

# FROM “NATIONAL ESSENCE” TO “ETNIC ONTOLOGY” PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUNDS OF ROMANIAN NATIONALISM

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**Abstract:** *This essay attempts to investigate the major theories about nationalism and to support the idea that Romanian nationalism was the most articulated theoretical corpus of many generations of scholars as a main reaction of a late modernity. Performed by poets, writers, historians and philosophers, Romanian nationalism is a true mark of a culture which tries to define its own identity. I will focus on the most relevant philosophical themes and authors and to follow how this doctrine succeeded to survive and to embrace such different historical époques or political systems.*

**Keywords:** intellectual history, modernity, nationalism, philosophy

## **Theoretical framework**

Trying to find an answer to the question: what was indeed modern in Romanian culture, how deeply is Romanian culture linked to modernity, I realized that exists a continuum in spite of all debates, polemics or controversies related to topic like: national spirit, local identity, the balance between West and East, the importance of culture for national identity. I called this process “re-inventing modernity”: using the patterns of modernity for analyzing a reality which often proves it too little modern. I also think that nationalism was the main response<sup>1</sup> of Romanian cultural and political elites to the challenges of modernity. Its persistence is quit remarkable during the whole Romanian modern history. It was embraced by liberals, conservatives, populists, legionnaires and even communists, by poets, writers, historians, philosophers and journalists. It was used and abused, reinterpreted and reframed, re-written and re-named for promote and pursue the idea of autonomous existence, unity and continuity of a people mono-ethnic,

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<sup>1</sup> Other different responses, like traditionalism or populism, can be provided. About the process of re-thinking the tradition in David Gross, *The Past in Ruins: Tradition and the Critique of Modernity*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1992, about how the traditions were re-invented in the modern period in Eric Hobsbawn, Terence Ranger, edit., *The invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1992 and about the emergence of the populism and its characteristics in Eastern Europe in Joseph Held (edit.), *Populism in Eastern Europe: Racism, Nationalism and Society*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996.

orthodox and largely peasant. I will disseminate the historicity of Romanian nationalism, its inner logic and philosophical presuppositions, starting from some assumptions related to the epiphenomenon of “nationalism” which can be understood as a plurality of ideas based on a certain definition of nation, or nationness, and a certain ideological construct of this. The intellectual history of nationalism starts, after the Franco-Prussian War, when the modern idea of nation was theoretically reframed, but mainly, after the Second World War, with the classical study of Hans Kahn, *The idea of nationalism: a study in its origins and backgrounds*<sup>2</sup>. For the first time, the opposition, a real taxonomic pattern, between the voluntarist version of nationalism – “the nation regarded as a rational territorial association of citizens” – and the organic version of nationalism – “the nation conceived of as a spiritual principle transcending the individual members” – was clearly stated. Even if other interpretations of the nationalism have been offered<sup>3</sup> the binary understanding of its characteristics is still available.

Moreover, nationalism – in its traditional, cultural version or in its modern, political one – is deeply related with the idea of nation, of collective identity, of national essence. As John Hutchinson has pointed, “for both traditionalists and modernists, the true matrix is the nation in whose drive for realization all must find their individual and collective identity”<sup>4</sup>. Also for Ernest Gellner<sup>5</sup>, the idea of nation is a contingency, not a necessity, even if in nowadays is considered to be universal and normative. However, no matter what definition about nation we take into account, the idea of nation seems to be normative and universal especially in the way in which people consider themselves as belong to the same community, sharing the same language, culture, common history, convictions, loyalties and solidarities. In the same line of conceptual thinking, I will bring in discussion the idea of nation as an “*imagined political community*” and the paradoxes of nationalism pointed by Benedict Anderson<sup>6</sup> in a very famous book where he talk about: i) “*the objective modernity of nations versus their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists*”, ii) “*the formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept versus the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations*”, iii) “*the political power of nationalism versus their philosophical poverty and incoherence.*”

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<sup>2</sup> Hans Kahn, *The idea of nationalism: a study in its origins and backgrounds*, New York, Macmillan, 1961.

<sup>3</sup> For Anthony D. Smith for example, „*three fundamental debates have structured and continue to define the historiography of nationalism: 1. the organicist versus the voluntarist understanding of the nation, 2. the perennialist versus the modernist approaches to nations, 3. the social constructions versus the ethnosymbolic approaches to nations*”, in *The Nation in History. Historiographical Debated about Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Hanover, University Press of New England, 2000, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> John Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism*, London, Fontana Press, 1994, p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983, p. 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and the spread of Nationalism*, Verso Editions: The Thetford Press Ltd, 1983, p. 15-16.

Starting at this last point, I will try to illustrate the main characteristics of Romanian nationalism and to support the idea that the most relevant Romanian philosophers, Lucian Blaga and Constantin Noica, like many others, have tried to create a philosophical system focused on the indigene resources of language and culture. The inner contradiction of Romanian nationalism is, from my point of view that although it emerged and developed in a culture dominated by French models<sup>7</sup> uses German intellectual sources in order to articulate its own cultural and political pattern. The idea of self-determination, the emphasis of diversity, the re-discovering of the popular traditions, produced, through the link between language and politics, the doctrine of nationalism<sup>8</sup>. The writings of Herder were directly known among Romanian intellectuals around 1840 but their circulation was limited at the level of a small elite. With a high culture which only locate itself and without the support of a middle class, a local bourgeoisie, Romanian nationalism was, for a period of one generation, unmethodical and mostly class-oriented. Only in the publicist activity, during the 1870's, of the most important Romantic poet, Mihail Eminescu, it can be found the entire forward evolution of Romanian nationalism: from national ethno-pedagogy to political radicalism.

### **Defining identity**

The Romanian nationalism is usually originated in the political movement of the Transylvanian School. Because of the historical and political context, with a majority of Romanian population in the Habsburg Empire, the members of the Transylvanian School have promoted the idea of Latinity and common of all Romanians in order to achieve civil and political rights for Romanians. In the same time, in the Old Kingdom, the local elites have used the idea of Latin origin toward an anti-phanariot and anti-ottoman attitude as a vector of Europeanization and develop a national consciousness. “Before 1848, Romanian nationalism was generally devoid to reformist connotations”<sup>9</sup> and the Latinist direction of the Transylvanian School was used by the local elites in order to achieve the unification of all Romanian provinces into a greater Romanian state. This was considered at that time a more realizable goal than the adaptation of Western European constitutionalism and the developing of a genuine middle class. But the new modern state which was Romania in the second half of the Nineteenth century, required more than institutions or laws and more than just the efforts of politicians

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<sup>7</sup> See, as references: Paul Cornea, *The Origins of Romanian Romanticism: public spirit, movement of ideas and literature between 1780-1840*, Bucharest, Minerva, 1972; Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Romanian Culture: literacy and the national development of national identity*, New York, Tauric Academic Studies, 2006; Pompiliu Eliade, *The French influence on Romanian public spirit*, Bucharest, Minerva, 1984.

<sup>8</sup> Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, London, Blackwell Publishers, 1993, p. 57-58.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen-Fisher Galati, *Romanian Nationalism*, in Peter Sugar, Ivo Lederer, ed., *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, University of Washington Press, 1969, p. 374.

or intellectuals. It was need of a new middle class: ethnic homogenous, different by the more cosmopolitan bourgeoisie, and formed from the public employees, lawyers, institutors, priests, journalists, in one word: a bureaucracy. This bureaucracy, educated and willing to succeed at social positions, was the most vulnerable to the ideologies which have pretended to modernize a profound traditionally society like the Romanian one. Even if this process was mainly a political one, sustained by both the conservative and the liberal parties which dominated the political spectrum in the Old Kingdom, the passage from the cultural dimension of the Romanian nationalism to the political radicalism, with certain xenophobia and anti-Semitic accents, was made by a poet.

His name is Mihai Eminescu, the most important poet of the Romanian literature until the First World War, and, in the same time an incisive journalist at the conservative paper *The Time*. Member of the very famous cultural society at that time *The Youth (Junimea)* which its magister and true leader, Titu Maiorescu has created the theory of *forms without content*, as the opposition to the imported of Western forms of civilization, Eminescu<sup>10</sup> has cultivated an enthusiastic nationalism based on his credo that political unity of the Romanians means first a cultural unity. In his articles, written between 1870 and 1883, Eminescu combined his generous poetical talent with a pastiest perception above history and a messianic conviction in the virtues of the people. At the same time, he criticized the politicians of his époque and the representants of the upper-class. Through “upper-class” Eminescu depicted the local bourgeoisie, cosmopolitan and mainly Jewish, considered as an exogenous social class directly determining the underdevelopment of the real social class, the peasantry. The nationalistic amplification of the past, with utopian and romantic elements, has contoured the dream of a genuine, pure, Romanian civilization, unaltered by foreign, corrupted, influences.

At the beginning of Twentieth century the great historian Nicolae Iorga will revitalize Romanian nationalism giving it a new orientation. His populist nationalism<sup>11</sup> – “*true nationalists are a group of people with understanding, conscience, diligence, and character, who realize that a people is an organic being, a living fact of the world, which can be, or not be, come into being or die, but can not be remade into another organic creation*” – combined the conviction of the corruption of the politicians with the importance accorded to the peasant issue and the attention to the life of Romanians from abroad<sup>12</sup>. He was the animator

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<sup>10</sup> The most important editions about his work are: Murarasu (1932), Perpessicius (1973) and Vatamaniuc (1985) A good analysis of the recurrent themes of the Eminescu’s utopianism in Sorin Antohi, *Civitas Imaginalis History and Utopia in Romanian culture*, Iasi, Polirom, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> From „What is Nationalism?” (1908) or his militancy activity from *The Romanian people* and popular schools held in Valenii de Munte had an enormous impact on the public spirit before the First World War.

<sup>12</sup> James P. Niessen, *Romanian Nationalism: An Ideology of Integration and Mobilization* in Peter Sugar, ed., *Eastern European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, The American University Press, 1995, p. 279-283.

of the literary current *The Spread Soyer (Samanatorul)* in which he took distance from the criticism promoted by *The Youth* and tried to argue the idea that ruthless imitations actually ruined the national spirit. In this respect, he suggests a return to traditional cultural values of rural life. The aim of his historic activity and political militancy<sup>13</sup> was to underline the unity of Romanian civilization and its continuity in time followers of the historical and political Byzantine tradition. His nationalist philosophy combines post-romanticism with neo-conservatism and inaugurates his ethnopedagogical project. The core of nationalism<sup>14</sup> originated in Eminescu’s articles was encompassed with cultural militancy and a strong populist emphasis. Again, nationalism claimed a return to people, but a people understood as peasantry, the real keeper of the national tradition, uncorrupted by foreign influences.

### Constructing a philosophy of nation

In the interwar period, the nationalism promoted by Eminescu and Iorga several decades before, will be re-discovered and adapted to the new political and social realities. The political elites from the Greater Romania, with a larger territory and a considerable population of minorities, better educated and more prosperous than the most part of Romanians, have tried to resolve the new situation through a centralized and ethnic homogenized policy<sup>15</sup>. The competition between the Romanian elites and the other ethnic elites for social positions and symbolic control, the consequences of the Great Depression and the general political context, made that the problem of identity to become more disputable.

*“The preoccupation with defining the Nation increased after the war, even over its already high level before, and contributed to forming an all-embracing national discourse that structured the language of politics and culture. (...) Politicians and intellectuals were equally active in developing the national discourse, rehearsing a variety of terms that referred overtly or implicitly to the identity of Romanians. Through them, the interwar years became a concerted period of making national ideology hegemonic”*<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Like his predecessor Titu Maiorescu, Nicolae Iorga took his doctorate in Germany and had a vigorous political activity. He wrote a lot of books about Romanian history and his cultural nationalism can be found in the volume *A Literary Fight*, Bucharest, Minerva, 1978.

<sup>14</sup> For the deconstruction of the identity rhetoric see Lucian Boia, *History and myth in Romanian consciousness*, Budapest, CEU Press, 2001, or the Romanian edition printed at Bucharest, Humanitas, 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural politics in Greater Romania: nationalism, nation-building and ethnic struggle*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1995, Romanian edition Bucharest, Humanitas, 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: identity and cultural politics in Ceausescu’s Romania*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991, p. 45-46, Romanian edition, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1994.

The national identity is ‘essence’ for the philosopher Constantin Radulescu-Motru, the most important theoretician of ethnicity from the first decades of the Twentieth century. He proposed the word ‘Romanianism’ as a pure manifestation of the historical Romanian reality. A similar conception, an evolutionary vision about ethnicity, viewed as a social reality, belongs to the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti. Both, Radulescu-Motru and Gusti, tried to emphasize the idea of an organic evolution of the nation. A re-evaluation of tradition, a matter of spirituality which stability is due by the orthodoxy, is, for the publicist Nichifor Crainic, the political solution for an ethnocratic state. His objective was the total autochthonization of Romanian culture and politics by identification Orthodoxy as the only depositary of Romanian identity. But the most influential in this direction of spiritualization the ethnicity was the philosopher Nae Ionescu, the mentor of a new generation of scholars known as ‘*Generation '27'*’: Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica, Mircea Vulcanescu, and promoter of a new kind of philosophy called *livingness (trairism)* which exalted the virtues of orthodoxy and defied any other religions or ethnicities or western “inventions”<sup>17</sup> like democracy, parliamentary system or liberalism. As an intellectual curiosity, even if both, Nichifor Crainic – a theologian – and Nae Ionescu – a philosopher – tried to exalt the virtues of Orthodoxy they never connect their positions<sup>18</sup>.

All these ‘essentialist’ definitions above nation ignored any ideological distinctions; they appeared into an époque in which the bolshevism and the liberal democracy outside and the ethnic minorities inside have perceived as threats for the nation. For covering this crisis of identity, the Romanian intellectuals have constructed definitions about national identity unaltered by exogenous factors. They related the idea of organic unity of the nation to the idea of community in the attempt to establish “a *cultural* consensus by constructing a sense of national togetherness.” Especially the philosophers used these arguments in order to “apply the metaphorical vocabulary in a genuine sense that considered them the essential features of community”<sup>19</sup>. But, by far, the most impressive theoretical contribution to the study of national identity from a philosophical perspective were the Lucian Blaga’s

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<sup>17</sup> About the ideological options of the famous members of ‘Generation ‘27’ can be consulted: Alexandra-Laignel Lavastine, *The Forget of Fascisme (L’Oubli du Fascism)*, Paris, 1999; Marta Petreu, *An Infamous Past: E.M. Cioran and the rise of Fascism in Romania*, Budapest, CEU Press, 2005, translation after the Romanian edition, Bucharest, Romanian Cultural Institute, 2004; Florin Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade the prisoner of History*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2005 or Sorin Lavric, *Noica and the Legionnaire Revolution*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> The extreme traditionalist position of Nichifor Crainic can be found in the volume *Cardinal Points in Chaos*, Bucharest, Albatros, 1998, but Nae Ionescu was a true Socratic spirit without a written work and his articles were collected by his disciples and published in the volume *The Rose of Winds*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1991.

<sup>19</sup> Mihaly Szilagy-Gal, *The Nationality of Reasoning: Autochtonist Understanding of Philosophy in Interwar Romania*, in Thanasis Sfikas, Cristopher Williams, ed., *Ethnicity and Nationalism in East Central Europe and the Balkans*, Ashgate Publishing, 1999, p. 84.

‘*Philosophy of culture*’ and his *Speech* held on the occasion of his bringing into Romanian Academy in 1937 and called ‘*The praise of Romanian village*’. With influences from German philosophy of culture, Spengler, Frobenius and Jung, Blaga defined a matrix-space consubstantial with the genesis of the Romanian people and called ‘mioritical space’. However, this territorialization of space is limited only at the traditional village, “*the place where the endless was born*”... The ‘mioritical space’ had nothing to do with real historical time or with sociological space, it is only a philosophical but very suggestive metaphor. Nor excessive traditionalist, either according a very much importance to the orthodoxy factor, considered as one but not the factor or the Romanian ‘national essence’, Lucian Blaga<sup>20</sup> succeeded to realize the most original work from interwar Romanian philosophy and to lift the term of ‘national essence’ to the rigor of a philosophical concept. His ambiguity between “high culture” (national culture) and “low culture” (village culture), both originated in the same “stylistic-matrix”, is an attempt to affirm a national culture by putting the accent on its traditional side. His metaphysical conception about the “stylistic-matrix” is, however, limited: in time to a pre-modern époque, in space to the traditional world of village, both “uncorrupted” by history.

*“Graver than novelists, more radicals than historians and sociologists in their diagnosis, philosophers are they who gave this Romanian debate metaphysic amplitude. Two names are detached and marked two époques of tragic rupture: the interwar period and Lucian Blaga; the postwar and Constantin Noica”*<sup>21</sup>.

With the philosopher Constantin Noica a new chapter in Romanian philosophy is opened. In his volumes, *Pages about Romanian soul* and *The Romanian feeling of being* Noica tries to establish a Romanian model of being – in the preposition *intru* as a correspondent for the verb *to be* – and to define in this way an ontology based strictly on the modulation of the Romanian language. As Katherine Verdery<sup>22</sup> noticed in the chapter dedicated to the ‘School from Paltinis’, Noica and his followers: Gabriel Liiceanu, Andrei Plesu, Sorin Vieru, Andrei Cornea, Thomas Kleininger have tried to performed the culture as a modality of surviving in a totalitarian regime, a “redemption through culture”, in the 70’s Romania. Essential for understanding the cultural framework in which the ‘School from Paltinis’ has evolved and its relation with the idea of Nation in a context dominated by the communist ideology is the sentiment of emergency, the cultural

<sup>20</sup> Lucian Blaga, *The Trilogy of Culture (The genesis of metaphor and the sense of culture, The mioritical space, The horizon and stile)* Bucharest, Humanitas, 1994 or *The Historical Being*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1975.

<sup>21</sup> Claude Karnoouh, *Romanians: Typology and mentalities*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1994, p. 154-170.

<sup>22</sup> Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: identity and cultural politics in Ceausescu’s Romania*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991.

act lived with authenticity and desperation<sup>23</sup>. The difference between Noica himself and his followers consisted in defining and clarifying their own cultural strategy: creating a cultural resistance was explicit for Liiceanu and Plesu and only implicit for Noica. He was more interested in promoting his own cultural project: the relevance of national culture in universality than in direct opposition to the system. The matter of national identity, the representatively of philosophy with national culture, and its relationship with the West were the most predilection themes for the representants of the ‘School from Paltinis’ who were in direct competition for cultural legitimacy and symbolic control with the protochronists<sup>24</sup>. The canonic battle for symbolic legitimacy was held with the support of a certain kind of discourse about philosophy for promoting a national identity.

### **On the other side of Philosophy: identity as stigmata**

The description of identity as stigmata starts at the turn of the Eighteenth century with Dimitrie Cantemir’s work *Descriptio Moldaviae*. There is a true historic journey: from the memories and depictions of foreign travelers about Romanian Principalities to self-imagines of Romanians and from the definitions of ‘national essence’ to the negative hermeneutics about the same identity<sup>25</sup>. The Romantic pandemic of historiography, literature or philosophy which influenced the self-image of Romanians will be counterbalanced by some negative images about identity. In 1916, the young sociologist Stefan Zeletin<sup>26</sup>, the author of a very good analysis about the development of Romanian bourgeoisie, published his

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<sup>23</sup> The sentiment of emergency can be revealed in *The Paltinis Diary: a paideic model in humanist culture*, Bucharest, Romanian Book, 1983, English translation Budapest, CEU Press, 2000 and *Letters*, Romanian Book, 1987 both written by Gabriel Liiceanu. Other relevant texts for the topic of this paper which can be quoted here are: Gabriel Liiceanu, *Philosophy and the feminine paradigm of the audience in Romanian Life* 80 (7), 1985 and Andrei Plesu, *The rigors of the national idea and the legitimacy of universality in 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (1-2-3), 1981 (unfortunately unavailable in English translation).

<sup>24</sup> The term *protochronist* was for the first time used by the literary historian Edgar Papu in an essay published in the cultural magazine *20<sup>th</sup> Century* in order to emphasize the idea of anticipatory events in Romanian culture (protos-chronos: first in time) In the same register, of the dialogue between intellectuals and society or the “*resistance through culture*”, is important to mention the dubitable existence of a Romanian samizdat – see reference in Gaspar Miklos Tamas, *Letter to My Romanian Friends*”, in *The Old Dilemma*, 16.02.2001. For a recent and comprehensive analyse of the protochronism see the book of the young researcher Alexandra Tomita, *A “glorious” history. The Romanian Protochronism File*, Bucharest, Romanian Book, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> See for exemplification the collective volumes *Foreign Travelers about Romanian Principalities* (9 volumes published between 1968–1997), Sorin Mitu, *National Identity of Romanians in Transylvania*, Budapest, CEU Press, 2001, translated after the Romanian edition from 1997; Daniel Barbu, *The Character of Romanians*, Bucharest, Nemira, 1999 or Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, *Romanians after 1990: the history of a misunderstanding*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1995.

<sup>26</sup> Stefan Zeletin, *From the Land of Donkeys*, Bucharest, Nemira, 1998 A very good commentary about Zeletin’s book in Balazs Trencsenyi, *The ‘Munchausenian’ Moment: Modernity, Liberalism and Nationalism in the Thought of Stefan Zeletin in Nation-Building and contested identities: Romanian and Hungarian case studies*, Budapest, Regio Books, 2001.



pamphlet: *From the Land of Donkeys*. His caustic presentation of Romanian mentality, habits, morals and sense of justice from the Old Kingdom was a shock for the public opinion that waited the imminent entry in the First World War for the territorial unity. In 1934, when Romanian nationalism became integral, the young philosopher Emil Cioran<sup>27</sup> published his baroque volume with a very suggestive title: *Transforming Romania* in which he desires for his country a heroic destiny that can compensate the mediocrity of history. “*Romania needs exaltation toward fanaticism. A fanatic Romania is a transformed Romania*”. There is, in this desperation, the sign of lucidity and of consciousness for whom Romania could be only great or none. These negative images of national identity, written with the scope to shock the audience, had, of course, a subsequent moral message. But they show us, in the same time, that the negativity rule was an exception from the dominator positive discourse about Nation-Building. What is common in all these interpretations – the pastiest for Eminescu, the vitalist for Iorga, the negative references for Zeletin and for Cioran – is the refusal of the present in the name of a projected future toward a myth. The discourse about Nation-Building, as a specific reaction to modernity, has taken and amplified a crisis of identity of Romanian intellectual elites. The attempt of philosophy to construct a discourse about national identity and ethnicity with only indigene basis, to re-conciliate the “great tradition” of popular culture with the “re-invented tradition” of the high culture, was, after all, a failure. It was realized *beyond* and not *synchronic* with Western modernity. The relationship between *modernity* and *national tradition* as a dimension of cultural self-reflection was dilemmatic: philosophers (and I use this term in a very large sense: as men preoccupied by the good of city) who constructed specific discourses about national identity and ethnicity can not proposed solutions for action. They have created a cultural tradition in which it can be found the complexes, the frustrations, the fears and the sentiment of proud for which history could not offer desirable proofs.

### **The defeat of Philosophy**

As final remarks: Romanian nationalism has designed its own philosophy as a specific reaction of the intellectual elites to modernity. As ideology, Romanian nationalism was ethnic centered because the politic and cultural local elites who consolidated the Romanian modern state, have considered as being more desirable shaping the political and cultural unity of all Romanian provinces than finding a capitalist way of development. This tension: between modernists, adepts to a European synchronization, and traditionalists, who want to preserve the local specificity, understood mainly as peasantry or orthodoxy is the sign of a crisis of identity of Romanian elites which is similar to modernity in the Romanian culture and history.

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<sup>27</sup> Emil Cioran, *Transforming Romania*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1993.

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