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ROMANIAN ORTHODOXY, BETWEEN IDEOLOGY OF EXCLUSION AND *SÉCULARISATION AMIABLE*

The present study represents a preliminary theoretical attempt to analyse the socio-political influence and impact of the Romanian Orthodoxy within the Romanian public life and political culture since 1990, both through the relation between the Orthodox Church and the state, and its impact on the wider society. An open-ended reflection on a constantly unfolding reality, the approach focuses on demonstrating the profound "modernity"—not backwardness—of Orthodoxy's implicit political theology and derived ideologies and their "modern" destructiveness.
The pivotal segment of the study is the relation between modernity and a theory of exclusion derived from a rather unorthodox (brief) interpretation of its emergence from the main carriers of modernity, namely Enlightenment and humanism. Instead of conclusion, the final section compiles and comments a few reformist initiatives and some possible philosophical-theological ways out of the deadlock of ideological self-centrism that still dominates our Orthodoxy.

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Francis Fukuyama's conviction that, following the disappearance of serious threats to liberal capitalism, we witness the end of history is contradicted by a major dangerous ideology that dominates the beginning of the 21st century, just as it did at the beginning of the previous century: nationalism. The present sweeping phenomenon of globalization, far from diminishing the economic discrepancies, accelerates the radicalisation of nation-states, often occurring also among the rich countries (such as Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Portugal, or France) by the increasing of radical right's popularity.

According to Jonathan Glover, there are two histories of nationalism: first, there is the continuously multiplied history of peoples engaged in the legitimate struggle for freedom; secondly, there is the history of nationalism under the form of tribal conflict. Regarding the protagonists of the latter, Glover writes that

> [although n]ationality is often thought of as [a given,] something "natural" or presocial ... nationalists often think of their nation in ways influenced by a traditional model of a "pure" or "ideal" case. This ideal version is of a people

> inhabiting a single, unified territory. All territorial boundaries are clear and undisputed, and there are no minorities [inside them]. The "people" are a tribe. They are a single ethnic group. They have a common language, a shared history, which involves their having a common culture. This culture typically includes shared religious beliefs.[1]

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In 1990, Nestor Vornicescu, Metropolitan Bishop of The Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) wrote: "Our orthodox theology regards the national factor as belonging to the divine order and will"; the resulting ethnic character of the Church urges the citizen to support the state, described as the expression of the Romanian nation. "Orthodox faith has thus identified itself with our consciousness as a people", the Church being, above all, the Church of the Romanian nation, of all [its] generations."[2] As a consequence, the attentive analyst Olivier Gillet comments, the Orthodox Church is considered, historically and ethnically, State Church; anyone unconnected to it by blood and ancient orthodox Dacian-Roman descent, is a second-degree Romanian citizen.[3] By attributing the Romanian Orthodox Church's ethnicity a mystical character this type of discourse descends directly from the interwar rightist cultural periodical *Gândirea*. One of the main contributors to this prestigious publication—and charismatic mentor of a generation of brilliant, albeit ultranationalist, thinkers—Nae Ionescu, has often expressed his opinion about the relation between Orthodoxy and the Romanian people as follows: "We are orthodox because we are Romanians and are Romanians because we are orthodox."[4] Similar ideas were expressed in a large number of church-related publications after 1990 by highly respected orthodox theologians and members of the high BOR clergy, who took part in the post-communist "Christian [ultranationalist] rebirth" of Romania.

Moreover, partly in order to rehabilitate the Church after its collaboration with the atheist communist regime, and partly in order to reassert the Church's strong and highly influential politico-ideological beliefs, an assiduous editorial activity began within its ranks. Many important and charismatic theologians and pulpit orators became largely involved in the process of resurrection of the ultranationalist interwar movements (which had adopted Christian Orthodoxy at the core of their ideologies), primarily competing "versions" of the Legionary Movement, by publishing regularly in their periodicals[5] and collective volumes. At the same time, many have devoted their energies to the presentation and re-publishing of various pre-war and interwar ultranationalist thinkers[6], including radical antisemites and mystical legionaries. Many members of the orthodox clergy had been involved in the interwar ultranationalist

movements, and some of the post-1989 survivors (of whom many endured long years of imprisonment in communist camps) and their disciples were acting out their "radical return", as Michael Shafir would say.[7] One of the survivors, the remarkable theologian and scholar Dumitru Staniloae, was contributing to the revival of many cardinal *gândirist* tenets, for example by expressing, in various writings, the idea that the orthodox spirituality cannot be dissociated from the Romanian people's identity.[8]

Such perspectives and their implications have been intensely criticized by pro-western, civic-liberal intellectuals, who were stressing their incompatibility with modernity and its projects, set in motion by humanism and Enlightenment.[9] This study's central aim is to disclose the structural connection between modernity and the exclusionist potential of one of its outcomes, (radical) nationalism (easily identifiable in the ethnocentrist discourse of Romanian Orthodoxy) and to dismiss it, as a consequence, *qua* reformist solution to BOR's politico-attitudinal problems.

The Enlightenment's impulse towards universalization or totalization played an essential role both in conceiving the individual self in terms of a formally general definition, thus excluding concrete historical differences, and in the grounding of the definition of that universal self in formal criteria which cannot be applied formally. As Berel Lang insightfully remarks, the definition works as a formal principle when applied in order to distinguish a group, or individual, from another, acting purely stipulatively, consequently arbitrarily. "The notion of a universalist definition of the self contains the basis of this inconsistency within itself, since it implies that the concept of humanity is not exclusionary, but at the same time makes clear that the concept is inapplicable without a criterion of exclusion (without such a criterion there would be nothing that was not a self)."[10] The danger here is that an individual or a group of individuals could thus be excluded on the basis of this principle so that even their minority status would be denied.

Although finding usually difficult to express its anticlericalism and general hostility towards Christianity (still powerful politically and institutionally), the Enlightenment ideologues and jurists were developing, in specific forms, a reaction against the "unenlightened" past as a whole: that with the possibility of freedom and equality that was now open to them, all citizens of the new regime had the obligation to commit themselves to those ideas by renouncing the differences that had characterized their previous tutelage. The derived principle of tolerance appeared thus quite tightly conditioned. Although the terms of the new principles allowed the considering of groups previously not acknowledged, the continuous criticism of difference itself and the ideological structure underlying it were prevalent in terms of their compelling force. "What starts out as a commitment to tolerance turns out to be, not acceptance of diversity in its own terms, but a tolerance of difference within the margins fixed by a stipulated conception of reason." Anyone, or any group outside

these margins, no matter how close or far, was to be excluded. If I am to refer to the quintessential expression, in legislative form, of these principles, namely the (original) Declaration of the Rights of Man (27 August 1789), it did not include Protestants or Jews under its purview, but suspended their legal status until the enactment of subsequent specific legislation. In Berel Lang's words,

> The principles themselves pertain to the rights and obligations of those who came fully within the domain of citizenship (and, to that extent, of humanity). To place anyone outside that domain is to open the way to arbitrariness, not only in the first judgment of who has or has not the right to a civic identity, but also the subsequent judgment of how those who do not have that right are to be treated.[11]

Of course, it would be absurd to conclude that at the basis of extreme acts and attitudes—by no means rare in recent, including Romanian, history—driven by exclusivist and "purifying" principles aiming at eliminating the difference, one should only place ideas inspired by the Enlightenment. The impact of some dominant nineteenth philosophical trends and sciences (such as biology and linguistics) is undoubtedly deeper than that of any ideas pertaining to the previous centuries.

Thus, as a reply given to Enlightenment's universalism, formalism, impersonalism and uniformism, the romantic attitude promoted the respect for individuality (including minorities, and martyrs *per se*); for the creative impulse; and the freedom to live and act according to unimposed personal principles, but also for unrestricted beliefs and emotions (exemplarily personified by the rebel artist) underlying private life, individual consciousness and rights. The dark side of the same constellation of creeds—that which exalts the sinister genius-artist whose prime moulding materials are people's lives, the ultrarevolutionary who destroys old societies in order to lay down new foundations, and was behind so many hysterical derailments into violent irrationalism and fascism[12]—bring into light romantic principles such as *race* (and the derived *racial hygiene*), *das Völk* (regarded in a purist way and in organic association with the purism of language), *Völkischekultur* or *Kulturnation*, and their entailments.[13] Although the present study does not deal specifically with the strong ties between such outbursts of anti-rationalism and the dynamic of various "purifying" ideologies, they cannot be ignored: their emotional drives often intersect and reinforce, paradoxically, the sinister logicality of exclusion, helping it to function, sometimes even in the absence of a referent-object-of-exclusion, such as in the case of "antisemitism without Jews". A radical form of scapegoatist nationalism, "antisemitism without Jews" is a post-communist representation specific to those Central-East European societies where the Jewish communities were either exterminated or drastically reduced by the fascist regimes. The

1990s Romania was no exception; the antisemitic overtones of the interwar far right were revived and many intellectuals affiliated to the Romanian Orthodoxy joined this choir. The noise grew stronger due to many new, "radical continuity" (with the national-communist past) voices storming an ideational market riddled with symbolic aggressiveness. This trend is identified both in popular and intellectual environments under the form of socio-discursive antisemitism and autochtonism and as forms of anti-minority public culture.

This, quintessentially modern, "mythical Jew" has his origins deeply rooted in the central and often problematic issue of national identity, which in most parts of the region has been a major cultural, political or juridical, concern since the nineteenth century and especially after the First World War. After the fall of communism, its main symbolic function become more clearly one of embodying the causes of national disasters, from communism to the effects of economic liberalism. As one of the authorities in the fields of communist and post-communist Central-East European politics, Vladimir Tismăneanu, suggestively put it, "this reification of "the Jew" as the threatening alien goes hand in hand with the parochial fetishisation of national history, which represents the major legitimising principle of [ethnocentric] collective identity." Following the Slovenian sociologist and psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek, Tismăneanu describes antisemitic fantasies as "expressions of neurotic reactions to the impossibility of a fully homogenous national identity of a corporatist type"[14] and "the Jew" as the "embodiment of the absolute failure of the totalitarian project."[15] Portrayed as the negative character *par excellence* within the national self-laudatory narratives "the mythical Jew" is rightfully placed by Denise Rosenthal at the epicentre of what she terms a "pervasive nostalgia":

> The last decade of re-readings and re-writings of the past make post-communism a pervasively nostalgic landscape, while everyday life becomes a "topography of memory"... [T]he narrative of "the mythical Jew" could be said to transpire on a complex background that includes... nostalgia, conspiracy theories and scapegoatism; self-perception as "victimised majority" and a positively revived inter-war [and wartime] fascist mythology; to which we could also add a tormented post-communist socio-economic transition and its correlative cultures of despair.[16]

Concurrently, Tismăneanu accurately observes how the revival, after 1989, of ethnocentric symbols, myths, "rationalised miracles" and "liturgical nationalisms" and teleological claims, are accompanied by desperate unleashing of emotions, hostility and anger as manifestations of the "politics of resentful marginality" and "cultural despair". The latter, a

post-communist feeling of loss of identity landmarks and certitudes, of disorientation and insecurity, is pictured by Tismăneanu as the main trigger of "outbursts of anti-democratic activism and salvationist expectations", ... [resulting in] a political culture of fear.[17]

Often the structures and developments of the mechanisms of exclusion, and their relations with cultural-representational dilemmas like identity crises become more evident if investigated within monolithic political-ideological contexts such as the communist regimes. Moreover, if analytically placed in the aftermath or in the wake of more complex trends that emerged in pluralistic societies, their clarifying potential can increase further. In Romania's case, the version of national communism developed under Ceausescu was, according to Michael Shafir, "probably unmatched elsewhere in the region in its efforts to entrench the legitimacy of both party and ruler on national symbols and on a political discourse that, for all practical purposes, resurrected the inter-war political credo of the extreme right."[18] The latter's "world outlook [was] encoded in all but official acknowledgement in party documents, and reflected in party-supervised historiography".[19] Thus "rediscovered", nationalism was meant to replace internationalist ideology as a legitimate means of the communist rule.[20]

During this period, the Romanian Orthodox Church subscribed to a paradoxical symbiosis between its ethnicist political credo and the official atheist nationalist discourse of the ruling party. Thus BOR was rendering the state nationalism a spiritual, and consequently legitimizing, character. At the same time, BOR denied any "nationalist" labelling and rejected the accusation of phyletism launched by the Patriarchy of Constantinople. Employing Chapter 13 of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans as starting point in justifying its political attitude, BOR had cultivated a respect towards the State which was seen as the mundane expression of the Romanian ethnonation. Although its discourse about the non-Orthodox Romanian citizens was not aggressive, their diminished Romanianess entailed by their non-Orthodoxy defined their "otherness" which clearly implied the mechanism of exclusion.[21]

The project of national communism itself incorporated unresolved urgencies of the inter-war period – first of all questions of state formation and political integration and economic development – which resonated with at least part of the Marxist-Leninist vision of societal development. As Paul Blokker put it, "the national Communist project interpreted resolutions to the problèmatiques of modern society in a collectivist way, which involved a continued emphasis on the dominant role of the state." In fact, continues Blokker, the communist state's totalitarian logic was similar to that of the fascist state, in that it sought to eliminate any form of political action and contention outside of its own structures ruled by the confinements of "social harmony" at the expense of individual and group interests.

During the post-Soviet communist age (1958-1989), the Romanian nationalist discourse has gradually reconstructed a Utopia (a self-referential ideological fiction (re)invented by intellectuals and supported by the Orthodox Church) not only on Marxist-Leninist, but also on traditional ideological grounds. Thus enforced, the nationalist Utopia became instrumental in performing the crucial function—employed by the state—of preventing, inhibiting and excluding oppositional forces. Due to the powerfulness of tradition and to the precariousness of communist credo within the public culture, "it was easier for Romanians to identify themselves with characters derived from the national drama than with the abstract patterns of [communist] doctrine."[22]

As for the post-communist period,

> the reiteration of collectivism and exclusive nationalism in the national Communist project left its imprint on the developments after 1989. The inter-élite struggle over the interpretation of modernity in the newly emerging modernising project is confined in an important way by meanings and symbols shaped during communist times. The invocation of national symbols is both a way to delegitimise Westernism, and to explain social dislocations that occurred since 1989.[23]

Orthodoxy's segregation(ism) based on denominational and ethnic criteria, implies a clear distinction between citizenship and nationality, which, in itself, makes the democratization of the state problematic. Unlike the other Christian denominations, Orthodoxy elaborated the ecclesiological equation state-nation-denomination and assimilated, at Church level, (ethno)nationalism. Consequently, the inseparability of the Church from the State, and the intrinsic (Orthodox) religiousness of the society are regarded as immutable; nationality, that is, the affiliation to an ethnic nation, is considered inseparable from Orthodoxy and any citizen who does not belong to Orthodoxy excludes himself from the present Romanian nation. These relations are placed under the auspices of the prime principles of the Church's ecclesiology, namely autocephaly and autonomy. The same ecclesiology represents the foundation of the Church's political role and of the structural parallelism between (the Orthodox) Church and the civil society, as well as the latter's constitutive model.[24]

According to its derived political theology, its synodal dimension renders the Church its infallibility and models the state's participating to the European (and generally international) life. Its autocephaly has to be mirrored by the state's sovereignty and, together with its ethnicity, establishes the latter's unity and political boundaries. Internationally, the synodal concerto of autocephalic patriotisms, ethnicities and Christianity constitute the European nationalism.[25]

Such ideas have strong correspondents along various cultural-political and social coordinates of society. As the reasserting of the nation-state justifies the efforts of rendering the national territory ethnically homogenous, "the existence of a minority may be presented as potentially threatening to the national state of the majority... The logic of the nation-state precludes the existence of national minorities within it."[26]

In the context of the post-communist identity crises, ethnonationalism tends to prevail over civic nationalism. As a consequence, "the totalizing socialist state is in danger of being replaced by a totalizing nationalist one", in the name of sovereignty, seen as a value in itself, as the highest value in whose name no cost is too high.[27]

There are multiple factors that contribute to this radicalization. Dan Stone, a very insightful analyst of extremist ideologies and racial violence, wrote that "[the growth of radical nationalism] is intimately connected to the end of the Cold War and the demise of the post-war consensus. The exhuming of the European nations' suppressed wartime pasts also permits the voicing of resentments kept in check by the post-war official narrative of anti-fascism."[28]

Like in the particular case of BOR, as well as in large segments of the public life of other former communist countries, in Romania, proving discontinuity with communism was often vehemently demanded by large parts of the body politic and is aimed at by resorting to anti-communist historic legitimacy and "reconciling" with and "embracing" of, the wartime acknowledged symbols of anti-communism such as Antonescu and C.Z. Codreanu, regardless of their infamous ethnonationalist and antisemitic records. These phenomena emerged in a complex and often fractured context; for alongside the conviction of mainstream politicians and civic intellectuals that European integration is vital in the volatile context of post-communist transition, old fears for national identity and sovereignty revived in response to the internal weakness of the state in dealing with minorities' aspirations. Despite (and to some extent because of) more than four decades of centralised communist rule, certain nationalist segments of intelligentsia, including many within the Orthodox Church, are still fearful of breaking the ethnic monopoly of the majority, which defines the nation-state and mirrors (or rather grounds) its unity. Despite all these, by the end of the first post-communist decade, Tismăneanu was convincingly observing that

> the deeply rooted [ultranationalist and] racist feelings are not shared by the most important opinion leaders and political elites, but are left with the marginal demagogues. The political elites did not revert to the interwar politics of exclusion when governments considered the persecution of... minorities a respectable means of legitimisation.[29]

As the present study has already suggested, these phenomena are among the main outcomes of modernity, usually centred in the Enlightenment. But, in its turn, the Enlightenment was set in motion by the openings previously created by humanism and other related doctrines of the Renaissance. Their consequences are no less controversial then those passed down the history road by *les Lumières*. In the beginning of modernity the birth of pluralism was saluted with joy by the minority of people who were dealing with thinking, discussing and writing. Pluralism had an emancipatory effect. But, then, something happened. According to Erasmus, "freedom is one's right (and ability) to mould oneself." That implied that not all people were equally endowed. The Renaissance humanists celebrated in fact the freedom of the few chosen. On the one hand, there were "the ones capable of employing impressive human capacities at the service of self-creating and self-legislating freedom." On the other, there was a "credulous and miserable mob, born in order to obey."[30]

According to Zygmunt Bauman, that is why it seems that the Renaissance was the era of the (other) great schism. In fact, the elite freed itself from the "animal" or insufficiently human, part, the ignorant, dependent side of its selves, now projected unto the uncultivated and vulgar masses. "These, just like the interior demons the self-moulding elite were striving to exorcise, were considered brutal, dirty and incapable of controlling their passions" which thus could be shaped into civilized form. Communication between the sides was theoretically cut. "Practically, the enlightened elite "confronted" the masses, not only seen as hideous otherness from which one ought to stay away, but also as an object to be ruled and taken care of." This synthesis shaped the new face of the political power.[31]

The resulting cumulative "drift of modernity domesticates the fantastic"[32] and normalizes radical exclusion, writes Omer Bartov. The modern fantastic and fictitious lack the forgone medieval grounds. The firmness of life's meaning sensed by the medieval man—who felt surrounded and supported by the divine order (even when his earthly minute life was miserable) which he "saw" in nature, society and history—is gone. The groundless grounds of modernity had generated fragmentations of life which inevitably clashed. In this universe, God can very well "function" just as a superfluous fiction; but human imagination is omnipotent, for it both makes for this world's creation and its perpetuation.[33] And from this perspective, the assumption that the (innocent) victim is necessary—in the modern confrontation between whole sides that brought about the idea that radical exclusion can be

operated by the ones who want to be saved from it—is anything but an unimaginable reality.

2

After the electoral defeat of political ultranationalism in the year 2000 and the rapid diminishing of its influence within the Romanian political landscape, the pro-European ideas and attitudes started to gain more ground. As Andreas Wimmer remarks, although we do not witness a decline of the nation-state and nationalism in Europe, a "new salience of ethnic and nationalist politics came from switching modes of inclusion and exclusion from hierarchical and universalistic to egalitarian and particularistic principles". Moreover, the prospects of joining the EU and lately its realization have provided—and still provide—enormous incentives to overcome exclusivist politics.[34]

The Orthodox Church finds itself in need of reshaping in accordance with the new realities. The decline (but by no means the disappearance) of ethnonationalist discourse and the increasing dialogue among the various forms of nationalism in Romanian society require a new type of presence for BOR. The Law of Religious Freedom and Religious Denominations No. 489 from 2006 does not declare it national Church, but one of the recognized religious denominations which, at Article No. 7 are all defined as equal social partners of the state.[35]

As the driving force of nationalism has decreased, none of the multiple nationalisms, many of them intellectualized and sophisticated, can dominate any longer the disputes and, as Caius Dobrescu interestingly notes, "that institutes rules of competition and continuous debate... inherently compatible with democratization... The different types of nationalisms keep each other in check generating a kind of really functioning pluralism."[36] In this dialogue, the Church's presence should resonate with the general European reflection on its own spirituality, aiming at the attainment of an *amiable secularization* of society[37] within which the religious dimension, though institutionally separated from the state life, remains essential.

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Among the notable reformist initiatives coming from within BOR itself, a very interesting and encouraging view was expressed by Radu Preda, an Orthodox clergyman and an academic at the important Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Cluj-Napoca, with regard to the need and prospects of an Orthodox social theology per se. In his opinion, which seems to be shared by reformist academics and hierarchs within BOR, this will bring social missionary sucess to the Orthodox Church. Criticizing a prominent

Bishop of the Church who said that there is no need for a social theology, as the holy mass is the true social theology, Preda replies by sketching the main coordinates of this virtually absent side of BOR's doctrine and activity. The social theology has to be elaborated as a result of dialogue with non-teological sciences (sociology, political science, economics). He stressed that the excessive accent on the spiritual side of the Church and faith, their focus on the divine, led to the diabolization of everything external to their regard; „social theology, far from being a form of self-secularization of theology, is a way of taking the [seen] world seriously, restoring its definition and status as Creation." The main domain of Orthodox social theology should be „the social structures as they really are (not as we want them to be), the concrete ways in which the community life of the Christian believer, and of man in general, is structured; the social structures of disease and poverty; the social policies; [...] the correct application [...] of Church's external subsidiarity.[38]

As for the philosophical and sociological groundings of a possible social theology, they still remain to be elaborated. In the history of applied theology there are examples of doctrines which bear resemblances with the Orthodox one. Among them Roger George Collingwood's theological view is very suggestive, mainly because he discusses both the need to preserve the emotional and ritualistic sides of religion, and the importance of tradition, and studies the believers' needs of religion as parts of their humanity and anthropological make-up. In his detailed examination of the crises of the religious life in European society through their institutional dimension, Collingwood arrived at remarkable conclusions some of which can be applied to our present discussion. His argument can be employed in the grounding of a prominent institutional dimension of the Orthodox Church (as social, political, and inter-confessional partner).

In his essay "The Church", Collingwood made an important attempt to stress the importance of factors which assure the institutional culture of Christian believers, by "administrating" the creed and by providing the faithful with a framework of rules and symbols capable of "focusing" their devotional energies, which have a great deal of emotional charge, towards a divinity conceived as a supreme guarantor of Christian civilization and well-being. In Collingwood's account, this requires the rehabilitation of the institutional side of the church, which has to be achieved by re-affirming its "infallibility," but not as an expression of its monopoly over truth:

> [T]he claim of infallibility contains a positive idea [only if it is] opposed to the mere claim for truth. To say that the church is infallible means [that] the human mind has the power of solving all problems which it can present to itself. Now that is an important truth, and the denial of it an important common error.[39]

This idea is followed by Collingwood's assertion that "we have to regard the church as a human and historical creation framed by man for his own needs."[40] Thus the church is viewed as a community of faithful people defined by tradition. Later, in *Speculum Mentis*, this idea will be clearly stated: "The life of religion is worship, and because religion is social this means social worship"[41]. This implies that worship, "the consciousness of being surrounded by a divine presence", or the belief that one is in direct communion with God has both an inner side and an outer side, the former—which represents the sensuous side of worship, where sensuous means intuitive, immediate, innocent of explicit reason—being informed—first of all with the creeds, concepts and the sets of rules, as parts of its institutional side designed to organize their practising—by the latter.

As a sign of dysfunction in the relationship between the "inside" and the "outside," Collingwood has identified, especially in the recent and contemporary history of Christian civilization, the presence of an anarchy, which, in his opinion, is generated by people who go off to follow the inner side of worship; it is the business of the outer, that is, social and institutional side of worship to temper it by creed and ritual which are rational in character, because, on the one hand, the inner worship is "filtered" through a creed, and, on the other hand, it is rational in character, even though implicitly, and thus isomorphic with the outer side of religious life.

As Collingwood implied in *Speculum Mentis*, the lack of balance between these two sides is the result of ignoring, by the post-medieval – especially modern – societies, the inner, devotional side of worship and of their almost exclusive dwelling upon the institutional side of Christianity, which, like any autonomous, more or less contentless, formal institutional structure, tended to work like all bureaucracies, which resist reformatory attempts, favour obedience, suppress liberty of their members, and continuously tend to reproduce themselves, as John Stuart Mill would say.[42] On the other hand, as M. Cowling observed, Collingwood suggested in his later writings that a fully emotional religion, deprived of all intellectual components is not only illegitimate, but also dangerous for (European) civilization; he ascribed this perspective on religion to "an epidemic disease," producing a "withering of belief in the importance of truth" and a recession from "the obligation to think and act in a systematic and methodical way," a disease which "ha[s] already produced irrational emphases on "intuition" in science and "emotion" in religion, and was ... producing an equally odious emphasis on "terror" and the leadership in politics."[43]

This implies that the inner side of worship has nothing capable of capturing and guiding its emotional energies. The emotional side of people is therefore "thrown" in a secularised world, in which the external side does not organise and guide it by creed and ritual and thus loses control of it.

Collingwood's critique of the fragmentation of modern (European) mind was an important part of his attempt to unify God, understood as being essentially a symbolic idea, "a product of human conceptual creativity," with a "genuine theistic form of devotion," a union capable of preserving both the "metaphysical character of the absolute referent of the symbol as well as the psychological posture and experiences of the theistic worshipper."[44] Within this framework, "we cease to insist upon religious conformity imposed by law at the moment we realise that religions different from our own are not expressions of irrationality or ... of irreligion but precisely of religion itself in its infinitely varied self-development. Here we find one and the same end, namely the cultivation of a healthy religious life, [no longer] pursued ... by the weapons of legal compulsion, [but] by its opposite, toleration."[45]

Many forms of excessive exclusive social behaviour—interpreted by many as relapses into pre-modern, "barbaric" times—take place in the modern world. A proper understanding and, following from that, effective diminishing of this destructive potential is hindered, as Dan Stone suggestively put it, by the false distinction between "premodern" and "modern" societies, that is, allegedly, "between societies based on feelings, rituals and charismatic attachments to a leader and societies based on means-ends rationality and purposive, goal-oriented action. The fact is that, especially in the latter, [excesses] take place not because of the 'dialectic of enlightenment' in which the domination over nature ends in the domination over human beings" (as Agamben or Foucault would say) but because "the modern age is an age of great (often concealed) passions."[46] Modern hyperrationality can end in ultra-violence just as "primitive barbarism" can, as "our esteem for facts has not neutralised in us all religiousness. It is itself almost religious. Our scientific temper is devout."[47]

3

Also of some value, strictly limited to social theology, of course, can be the challenge posed to the Enlightenment humanism by the posthumanist-inspired view of a universe in which man loses his central, privileged place in relation to things—that is, the Creation, in religious terms. For if we accept the traditional stance that we are naturally inclined to think, organise ourselves, and act only in certain ways, it is difficult to conceive that society and human behaviour would ever be different. Traditional humanism has to be done away with in order for radical change implied by the genuine thinking of difference to become possible.[48]

Yet, a "strong" postmodern attitude *per se*—that is, an awareness of fragmentation, an absence of transcendental criteria for ordering the world, as Derrida would define it—cannot be compatible with any

interpretation, however permissive—of Orthodoxy's socio-politico-theological implications.

Lang's suggestion, more appropriate in our case, is that an alternative version of tolerance to that of modernity focused on universalization of judgment and on the historical concept of a universal self would entail changes in these factors. One such alternative would associate historical or social identity intrinsically with human nature – in contrast to an ahistorical "essence" – stipulating that its related conception of human rights would depend, not on the conformity of all persons to a single ahistorical ideal, but on an indefinite number of possible ideals; this would be a *vertical* revision of the concept of tolerance, on the ground that at least certain social differences are not accidental, but determinant aspects of individual identity. This would be an anti-utopian conceptual alternative, based in an historical and socially contingent self, opposed to the notions of human perfectibility and the underlying universalist standard of human nature and society. Apart from Aristotle, whose relevance for the present discussion, though significant, remains basic, in a number of contemporary writers on ethics and social theory whose work incorporate this alternative basis to the Enlightenment universalizing design, the possibility of a pluralist view is clearly posed.[49]

If one wants to adapt the above to the relation between religion and politics, one can say that the pluralist liberal socio-political order is not based on the institutional collaboration between Church and the state, between clergy and politicians, but on the citizens' social engagement. „As politicians, or citizens the Christians will continue to support the Church, but in social matters they take the responsibility of their actions upon themselves.[50]

As a conclusion to this, more fragmented, applied final reflection on the relation between the largest Church in Romania and the state, and the general context which this reflected, I chose a picture of the 1990s, inspired by Stelian Tănase:[51]

a. The state was maintaining its dominant position. The relations with the various groups of interests it promoted (especially through bureaucracy) were of a clientae type. BOR was no exception. Even at present, although somewhat diminished, the state's position remains dominant. As for its relation with the religious institutions, it still reflects a patronizing attitude, manifest, first of all in a complicated legislation, a regulatory excess typical for centralist models of statehood.[52] The text of the Law of Religious Freedom and Religious Denominations is based on the presupposition that the state is placed above all social actors, and is considered an omnipresent and omnipotent, omniscient entity that can administrate freedom, including religious freedom.[53]

In its turn, BOR, although downplaying significantly its claims to religious monopoly, keeps enough anti-pluralist voices within its ranks who are still claiming BOR's entitlement to a privileged treatment—legitimized by historic tradition and number of followers—among religious denominations.[54] Regarding its attitude toward other religious denominations, Gabriel Andreescu notes that "BOR is the main source of defamations and insults to which other religious organizations are subjected ... The religion school textbook edited by A. Lemeni libels Jehova's Witnesses, the Baha'i and the Mormons."[55]

b. Political elites were divided: they perceived politics as confrontation rather than negotiation. The traditional distrust of population towards institutions (except the Church and the Army) and political class is still manifest. BOR had a massive prestige and impact in shaping the political culture of the 1990s; the politicians' eagerness to be seen participating to its rituals, in the hope to become the recipients of some transfer of legitimacy and prestige, was notorious.

c. The relation state-civil society represented the main tension of the Romanian society. The society was still atomised and dependent upon the state (this dependency continued, to a diminishing extent, after 2000).

d. The political culture was, to a large extent, authoritarian and collectivist. A political history with few democratic experiences and a prevalent conservative agrarian society in the past has imposed a paternalist-authoritarian, personalised, and closed, political culture. The Western political culture was still marginal. That is why the attempts of modernisation found a hindrance in the general mentality, which was (and, to some less significant extent, still is) attached to the traditional idea of charismatic and paternalist leadership directly linked to the masses through a "seductive" system of rituals and symbols. The ritualistic omnipresence of BOR enforced this aspect. Regarding the present situation, a fairly pessimistic analyst, Cornel Codiţă makes the following comment:

> "The Romanian society does not function on the basis of values, but through mechanisms like tradition, rituality, authority, force..., or seduction. The Orthodox Church is also centred in tradition, ritual and authority, whereas the gate to the world of values is that of liberty. The discussion about this value is practically inexistent within BOR... As a value, the public well-being, which would bring together the political and Church's universes [is not present, mainly because] the Romanian society is a one of a minimal public space."[56]

e. A strong ethnic/civic cleavage dominated the political landscape and culture; the ethnic question, that is, the question of the national identity prevailed.[57] Romania is a society having strong minorities on the

national territory and territorial disputes with the neighbours. Nationalism was the main political potential of the country. Those who controlled its symbols controlled the population. BOR was very actively involved in this monopoly competition; its "spiritual alliances" with champions of nationalism have contributed to the social and ethnic tensions during the 1990s. As long as the ethnic dimension was dominant (and arguably still is to this day, at the expense of the civic dimension) the institutions and the rules of political game cannot be articulated fully democratically.

f. With respect to the institutions in general, the paternalist conduct of the executive power made the separation of powers inoperative. Thus the legislative and the judicial powers were in fact subordinated to the executive power. The political parties, in their turn, were identified (both by their members and by the electorate) with their leaders. Their leadership was to a large extent oligarchic and authoritarian. All political life was and remains intensely personalised. Back in the 1990s, the political parties reflected the features of the Romanian society: paternalism, the domination of authoritarian models, conservatism, hierarchism, collectivism, violence, fragility of institutions, clan–type pattern of social relations. As regards the general attitude of the population towards institutions, recent polls continue to exhibit distrust, especially with respect to the institutions having a key role in democratic systems (mainly parliament and justice). The most popular institutions are the army and the Orthodox Church (despite its well-known collaboration with the communist regime) arguably, at least during the unstable 1990s, due of their hierarchic, authoritarian, rigid and disciplined, and ultimately non-democratic, structure.

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The post-communist period dealt with was divided, simply, into two "halves:" (1) 1990-2000, characterized, within the conceptual framework under scrutiny, by (ultra)nationalism and antisemitism, conflict, strong paternalism, authoritarianism, intolerance, institutional centralism, etc.; (2) 2000- when benign competing nationalisms, (notable, though modest) advancement towards dialogue, tolerance, and doctrinal and denominational pluralism, social disposition towards religious debate within the EU, seem to gain some strength able to grow into a positive trend.

Inter-denominational rivalries and endless negotiations between denominations and the state took the legislative power 17 years to abrogate the communist Religious Denominations Law from 1948. And this would have taken an indefinitely longer time if it were not for the pressure of EU integration deadline (1 January 2007). Although indirectly, the state defines itself as secular, as there is no state religion and the state is neutral

with respect to religious matters and atheist ideology (Art. No. 1, Par. 1 and 2).

The participation, of the Orthodox Metropolitan Bishop of Banat, Nicolae Corneanu, in the Greek-Catholic Eucharist, although it triggered very strong criticism—even rage—from high levels of BOR; his retrocession gestures towards the same Church; his periodical ecumenical religious services (even with the participation of the Chief Rabbi of Timisoara),[58] constitute groundbreaking openings toward what Orthodoxy should and can become.

In terms of influence and impact on public life and political culture, BOR has – under the auspices opened by actions like the above, the social-theological initiatives, as well as the pluralistic legislation and the EU incentives – the chance of moving from intolerance and segregation to dialogue,[59] from monopolistic claims and behaviour to social policy initiatives, from ethnocentrism to key-role playing in the European process of spiritual self-definition.

Once in the EU, Romania belongs to a society characterized by a stronger pluralism (cultural, ethnic, and religious) than the one we were used to. "BOR will need to rethink its relations with other denominations and to renew its traditional(ist) discourse ... [To its advantage,] the European Union will have to integrate a country in which the public space is not inhospitable towards religion."[60] Among the really enriching spiritual contribution Orthodoxy can bring to the united Europe, Christos Yannaras places a new anthropological conception, in which the atomized, isolated individual

> is replaced with the relation, the experience of a personal relation, which is its absolute priority... The relational reality of the person has, as a consequence, the manifestation of personal existence as unique existence. The existential identity of the person is clarified and manifests itself through its relation with the others, and thus identifies itself as absolute alterity.[61]

Modest and hardly visible as they may appear, the changes are already unveiling a significant result: the dissapearance of the religious fundamentalist project within *zoon politikon*'s realm.

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Notes

[1] Jonathan Glover, „Nations, Identity, and Conflict," in *The Morality of Nationalism*, ed. Robert McKim and Jeff McMahan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 12, 13.
[2] Olivier Gillet, *Religie şi naţionalism: Ideologia Bisericii Ortodoxe Române sub regimul communist*, trans. Mariana Petrişor (Bucureşti: Compania, 2001), 172.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Nae Ionescu, *Roza vânturilor* (Bucureşti: Roza vânturilor, 1990), passim.
[5] Such as the legionary *Gazeta de Vest* and *Puncte Cardianale,* or the pro-legionary *Mişcarea*; *Baricada*; *Europa*; *România Mare,* etc.
[6] See, for example, Gillet, 279-313.
[7] See Michael Shafir, "The Movement for Romania: A Party of Radical Return", *RFE/RL* Research Report, 29, 14 July 1992.
[8] Dumitru Stăniloae, *Reflecţii despre spiritualitatea poporului român,* quoted in Gillet, 254.
[9] See e.g. Victor Neumann, *Neam, popor sau naţiune? Despre identităţile politice europene* (Bucureşti: Editura Curtea Veche, 2003), 55, 61, 62; Cristian Preda, "Laicitate şi naţiune," *Revista 22* no. (2008), http://www.revista22.ro/764.html; Cătălin Avramescu, "România reformată," *Revista 22*, no. (2006), http://www.revista22.ro/2988.html.
[10] Berel Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 190.
[11] Lang, 187.
[12] Isaiah Berlin, foreword to *The Mind of the European Romantics*, by Hans G. Schenk (London: Constable, 1965), xvii.
[13] Neumann, 44-48.

[14] Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Fantasmele salvării: democraţie, naţionalism şi mit în Europa post-communistă*, trans. M. Theodorescu (Iaşi: Polirom, 1999), 118.
[15] Quoted in Tismăneanu, 118.
[16] Denise Rosenthal, "'The Mythical Jew:' Antisemitism, Intellectuals, and Democracy in Post-Communist Romania," *Nationalities Papers* 3 (2001): 421.
[17] Tismăneanu, 59, 65, 137.
[18] Michael Shafir, "The Inheritors: The Romanian Radical Right Since 1989," *East European Jewish Affairs* 1 (1994): 71.
[19] Michael Shafir, "Between Denial and 'Comparative Trivialization': Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe," ACTA, The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem 19 (2002): 10.
[20] Vladimir Tismăneanu, "The Tragicomedy of Romanian Communism," *East European Politics and Society* 2 (1989): 329-376 passim.
[21] Gillet, 176.
[22] Brînduşa Palade, "The Romanian Utopia: The Role of the Intelligentsia in the Communist Implementation of a New Human Paradigm," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies,* 2 (2002): 93, 95, 96.
[23] Paul Blokker, "National Experiences with Modernity: The Case of Romania" (unpublished manuscript, available at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, 2002), 12-13.
[24] Gillet, 269, 270, 271.
[25] Mihai Diaconescu, *Istorie şi valori. Studii, comunicări, eseuri, articole* (Bucureşti: Editura Ministerului de Interne, 1994), 18-33.
[26] Robert M. Hayden, "Schindler's Fate: Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing, and Population Transfers," *Slavic Review* 4 (1996): 735-6.
[27] Robert M. Hayden, "Recounting the Dead: The rediscovery and Redefinition of Wartime Massacres in Late- and Post-Communist Yugoslavia," in *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism,* ed. Rubie S. Watson (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1994), 168.
[28] Dan Stone, "Explaining the Far Right", *The Jewish Quarterly* 186 (2002): 54, 58.
[29] Tismăneanu, *Fantasmele salvării,* 124, 125.
[30] John Milton, quoted in Zygmunt Bauman, *Etica postmodernă,* trans. D. Lica (Timişoara: Amarcord, 2000), 28.
[31] Bauman, 28, 30.
[32] Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 49.
[33] Bartov, 50.
[34] Andreas Wimmer, "Political Modernization and the Nationalization of Society", in *Nation and National Ideology: Past, present and Prospects,* Proceedings of the International Symposium held at the New Europe College, Bucharest, April 6-7, 2001 (Bucureşti: New Europe College, 2002), 319, 320.
[35] According to Dorina Năstase, *de jure*, the lawmaker has removed, with slyness, the claim of national church status for BOR. But there is a lot in the law which confirms *de facto* BOR's dominating status. See Dorina Năstase, "Corectitudinea politică şi legea cultelor," *Revista 22* 883 (2007), http://www.revista22.ro/3456.html.
[36] Caius Dobrescu, "Conflict and Diversity in East European Nationalism," *East European Politics and Societies* 3 (2003): 412, n54.

[37] Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban, "Europa şi pluralitatea religiilor," *Revista 22* 852 (2006), http://www.revista22.ro/4279.html. Tătaru-Cazaban borrows the phrase *sécularisation amiable* from the French historian and politologist René Rémond who employed it as a definition of the relation between the united Europe and religion within the political project of modernity.

[38] Radu Preda, "Teologia socială ortodoxă sau subsidiaritatea externă a bisericii" (paper presented at the *Revista 22* seminar "Ortodoxia în Europa," Bucharest, September 13, 2006), *Revista 22* 861 (2006), http://www.revista22.ro/3129.html.

[39] Robin G. Collingwood, "The Church," Group paper (Oxford, 1920), Department of Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Dep. Collingwood 1/4, 18.

[40] Collingwood, 20.

[41] Robin G. Collingwood, *Speculum Mentis, or The Map of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 121.

[42] Similarly, many analysts remarked a disturbing of the balance between the "inner" and "outer" sides within BOR's activity. For instance, Vasile Bănescu wrote, "The malady of institutionalization has diminished the essentially good pathos... The administrative tends to suffocate the seen institution of the Church." Vasile Bănescu, "Pervertirea spaţiului ecleziastic românesc," *Revista 22* 799 (2005), http://www.revista22.ro/1847.html.

[43] Maurice Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 187.

[44] Joseph M. Felser, *R.G. Collingwood's Early Philosophy of Religion and Its Development* (PhD diss., vol. II, University of Chicago, Illinois, 1992), 401.

[45] Collingwood, "Lectures on Moral Philosophy – 1933," Department of Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Dep. Collingwood 8, 76-7.

[46] Dan Stone, *History, Memory and Mass Atrocity: Essays on the Holocaust and Genocide* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2006), 201-2.

[47] William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995 [1907]), 5-6.

[48] See Neil Badmington, "Introduction: Approaching Posthumanism," in *Posthumanism*, ed. Neil Badmington (Basinstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 6, 7.

[49] Lang, 198, 199; the authors and their works he mentions as promoters of the alternative doctrines to Enlightenment, include, apart from Aristotle (*Politics* and the *Nichomachean Ethics*), Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (1981); Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (1985); Stuart Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict* (1983), Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (1986).

[50] Rudolf Uertz, "Etica socială ortodoxă şi provocarea UE" (paper presented at the *Revista 22* seminar "Ortodoxia în Europa," Bucharest, September 13, 2006), *Revista 22* 861 (2006), http://www.revista22.ro/3129.html.

[51] Stelian Tănase, *Revoluţia ca eşec* (Iaşi: Polirom, 1996), passim.

[52] Dorin Dobrincu, "Legea cultelor: text, subtext şi context," *Revista 22* 880 (2007), http://www.revista22.ro/3392.html.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Attentive critics—such as Cristian Preda—of BOR's attitude towards pluralism, democracy and secular constitutionalism, have identified situations in which the Holy Synod of BOR assumes the competence to legislate in matters which fall within the state's attributions, such as the clergy's involvement in political activities. See Cristian Preda, "Laicizare, sau imperiu religios?," *Revista 22* 731 (2004) http://www.revista22.ro/809.html.

[55] Gabriel Andreescu, "Pe cine va viza legea cultelor?," *Ziua*, Analyses and Commentaries section, January 18, 2007.
[56] Cornel Codiţă, "Convergenţe între politică şi religie," *Religie şi politică* (paper presented at the international seminar *Religie şi politică*, Institutul de Studii Populare Bucureşti, June 18, 2008), http://www.isp.org.ro-religie-si-politica.
[57] Very significantly, towards the mid 1990s (characterized by collectivism and weakness of individualism), when politicians were accusing the intellectuals of undermining Romania, even the civic intellectuals affiliated to the most liberal forum of debate, GDS (The Group for Social Dialogue), adopted, under the pressure of nationalists of various nuances (very influent at the time), and of large segments of society the principle that the normative debate should focus on a politics of identity. See Bruce Haddock and Ovidiu Caraiani, "Nationalism and Civil Society in Romania," *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 258-74.
[58] See Smaranda Vultur, "Un context şi evenimentul său revelator," *Revista 22* 956 (2008), http://www.revista22.ro/4662.html.
[59] Even at present, many religious (Orthodox) school textbooks still contain "violently intolerant and exceedingly ritualistic passages." (Ana Soviany, "Educaţia religioasă în şcolile publice," *Revista 22* 933 (2008), http://www.revista22.ro/4279.html.)
[60] Anca Manolescu, "Dialogul religiilor pentru o laicitate ospitalieră," *Revista 22* 852 (2006), http://www.revista22.ro/2880.html.
[61] Christos Yannaras, *Ortodoxie şi occident* (Bucureşti: Editura bizantină, 1995), 60, 61.