of Péguy’s aphorism. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century until 21<sup>st</sup> Romanian character remained a problematic issue in the development of the Romanian history. The interwar period seemed a paradisiacal nexus between the Communist age and the tormented legacy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The present paper focused on scrutinizing the relation between Orthodoxy and nationalism in interwar Romania, namely on an aspect of the great debate concerning Romanian ethnicity and the place played by the Romanian people on the map of history. Why Orthodoxy, culture, nationalism and Romanianness became to be associated in such an important number of intellectual speeches and in so different political orientations remains an insufficiently questioned historical issue in the Romanian history.

The present paper attempted to provide a critical outlook of the traditionalist camp and its views regarding the debate concerning the character of the Romanian nation. I have focused my efforts on two directions. On the one hand I have tackled the metamorphosis of the nationalist discourse in connection with Orthodoxy in the writings of Nichifor Crainic. As a representative figure of *Gîndirea*, he exposed his intellectual creed in different stages and under the influence of different ideas or political ideologies. Starting as an apolitical intellectual concerned with the continuation of the nationalist ideal before World War One, Nichifor Crainic attempted to build up an ethno–theology opened to the secular sphere.

Between 1921 and 1926, Crainic proposed an Orthodox alternative to the Liberal official ideology of the Romanian state and the lack of spirituality among the Romanian intellectuality, Crainic proposed an “organic” development of the Romanian culture in the context of the massive introduction of new intellectual trends coming from the West. After his Viennese experience in which mystics and Russian philosophy of history played a major role, Crainic tried to adapt his theological training and his literary intellectual profile to produce a synthesis proposed to the Romanian young generation coming to the Romanian universities in search for a better life. Orthodoxy was imagined as a social and spiritual binder of the Romanian people. The texts from this period belonging to Nichifor Crainic are proof enough of his intellectual search for this kind of intellectual synthesis between nationalism and Orthodoxy depicted as the spiritual force behind the Romanian people.

After 1926, the intellectual discourse of Nichifor Crainic was not as innocent as it was before this date. The emergence of the National Peasants Party of Iuliu Maniu with its heterogeneous political ideology mixing populism, nationalism, agrarianism and fascist public manifestations like the mobilization of the masses and the usage of storm troopers was seen by Nichifor Crainic as the exacerbation of his traditionalist project, although Iuliu Maniu was far from being an Orthodox messianic leader. Rather, Maniu made Crainic a mundane offer, a seat in the Romanian parliament under his political banners. Accordingly, the discourse of Nichifor Crainic from this period emphasized the role played by the Romanian peasantry for Romanian spirituality and the threat of the Western civilization represented by the bourgeoisie, the main electoral base for the National Liberal Party, and the adversaries of the National Peasant Party. Therefore, Crainic made his first bid to become the official ideologue for the political regime and, in this manner to institutionalize himself as the leading intellectual figure of the regime. After the failure of the National Peasants Party of Maniu, Crainic turned his hopes towards the return of Prince Carol, but

after his restoration on the Romanian throne Crainic was disappointed again and decided to advocate for the Romanian Iron Guard. Accordingly, he transformed his high elitist speech from *Gîndirea* in a softer approach, that is, a journalist style addressed to a broader audience and especially to the young one. Mihail Polihroniade, Vasile Vojen, Dragoș Protopopescu, Toma Vlădescu being the first intellectuals who finished their apprenticeship under Nichifor Crainic's baguette when they wrote in *Calendarul*.

After 1934, Crainic understood that Codreanu's *innocent* movement has transformed into a terrorist organization capable of assassinations and of using all means to get to power. Accordingly, he maintained benevolent neutrality towards the Iron Guard and continued to polish his view about ethnocracy and Orthodoxy under the influence of Italian corporatism and political totalitarianism. Dissatisfied with both the Iron Guard and Carol, Crainic created his own political utopia in which authoritarianism and the Church as the guardian of Romanian ethnic conscience. General Antonescu's rise to power (6<sup>th</sup> of September 1940) incarnated best the Christian fascist utopia of Nichifor Crainic. After 1948, a now aging and demoralized Crainic changed again his discourse but not to serve a leader of his choice, but rather to bring his contribution to a Communist nationalist project in whose functionality there are doubts that he ever believed.

Nae Ionescu and his quest for the primacy of the spiritual, authenticity and lived-experience represent the radicalization of the nationalist project imagined by Nichifor Crainic. Although he came from a different intellectual background influenced by Husserl's phenomenology and logic positivism, Nae Ionescu was the first Romanian philosopher to attempt to construct a Romanian "ethnic ontology" (Sorin Antohi), a project which represented a step forward from Nichifor Crainic's previous attempts to construct a Romanian understanding of the being. Nae Ionescu succeeded in his attempt by connecting the quality of being true Romanian with Orthodoxy. Ionescu's maneuver spoke a lot about



the influence of the political context and of his political convictions. Before 1926, like Crainic, Ionescu remained an academic celebrity of Bucharest University who criticized positivism and democracy, Western intellectual trends and a certain path of Romania's industrial development which he thought it was inorganic with the character of the Romanian state.

Maniu's attempt to dominate the Romanian political scene, the affair of the Concordat from 1927 and the opposition of Maniu's Party for the installation of a totalitarian regime of King Carol II led Ionescu to a violent rejection of the Romanian Greek-Catholic minority from Transylvania according to his principle that only Orthodox Romanians were good Romanians. Ionescu's charismatic personality influenced his students in joining the Iron Guard after 1933, but never succeeded in proposing his confessional ethnic ontology for the simple reason that they had a different understanding of the spiritual revolution which seemed to weight on their minds in the 1930s. The fact that Constantin Noica after he was set free from the Communist prison continued to speak about a "Romanian feeling of being" (*Sentimentul românesc al ființei*) and the "Cosmic Christianity" concept of Mircea Eliade prove that Ionescu's ethnic project continued in an abridged form, namely without the Orthodox component.

The final contribution of the present paper was setting up the intellectual background of the traditionalist camp which was directly connected with the Iron Guard and brought its contribution to the ideological crystallization of the Iron Guard discourse and helped advertising among the young intellectuals for new recruits.

The material analyzed revealed that although it seemed that Crainic and Ionescu's articles had a linear trajectory, their articles attest different influences, different topics of interest and different political sympathies behind a dense intellectual agenda. The fact that Crainic changed almost five times his speech during his intellectual career proved the idea

that Romanian traditionalism was a unitary intellectual camp with many representatives wrong; on the contrary, the traditionalist side of the debate concerning Romanian character was fragmented between different ideologues who according to their political agenda, shaped/ changed their opinion concerning Romanian character and nationality. I have also suggested that Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu's lack of communication reflected their plurality of opinions and, also, the dichotomy between the secular and the ecclesiastic spheres during the interwar period. It is no wonder that the Church through Archbishop Nicolae Bălan and Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae attempted to overcome the cultural and political isolation prescribed by the secular State to the Orthodox Church from 1859.

As a personal conclusion, the lack of communication between Crainic and Ionescu on the one hand and the transmission of the Nae Ionescu's ethnic ontology without its main feature, namely the primacy ascribed to Orthodoxy, demonstrates without doubt that a theologian like Crainic who, in his attempt to frame a nationalist traditionalist project relied upon the relevance of the Orthodox Church came from the ecclesiastical sphere to the secular sphere, had no chance to meet in the middle with an intellectual like Ionescu who attempted to construct an ethnic definition from the secular space to the Orthodox Church. Accordingly, someone can see the continuation of Nichifor Crainic's project through the Romanian Orthodox Church during the Communist period. Ionescu's legacy was perpetuated by a philosophical tradition continued by Mircea Vulcănescu and Constantin Noica who eradicated Orthodoxy from their mentor's syllogism, a tradition which continues even today in the Romanian culture through the legacy of the so-called Păltiniș School.

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