ETHNICITY AND DENOMINATION – ORTHODOXISM AND CATHOLICISM

NICHIFOR CRAINIC AND "GÎNDIREA". NATIONALISM AND ORTHODOXISM IN INTERWAR ROMANIA (I)

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1. Prolegomena

After 1918, the struggle to define the Romanian ethnicity became bitterer 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 to shape a traditionalist view regarding the character of a future Romanian culture. Continuing the 19th century project of the Junimists 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 article is to lay out the way in which Orthodoxy is present in 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 is to determine that the Romanian traditionalist camp, represented by Nichifor Crainic, did not have a unitary discourse about the relation between Romanianness 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 Nichifor Crainic's nationalist Orthodoxism there were strong political sympathies. As Moeller van den Bruck in Germany[1], Crainic began his political career from a neutral position, that of an intellectual uninterested in the political torments of his age, and he ended up as one of the first ideologues of the Romanian Fascist yoke.

2. "Gîndirea" and Nichifor Crainic

"Gîndirea" was first issued on May 1, 1921 by a group of young Romanian intellectuals coming from the Transylvanian city of Cluj-Napoca like Lucian

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[1] Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair. A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*, Berkeley – Los Angeles, 1961, p. 205.

Blaga, Adrian Maniu, Gib I. Mihăiescu, Emil Isac, Radu Dragnea, D. Tomescu, D. I. Cucu and Cezar Petrescu. As Dumitru Micu has shown, 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[2]. 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."[3] 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 proof enough for the previous statements: the country [Transylvania] "needs the light of "Gîndirea" as it needed at one time the comforter of the "Luceafărul" … 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."[4]

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, satisfied with 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"[5]. 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."[6]

As Dumitru Micu has shown, the trends in the review were almost contradictory[7]: Nicolae Iorga's texts in which he defied the "modernist spirit"

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[2] Dumitru Micu, *Gîndirea şi gîndirismul,* Bucureşti, 1975, p. 12.

[3] 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, 1978, p. 140.

[4] Adrian Maniu, *Cuvinte pentru drum,* in "Gîndirea", I, 1921, no 1, p. 3.

[5] Keith Hitchins, *"Gîndirea": Nationalism …,* p. 147.

[6] *Cronica măruntă,* in "Gîndirea", I, 15 May 1921, no 2, p. 38.

[7] Dumitru Micu, *op. cit.,* p. 18.

contrary to the autochthon tradition and prophesied its diminishment[8], Pamfil Şeicaru's *neosemănătorist* approach which tended in Iorga's direct tradition to praise the contribution of "Semănătorul"[9] and to dismantle the longing of the Romanian culture towards the Western culture depicted as the worse that could happen to the Romanian people[10], and the anti-Catholic contributions of G. M. Ivanov who preached for a "third dictatorship", namely "the only possible democracy – the Christian one."[11]

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.[12] Also, he will prove the most important theoretician of traditionalism in an Orthodox key. Ioan Dobre or Nichifor Crainic was born on December 24, 1889 in a small village called Bulbucata (Vlaşca). Between 1908 and 1912 he studied at the Central Seminary in Bucharest hoping that he could fulfill his family ambitions and become a priest. During this period he was influenced especially by Nicolae Iorga and his nationalistic discourse which followed closely the 19th 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 poems *Şesuri natale* (Native fields). Between 1916 and 1918 he was concentrated on the Romanian army fighting in the World War One 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 another volume of poetry called *Darurile pămîntului* (The Gifts of the Land) and in the same year, following Lucian Blaga's advice, he went to Viena to study Philosophy. After 1921 he started to collaborate with "Gîndirea".

Nichifor Crainic's activity in "Gîndirea" had three stages. 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 was a Romanian authentic culture, genuine and autochthon 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 "Gîndirea" moved to Bucharest. A greater cultural visibility, the emergence of rightist movements and the obvious failure of the

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[8] Nicolae Iorga, *Elementele culturii româneşti,* in "Gîndirea", III, 5 December 1923, no 7, pp. 145-147.
[9] *Pe marginea unui volum omagial,* ibidem, I, 15 January 1922, no 20, p. 383.
[10] *Literatura neînsufleţită,* ibidem, II, 5 December 1922, no 9, pp. 73-74.
[11] G. M. Ivanov, *A treia dictatură,* ibidem, III, 5 April 1924, no 14, p. 341.
[12] Nichifor Crainic, *Zile albe. Zile negre,* Bucureşti, 1991, p. 171.

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 to 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.[13] Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Vasile Băncilă or Dragoş Protopopescu became the leading voices of a young generation revolted against the governmental patronized pro-Western culture.

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 tradiţiei* (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.[14]

After 1934[15], 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 şi Etnocraţie*[16] (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[17]. 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 hand between Crainic from "Gîndirea" and the one from *Orthodoxie şi Ethnocraţie* and on the other hand

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[13] 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, 1995, p. 154.

[14] Armin Heinen, *Die Legionen "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien, Soziale Bewegung und Politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus,* München, 1986 (Romanian edition, Bucureşti, 1999, p. 173).

[15] For the significance of this date see Dumitru Micu, *op. cit.,* p. 30.

[16] Nichifor Crainic, *Ortodoxie şi Etnocraţie,* Bucureşti, 1997.

[17] Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel. Fascist Ideology in Romania,* Boulder, 1990, pp. 57-59.

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

3. 1921-1926. The Early Orthodoxist Quest for Romanianness

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 1921–1922, 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 among 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 "Viaţa 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.[18] 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 ţara mea* (Jesus in My Country)[19], *Politică şi Ortodoxie* (Politics and Orthodoxy)[20] and *Parsifal*[21]. 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 Synod, sometimes even expressing contrary ideas to the ecclesiastical official opinion. 'This review – writes Crainic in a polemical observation from 1928 – is not the official journal of the Holy Synod'"[22].

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

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[18] Dumitru Micu, *op. cit.,* p. 39: practically, Dumitru Micu is using an article of Lucian Blaga called *Începuturile şi cadrele unei prietenii,* in "Gîndirea", XIX, 1940, no 4, p. 226.

[19] Ibidem, 1923, nos 11-12, pp. 117-120.

[20] Ibidem, 1924, no 5, pp. 77-83.

[21] Ibidem, 1924, nos 8-10, pp. 181-186.

[22] Dumitru Micu, *op. cit.,* pp. 60-61.

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.[23] On the other hand, I will suggest that Crainic is shaping this Orthodoxist approach of Romanian nationality as a competing alternative to 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 end of World War One, 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. Nevertheless, Orthodoxism meant for Crainic not a theological or ecclesiastical solution for the Romanian problems. On the contrary, as Mihály Szilágyi-Gál has pointed out, "In the *Gîndirism* movement, Orthodoxy was not just a national religion, but the Romanian ideology itself"[24], namely that Orthodoxy played a cultural role as the representative of the Romanian national character.

The first of his programmatic texts *Iisus în ţara mea* was published in "Gîndirea".[25] 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.[26] After that Crainic deplored the unworthiness of the Romanian Orthodox Church to fulfill "its national mission"[27] as opposed to the rural Christianity, which, 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."[28]

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[23] For the details regarding the humiliating position of the Romanian Orthodox Church in interwar Romania, see Fr. Alexandru Moraru, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română între anii 1885 şi 2000. Biserică, Naţiune, Cultură,* vol. 3, I, Bucureşti, 2006, p. 92.

[24] Mihály Szilágyi-Gál, *The Nationality of Reasoning. Autochtonist Understandings of Philosophy in Interwar Romania,* in Balázs Trencsènyi, Dragoş Petrescu, Cristina Petrescu, Constantin Iordachi, Zoltán Kántor (eds.), *Nation–Building and Contested Identities. Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies,* Iaşi-Budapest, 2001, p. 87. Mihály Szilágyi-Gál's idea can be summarized best by Roger Griffin's insight from *The Nature of Fascism,* London, 1996, pp. 30-31 about the transition in the fascist movements from a stage characterized by the ideal of "religious politics" to a stage where religion gives its place to a "political ideology", a process which seems to describe best Crainic's transition from Orthodoxy to *Orthodoxism*, which is a political and cultural ideology (an -ism as Fascism, Communism or Modernism) shaped according to his nationalist view.

[25] *Isus în ţara mea,* in "Gîndirea", II, 1923, nos 11-12, p. 117 and *passim.*

[26] *Ibidem,* pp. 117-118.

[27] *Ibidem,* p. 118.

[28] *Ibidem,* p. 119.

Accordingly, laying himself in a close connection with the 19th 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 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."[29]

Nichifor Crainic became even more radical in his following texts about the relation between Orthodoxy and Romanianness. *Politică şi Ortodoxie*[30] 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, then Romanian orthodoxy is, by all means, peasant orthodoxy. Any political doctrine which intends to define the cardinal needs of this social class and a policy which tends to turn to account not only political and economical points 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."[31]

Against any State-controlled or political process of defining the Romanian ethnicity according to bourgeois values[32] which seemed to describe the Western spirit, 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

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[29] Dumitru Micu, *op. cit.,* p. 64.

[30] Nichifor Crainic, *Politică şi Ortodoxie,* in "Gîndirea", 1924, no 5, pp. 77-83.

[31] *Ibidem,* p. 78.

[32] The polemic between the traditionalists and westernizers was fought on many grounds, including the social and the economical ones. By advocating for the primacy of the archaic village and for the indulgement of the rural economy, values characteristic of an already present social class, namely the peasantry, Crainic sets himself aside from a Liberal economical trend whose aims will be later on enclosed in Ştefan Zeletin's cry from *Burghezia română. Originea şi rolul ei istoric* (1925) about the necessity of developing a strong Romanian bourgeoisie. For an analysis of Zeletin and of other trends from the same period see Balázs Trencsènyi, *"The Münchansenian Moment": Modernism, Liberalism, and Nationalism in the Thought of Ştefan Zeletin,* in Balázs Trencsènyi, Dragoş Petrescu, Cristina Petrescu, Constantin Iordachi, Zoltán Kántor (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 61 and *passim.*

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."[33]

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.[34] 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 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 does 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."[35] 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. Because after 1848 the Western modernism grounded in the aesthetic and civil values belonging to the atheistic ethos drawn after the emergence of Enlightenment and French Revolution contaminated the Romanian spirit the return to the Orthodox tradition, which constituted for Crainic the messianic ontological substance of the Romanianness, became an organic necessity for the Romanian nation.

In this particular text Crainic focused on the preserving of the archaic character of the Romanian village against the idea of mass-party which began to be popularized among the peasantry, especially in Transylvania by the National Peasants Party.[36] Inspired by different political trends going from agrarianism to populism, this political ideology permeating the Romanian peasantry was depicted by Crainic as a political interference in the pure universe of the Romanian village, the only preserver of the Romanian traditions and culture.

Also, Crainic proposed the rural Orthodoxy in order to establish a difference between him and the other traditionalist fold represented by the 19th century Junimists and their most fervent disciple Nicolae Iorga, who were advocating for the return to the Romanian traditional society, but this return was depicted from a

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[33] Keith Hitchins, *"Gîndirea": Nationalism ...,* pp. 149-150.

[34] Nichifor Crainic, *Politică și Ortodoxie,* p. 78.

[35] *Ibidem,* p. 82.

[36] Constantin Stere, *Social-democratism sau poporanism?,* in Idem, *Scrieri politice și filozofice,* București, 2005.

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 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."[37]

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 and to gain legitimacy, Crainic had to delimit programmatically his innovative approach from all other similar trends in the Romanian culture. It is less surprising that his future article, *Parsifal*[38] 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*[39] (Decline of the West) which had an excellent press in "Gîndirea"[40], Crainic applied to the Romanian case the antinomy set by Spengler between culture and civilization[41]. 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

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[37] Keith Hitchins, *"Gîndirea": Nationalism ...,* pp. 152-153.

[38] Nichifor Crainic, *Parsifal,* in "Gîndirea", 1924, nos 8-10, pp. 181-186.

[39] For the impact of the book on German culture, see Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism. Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich,* Cambridge, 1996, pp. 49-69; for the impact of Spengler in the Romanian culture, see Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866–1947,* Oxford, 1994, p. 299.

[40] The book was reviewed by Lucian Blaga in his article *Spengler, un Copernic al istoriei,* in "Gîndirea", 1921, no 1, p. 6.

[41] For an explanation about Spengler's antinomy between civilization and culture, see Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic,* London, 1996, p. 49.

"Christianity of Dostoievski" which is for Crainic "the orthodoxy of the simple, peasant soul."[42] 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 tool 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."[43]

By adopting even a geographical antithesis between modernist West and archaic but in the same time spiritual East Crainic established the existence of an autonomous cultural tradition in Eastern Europe, which confounded itself with Eastern Orthodoxy. Therefore, according to him, any interference of a Western culture threatened to sever the tradition 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.[44] As Katherine Verdery states, in front of the revisionist claims coming from the regimes from which after 1918 Romania annexed large territories and which contested its legitimacy over those 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.[45] 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.[46]

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.

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[42] Nichifor Crainic, *Parsifal,* p. 184.

[43] *Ibidem,* p. 185.

[44] For a complete summary of the debate, see Thomas J. Kiel, *Romania's Tortured Road towards Modernity*, Boulder, 2006, pp. 128-129.

[45] Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology and National Character in interwar Romania,* in Ivo Banac & Katherine Verdery (eds.), *op. cit.,* pp. 111-112.

[46] Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right. The Nineteen Thirties,* Boulder, 1999, p. 22.