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Marius Turda

In Search of the Perfect Romanian

National Specificity, Racial Degeneration, and Social Selection in Modern Romania



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To my grandparents

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Preface to the English Edition

This is the revised and enlarged version of a book which was first published in Romanian in June 2024, just a few months before the much contested first round of Romania's presidential elections. The preference of a large part of the Romanian electorate for a nationalist, anti-European candidate took many observers, inside and outside Romania, by surprise. It became painfully clear not only that the main tenets of Romanian ethnic nationalism, the products of a long process of historical development that began in the mid-nineteenth century, had retained their appeal among younger generations of Romanians – those who grew up after the demise of communism in 1989 – but that certain proclivities and ideological affinities, such as legionarism and protochronism, had not been relegated to the past, but instead had been amplified over the previous decade, ultimately coalescing into an ideological mould that continues to provide many Romanians today with a source of self-respect and national pride.

The failure of post-1989 Romanian governments to engage critically with the past certainly aided the growth and popularity of sovereigntist claims to regain national dreams and ambitions. *Make Romania Great Again* echoes similar political slogans elsewhere but also expresses a common longing for a glorious past and for a version of Romanianness in its pristine purity. The time has come to attempt a retelling of the story of Romania's transformation into a modern nation-state, to reconsider some pertinent questions for the present and for the future. By raising questions of national character and specificity, this book clearly demonstrates how deeply entangled modern nationalism is with the legacies of antisemitism, racism, and eugenics that assert the supremacy of the Romanian ethnic community.

The first edition of *In Search of the Perfect Romanian* enjoyed a very positive reception in Romania and was awarded a prize in 2025 by the literary journal *Observator Cultural*. I thank my readers and critics in Romania, alongside colleagues who very generously provided comments, suggestions, and words of encouragement. I have been blessed to learn from great scholars who combine scholarship with a deep passion for social and racial justice. A special thank you is owed to Maria Bucur, Zsuzsa Bokor, Ciprian Mihali, Florin Cîntic, Vasile Ionescu, Adrian Șerban, Călin Cotoi, Ștefan Ionescu, Zoltán Tibori Szabó, and the late Michael Shafir.

I am also grateful to James Christian Brown for providing this translation. I appreciate his willingness to engage with a difficult text, including some

very cumbersome Romanian primary sources. Needless to say, any errors of fact and all opinions expressed here are entirely my own.

As always, my deepest debts are to my family and friends, and to libraries and archives across Romania. I want above all to thank Răzvan Pârâianu, Sorin Antohi, Steliu Lambru, Nicu Furtună, Constantin Bărbulescu, Attila Varga, Sanda Hodoş, as well as the archivists and librarians at the university libraries in Bucharest, Cluj, and Iaşi, and the Romanian Academy. I hope this book in a small way repays their love, generosity, and support.

I have spent more than twenty years researching the topics discussed in this book and during this time I have benefitted from the support and assistance of many institutions around the world. Although too many to name here, for their support of my research they are sincerely thanked. Oxford Brookes University, my academic home since 2005, deserves a special mention, for it also kindly provided the necessary funding to publish this book in open access.

I am grateful to Linda Kunos for responding so positively to my idea of having the book published in English. I am indeed fortunate to have been able to work with her on this and other books published by the Central European University Press.

As was the case with the Romanian edition, this English version too is dedicated to my grandparents from Maramureş.

London, 2 February 2026

1. Introduction

Abstract: This chapter offers a broad overview of the evolving scholarship on modern Romanian history, highlighting the centrality of the debate on national specificity. In terms of the latter, it insists on the contribution of medical and social sciences. It also argues for a continuing critical engagement with the history of race, racism, and eugenics, while at the same time proposing a more nuanced understanding of interwar Romanian nationalism and its contribution to the Holocaust.

Keywords: historiography, modern Romania, national specificity, public memory, the Holocaust

In the first half of the twentieth century, debates on national specificity in Romania found a source of inspiration in anthropology and eugenics. The concepts of race, degeneration, and social selection appear in the Romanian public space gradually but with increasing frequency, especially after 1900. Romanian nationalists and antisemites embraced racial and eugenic theories not only out of scientific curiosity, but also for political motives, out of the desire to create a national state for all the Romanians.[1] This state was seen not only as the result of a historical, cultural, and linguistic process, but also as the political expression of an ethnic community, of a race sharing a common geographical origin and biological past. Thus, the idea of race became overlayed with a political and cultural terminology that, in its turn, gradually constructed a mythology of the Romanian nation.

1 Marius Turda and Paul Weindling, eds, *'Blood and Homeland': Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900–1940* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007), 353–373; Marius Turda, *The Idea of National Superiority in Central Europe* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004); Marius Turda, ed., *The History of East-Central European Eugenics, 1900–1945: Sources and Commentaries* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); and Marius Turda, *Știință și etnicitate II: biopolitică și eugenism în România, 1920–1944* (Bucharest: Editura Muzeului Municipiului Bucureşti, 2019).

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Starting from 1880, with the recognition of the independence of the young modern Romanian state created by the 1859 union of Wallachia and Moldavia, the idea of protecting, strengthening, and expanding the majority ethnic community became a central one, supported by political, cultural, and scientific elites alike. For this to be achieved, more was needed than merely the creation of the political, social, and economic structures necessary for a functional modern state. It was also necessary to identify the cultural and biological characteristics specific to the Romanians, in other words, to pinpoint what distinguished them from other peoples. As the debate on national specificity and the Europeanization of Romania intensified,[2] writers of various intellectual and political orientations formulated what Sorin Antohi has termed a Romanian 'ethnic ontology',[3] with the aim of giving consistency to a modern state that was in equal measure ideal and idealized.

The view that the concept of race played only a minor role in the mobilization and energizing of Romanian nationalism in the modern period is deep-rooted in historiography. In many studies from the 1990s, including 'classic' works on the construction of Romanian identity by such important authors as Katherine Verdery, Zigu Ornea, Keith Hitchins, Lucian Boia, and Sorin Alexandrescu, Romanian racism is not taken seriously, but rather is treated as a relatively minor aberration or merely an imitation of currents of opinion fashionable in other countries.[4] This historiographic tradition remains popular and is given official legitimation in Romanian history textbooks. For instance, it is widely accepted that the Romanian political, cultural, and religious elites were antisemitic in the interwar period and in the early 1940s, but not that their attitudes to the Roma were motivated by racism and eugenics.

2 Marta Petreu, *De la Junimea la Noica. Studii de cultură românească* (Iași: Polirom, 2011) and Liviu Neagoe, *Eutopia. Concepte, identități și istorii românești* (Bucharest: Cartier, 2023).

3 Sorin Antohi, 'Romania and the Balkans: From Geocultural Bovarism to Ethnic Ontology', in *Globalism şi dileme identitare. Perspective româneşti*, ed. Alexandru Zub and Adrian Cioflâncă (Iaşi: Editura Universităţii 'Alexandru Ioan Cuza', 2002), 79–118. See also Sorin Antohi, 'Argumentum biologicum. Despre "stadiul cel mai înalt şi ultim" al specificului naţional', preface to Marius Turda, *Eugenism şi antropologie rasială în România, 1874–1944* (Bucharest: Cuvântul, 2008), 5–12.

4 Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1991); Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right: The Nineteen Thirties*, trans. Eugenia Maria Popescu (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1999) [original ed., 1995]; Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866–1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, trans. James Christian Brown (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001) [original ed., 1997]); and Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român* (Bucharest: Ed. Univers, 1998).

The debate on natural specificity was not based only on literary and philosophical constructions, but also on racial conceptions regarding the renewal of ethnic communities. It is thus necessary to show how the concept of race was absorbed by the process of biologization of national belonging in modern Romania, especially as the historical, cultural, political, and social significance of this process is still little understood. In the pages that follow, I propose to explain the racial and eugenic metaphors that were used, starting in the last decades of the nineteenth century, to intensify the political and ideological message about the regeneration of the Romanian nation.

Romanian high *culture*, a necessity for the functioning of the modern state, had to be created; it did not as yet exist. Human *nature*, however, did exist, personified by the humble peasants, their faces emaciated and furrowed by centuries of suffering. They might not, perhaps, have been the *best-looking* and the *healthiest* of all humans, but they were the most *loved*. At least, this declared love was the starting point for all those who discussed national specificity and what it meant to be Romanian. Love for the peasant was the simplest and most usual motivation for all the social, medical, and educational projects formulated in modern Romania.[5] For those personally and professionally involved, the programme of ethnic transformation was a veritable experiment in civilization, culture, and social selection, without which the Romanian state itself could not be conceived as being national.[6]

These peasants had to be turned into *Romanians* conscious of their illustrious origins and proud of belonging to their own national community. They also had to be educated, better fed, cured of endemic and epidemic illnesses – in other words, taken out of the so-called 'primitive' condition in which they were found by those who ventured into the villages and hamlets of the country. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the problems of health, hygiene, sexuality, fertility, etc. that characterized the rural population of Romania were little known or understood. Moreover, the medical profession's perception of the countryside was predominantly negative, no matter how idealized it might be in literature. The reality of day-to-day life in the Romanian village was sombre.

5 Constantin Bărbulescu, *Imaginarul corpului uman între cultura ţărănească şi cultura savantă, secolele XIX–XX* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2005); Constantin Bărbulescu and Vlad Popovici, *Modernizarea lumii rurale din România în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX–lea şi la începutul secolului al XX–lea* (Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2005); and Călin Cotoi, *Inventing the Social in Romania, 1848–1914: Networks and Laboratories of Knowledge* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

6 George Călinescu, 'Specificul naţional', in George Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* (Bucharest: Fundaţia Regală pentru Literatură şi Artă, 1941), 885-888. See also Alexandru Hanţă, *Ideea de patrie în literatura română* (Bucharest: Edit. Minerva, 1976).

As Romanian medicine began to become professionalized and institutionalized after 1880, inspired by French and German models, there also arose the first discussions about the possible degeneration of the Romanian peasant.[7] According to physicians, this was due to natural factors, such as insufficient nutrition, inadequate hygiene, hereditary ailments, and alcoholism, but also to the presence of ethnic groups such as Jews and Roma, who either contributed directly to the economic ruin of the Romanian peasant by their commercial activities (in the case of the Jews) or brought about a degradation of the biological and psychological capital of the community by their infiltration into Romanian villages (in the case of the Roma). It was necessary, the physicians argued, to bring in not only preventative medicine and public health measures, but also eugenic ideas regarding the protection of the race.

Romanian medical discourse at the end of the nineteenth century revised the concepts of good and evil, separating them from their religious base and integrating them into a secular and supposedly scientific moral order in which health was a virtue and illness was evil. These experts on health put themselves forward as defenders of the nation in a period in which modern Romania was engaged on the extensive project of constructing the national state.[8] Medicine was not just one of the universal sciences: it had to become a 'national science' that would contribute to the Romanian state's efforts to improve the biological quality of the population.[9] The objectives of modern medicine were to be achieved not only through improving living conditions and encouraging population growth and public education on matters of sexual hygiene, but also through cultivating moral behaviour with regard to eugenic marriage and the reproduction of healthy individuals.

7 Valentin Veron-Toma and Adrian Majuru, eds, *Nebunia. O antropologie istorică românească* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2006); Constantin Bărbulescu, 'Tema degenerării rasei în literatura medicală din România la sfârşitul secolului al XIX–lea', in *Identitate şi alteritate 3: studii de istorie politică şi cultură*, ed. Nicolae Bocşan, Sorin Mitu, and Toader Nicoară (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002), 273–290.

8 Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005) and Constantin Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities: The Making of Romanian Citizenship, c. 1750–1918* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

9 Constantin Bărbulescu, *Physicians, Peasants and Modern Medicine Imagining Rurality in Romania, 1860–1910*, trans. Angela Jianu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2018) [original ed. 2015]; Ligia Livadă-Cadeschi, 'Medicină și politică în periodicul Călăuza sanitară și igienică, Bucharest, 1899–1907', *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review* 14, no. 4 (2014): 539–557; and Camelia Zavarache, '"A Model of Devotion to the School": Female Doctors in Secondary Schools in Interwar Romania', in *Negotiating In/visibility: Women, Science, Engineering and Medicine in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Amelia Bonea and Irina Nastasa-Matei (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2025), 147–171.

The improvement of the nation's health thus began with the wise choice of a husband or wife, and eugenic propaganda popularized idealized versions of masculinity and femininity belonging to the Romanian ethnic majority, on the basis of which it constructed normative visions regarding ethnic cohesion and marriage. Such representations of the ideal family and nation incorporated both nature (ancestors and good origins) and the social and educational context (a good living environment). What counted was the health of the nation and its racial future.

Romanian physicians tried – sometimes within their own area of expertise but often by experimenting with anthropology and eugenics – to support the idea and to provide the evidence necessary for the conviction that the nation was not something abstract, but a living and dynamic organism, whose existence, development, and growth were not to be left to chance. A biopolitical programme was thus proposed, with the aim of ensuring the health of the nation and of future generations. By means of an exact identification of the national body, it would be possible to propose a clearer definition of the Romanians, and on the basis of their ethnic specificity, it would be possible to conceive a suitable biopolitical programme to ensure a future for them, both at the individual and at the collective level. It was hoped that thanks to the attention given to eugenic principles and to their application, it would be possible to offer the country the much-desired racial regeneration of the Romanian people.

Proceeding in this way, anthropological, and later eugenic studies of the Romanians developed in relation to other scientific concerns regarding the health of the population – medical, hygienic, demographic, and sociological. For those doing research in Romanian villages, it was clear how little was known about the real life of the peasants up and down the country. The physical representation of the nation enabled direct contact with these people who had hitherto been mere extras in the grand drama of the nation. Now they were leading actors.

The study of the intellectual origins of the debate on national specificity and character has brought to light the ideological syncretism in European culture at the end of the nineteenth century.[10] At the time, there was a transfer of knowledge between such diverse fields of study as literature,

10 Balázs Trencsényi, *The Politics of 'National Character': A Study in Interwar East European Thought* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012); Diana Mishkova, Marius Turda, and Balázs Trencsényi, eds, *Anti-modernism: Radical Revisions of Collective Identity* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014); Balázs Trencsényi, Michal Kopeček, Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčič, Maria Falina, Mónika Baár, and Maciej Janowski, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016 and 2018).

history, medicine, anthropology, sociology, and philosophy, whose boundaries became increasingly permeable. This syncretism largely arose from the multifaceted construction of a modernist cultural rebellion that denounced the moralistic and optimistic vision of social modernization associated with liberal culture.[11]

This culture of a different modernity had its origins in a variety of sources, from Arthur de Gobineau's attempt to formulate a theory of human degeneration to the cultural pessimism of Friedrich Nietzsche and Oswald Spengler and the racism of the Germanized Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain.[12] The commitment shown by these writers to the regeneration of the race also impressed Romanian authors of the beginning of the twentieth century, who likewise desired a national renewal. Their eugenicist vision of a healthy and populous nation emphasized not only the protection of the family, of Romanian mothers and children, but also the removal from the community of individuals considered a threat (from an ethnic, biological, or social point of view) to the majority. It was from the majority population that they wanted the ethnic elite of the biopolitical Romanian state to be selected.

In particular, if we consider the various nationalist currents that appeared in the years after 1900, a period in which cultural pessimism was growing in Romania, we may understand the revolt of such authors as Aurel C. Popovici and A. C. Cuza against liberal modernity, which, as they saw it, was 'foreign' to the Romanian spirit. They proposed a new form of nationalism, organic, ethnic, and nativist, expressive of a social and political modernity adapted to the specific conditions of twentieth-century Romania. An immediate effect of this process of nationalization was the promotion of biopolitics to the rank of a normative theory of government and the transformation of the national body into an object not merely of study, but of adoration. Far from being marginal or sporadic, eugenic ideas of the protection of

11 George Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999); Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Walter Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence: From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); and Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007).

12 J. Edward Chamberlin and Sander L. Gilman, eds, *Degeneration: The Dark Side of Progress* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Marius Turda, 'Biology and Eugenics', in *The Fin-de-Siecle World*, ed. Michael Saler (London: Routledge, 2014), 456–470.

the ethnic community were integrated from the start in this new type of nationalism. A way had to be found of strengthening the Romanian element in the population, of encouraging Romanians to have numerous families, with many healthy children.[13]

The title of the book, *In Search of the Perfect Romanian*, alludes to something that does not exist. The *perfect* Romanian was never found, but this did not deter generations of poets, historians, philosophers, politicians, and scientists from continuously *searching* for him and for her. For almost a century – from the 1840s to the late 1940s – it was believed that the Romanian peasant was both the source of national renewal and the embodiment of the main features of national character. To protect, improve, and ensure the future of the Romanian peasant became the central focus of various nation-building projects in modern Romania. Leading Romanian eugenicists, among them Iuliu Moldovan, Aurel Voina, Grigore I. Odobescu, Gheorghe Marinescu, Gheorghe Banu, Liviu Stan, Iordache and Gheorghe Făcăoaru, and Sabin Manuilă, all set the Romanian peasant family at the centre of the eugenic and biopolitical transformation of the country. The Romanian peasant family became synonymous with the authentic Romanian people.

The external ethnic selection of those who wished to become members of the national community was always accompanied by an internal social selection of those who, although members of the community, had lost something of their human value, some because of incurable hereditary illnesses, others because of social illnesses such as alcoholism. It was at the intersection of these two coordinates that the search took place for the *perfect* Romanian: the individual with an ethnic origin uncontaminated by mixture with those considered to be of an 'inferior' race, healthy both physically and mentally, and animated by a deep sense of patriotism. In modern Romania, as indeed in all modern European countries, racism, antisemitism, and eugenics coexisted.[14] The wider process of purifying and renewing the body of the Romanian nation presupposed the rejection both of Jews and Roma and of persons with physical and mental disabilities. In this book, these two aspects will be treated together, not separately.

Let us consider an example of social selection: eugenic sterilization, beyond doubt one of the best-known programmes of social and biological

13 Marina Îngustu, *Condiția copilului în România modernă (1859–1914)* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2025).

14 Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Jean-Frédéric Schaub, *Pour une histoire politique de la race* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2015); and Marius Turda and Maria Sophia Quine, *Historicizing Race* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

engineering proposed in the twentieth century. Notions of social progress and harmony operated together with ideas of racial protectionism, biological decline, deviance, delinquency, and criminality. Descriptions such as 'degenerate', 'undesirable', 'abnormal', and 'asocial' were correlated with the hereditary characteristics of those individuals whose presence in society was put under a question mark. Consequently, it was necessary, in the name of the 'common good', that they be prevented from reproducing and excluded, as far as possible, from the community. These individuals were continually marginalized and dehumanized, and their supposed inferiority was repeatedly reinforced by the racism of state-sanctioned policies of sterilization, institutionalization, and segregation. The eugenicists tried to prevent these individuals from having children. The nation had to be protected, not only from enemies without, but also from those within.

The examples are numerous, even if we know more about some and less about others. The compulsory sterilization of individuals with chronic mental and physical disabilities, for example, introduced by the Nazi regime in 1933, is well documented and is frequently discussed in the context of Nazi racism and the Holocaust.[15] The eugenic sterilization laws introduced in the United States from 1907 are also well known, even if there is little discussion of the fact that they remained in force after 1945, and that the majority of sterilizations, especially of women of colour, were in fact carried out in the 1950s and 1960s, in the period of the movements for civic and political emancipation.[16] It is the same with the history of eugenic sterilizations in South America or in Europe after the Second World War: the general public knows very little about the sterilization of the indigenous population in Peru, or about the eugenic programmes in Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, where the sterilization of women with mental disabilities continued until the 1970s. We are only now beginning to learn

15 Gisela Bock, *Zwangssterilisation und Nationalsozialismus. Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986); Benno Müller-Hill, *Murderous Science: Elimination by Scientific Selection of Jews, Gypsies, and Others. Germany, 1933–1945* (New York: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 1988) [first ed. 1984]; Horst Biesold, *Crying Hands: Eugenics and Deaf People in Nazi Germany* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1999) [first ed. 1988]; and Dagmar Herzog, *The Question of Unworthy Life: Eugenics and Germany's Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024).

16 Johanna Schoen, *Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2005); Mark A. Largent, *Breeding Contempt: The History of Coerced Sterilization in the United States* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008); and Randall Hansen and Desmond King, *Sterilized by the State: Eugenics, Race, and the Population Scare in Twentieth-Century North America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

more about the sterilization of Roma women in Czechoslovakia, and it is quite possible that similar procedures were applied in other countries in the Communist East that had a significant Roma minority, such as Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria.

Fortunately, in recent years, studies regarding the policies and practices of eugenic sterilization have become more numerous, including in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which had previously been unfairly neglected. One chapter of this book deals with eugenic sterilization in interwar Romania, a subject very little known either to historians or to the general public, precisely in order to demonstrate that the Romanian example has much to offer the regional, transnational, and global discussion about the heritage of eugenic theories and practices, which continue to haunt not only policies of social assistance and education, but also the social behaviour of many of us. The debates over sterilization in the interwar period, together with the historical context in which they must be read, demonstrate the impact that eugenics had at the time not only among doctors but also among politicians and writers.

Most eugenicists argued for the supremacy of heredity. The notions of cultural progress, intellectual achievement, 'racial' protectionism, the biological decline of the nation, social pathology, and the criminal behaviour of some were all impregnated with the belief that a person's destiny was determined by the quality of their genetic material. Pursuing a political project in the name of science, the Romanian eugenicists fused theories of evolution and biological determinism with the modern vision of a 'new man', insisting that this was directed at the same end: preventing the continuing degeneration of the Romanian people and saving it from the pressure of over-population with individuals considered 'deficient'. The construction of a national eugenic community was an ambition that eugenics shared with all the political ideologies of the modern period, from liberalism to racism.

There is today a rich specialized literature dedicated to the interwar period in Romania and especially to the so-called 1930s generation,[17] about the Legionary Movement,[18] which many young people of that generation

17 Marta Petreu, *Generația '27 între Holocaust şi Gulag. Mircea Eliade şi Klaus Mann despre generația tînără* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2016); Cristina A. Bejan; *Intellectuals and Fascism in Interwar Romania: The Criterion Association* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); and Mara Magda Maftei, *Cioran şi utopia tinerei generații* (Bucharest: Contemporanul 2011).

18 Armin Heinen, *Die Legion 'Erzengel Michael' in Rumänien. Soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1986); Mihai Chioveanu, *Fețele fascismului: politică, ideologie și scrisul istoric în secolul XX* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2005); Traian Sandu, *Un fascisme roumain.*

embraced, about the sociographic investigations initiated and led by Dimitrie Gusti,[19] and about antisemitism.[20] Historical research has directed its attention above all to the poets, philosophers, and literary critics, to the literary and religious constructions of national identity, to cultural policies, and to the so-called generation conflict.[21] As is only to be expected, the period of the Holocaust has attracted particular interest on the part of historians, especially since the publication in 2005 of the *Final Report* of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, chaired by Elie Wiesel.[22] In this context, the close relation between nationalism, antisemitism, and racism is often mentioned, contributing to the few debates in Romanian historiography concerning the role played by biopolitics and eugenics in the radicalization of national politics with regard to Jews and Roma.[23]

Histoire de la Garde de fer (Paris, Perrin, 2014); Constantin Iordachi, *The Fascist Faith of the Legion 'Archangel Michael' in Romania, 1927–41: Martyrdom and National Purification* (London: Routledge, 2023); and Cristian Manolachi, *Revolverul Arhanghelului. Mișcarea Legionară și mistica asasinatului politic* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2023).

19 Zoltán Rostás, *Sala luminoasă. Primii monografiști ai Școlii gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003); and Zoltán Rostás, *Parcurs întrerupt. Discipoli din anii '30 ai Școlii gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2005).

20 Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991); Lya Benjamin, 'Bazele doctrinare ale antisemitismului antonescian', in *România și Transnistria: Problema Holocaustului. Perspective istorice și comparative*, ed. Viorel Achim and Constantin Iordachi (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2004), 237–251; and Alexandru Florian and Ana Bărbulescu, *Elita culturală și discursul antisemit interbelic* (Iași: Polirom, 2022).

21 Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Sorin Radu and Oliver Jens Schmitt, eds, *România interbelică. Modernizare politico-instituțională și discurs național*, (Iași: Polirom, 2023).

22 Radu Ioanid, *Holocaustul în România: distrugerea evreilor și romilor sub regimul Antonescu 1940-1944*, 2nd ed. (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2006); Jean Ancel, *The History of the Holocaust in Romania* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi–Allied Romania* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009); Diana Dumitru. *The State, Antisemitism, and Collaboration in the Holocaust: The Borderlands of Romania and the Soviet Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Ion Popa, *The Romanian Orthodox Church and the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017).

23 Ștefan Cristian Ionescu, *Jewish Resistance to 'Romanianization': 1940–1944* (New York: Palgrave, 2015); Adrian-Nicolae Furtună, *E Rroma Rumuniator: thaj o Holokausto. Historia, teorie, kultura*, trilingual edition (Popești-Leordeni: Dykta! Publishing House, 2018); Ioan Valentin Negoi, *Deportarea romilor din Muntenia în Transnistria în perioada celui de–Al Doilea Război Mondial* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2023); and Ioan Valentin Negoi, *Istoria nespusă a romilor din România. De la cea mai lungă perioadă de sclavie din Europa până la Holocaust* (Bucharest: Hyperliteratura, 2025).

Until recently, studies of the interwar period have marginalized the influence of eugenic theories on Romanian political and scientific culture. The respected historian of medicine Gheorghe Brătescu spoke of 'the feeble Romanian eugenics',[24] minimizing the importance of the ideas of racial protection and the biological improvement of the nation proposed by some of the most respected Romanian physicians of the time. In 2002, Maria Bucur published her book on the history of Romanian eugenics in the interwar period. Beyond doubt, it is her achievement to have demonstrated, for the first time in Romanian historiography, that eugenics played an important role in the interwar period, not only in the process of creating the institutions of hygiene and public health in Cluj, Bucharest, and Iași, but also in the intellectual and political sphere.[25] This pioneering study has had a substantial influence on new generations of researchers attracted by the interwar period in Romanian history.[26]

The acceptance of racial and eugenic thinking was much more widespread and more generalized in the interwar period than has been discussed in Romanian historiography.[27] Historians studying the debate on national specificity in interwar Romania have not given close attention to the currents of racial thinking that developed around 1900. The mapping of these ideas might help us to better understand how the debate on national specificity and visions regarding the ethnic regeneration of the nation – which demonized Jews and Roma and eulogized the peasantry and traditional rural life – survived in the biopolitical and eugenic discourses of the interwar years. There is a discursive and conceptual continuity between the racial

24 Gheorghe Brătescu, *Către sănătatea perfectă. O istorie a utopismului medical* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), 406.

25 Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2002). See also Maria Bucur, 'War and Regeneration: The Great War and Eugenics in Eastern Europe', *Slavica* 4, no. 1 (2015): 31–43.

26 Marius Turda and Adrian-Nicolae Furtună, 'The Roma and the Question of Ethnic Origin in Romania during the Holocaust', *Critical Romani Studies* 4, no. 2 (2022), 8–32; M. Benjamin Thorne, 'Assimilation, Invisibility, and the Eugenic Turn in the "Gypsy Question" in Romanian Society, 1938–1942', *Romani Studies* 21, no. 2 (2011): 177–205; Mihai A. Panu, 'The Eugenic Construction of Gender Identities in Interwar Romania', *Colloquium Politicum* 3, no. 2 (2012): 9–19; and Flavia Craioveanu, 'Racism in Interwar Romanian Press: Disseminators and Influences in "Societatea de mâine": A Case Study', *Acta Musei Porolissensis* 42 (2020): 151–171.

27 Ligia Livadă, 'O tribună a eugenismului românesc: Revista de Igienă Socială (1931–1934)', in *Școală, Biserică, Stat și Națiune în istoria României. Omagiu Profesorului Cornel Sigmirean la împlinirea vârstei de 65 de ani*, ed. Liviu Boar, Ioan Bolovan, and Laura Stanciu (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2021), 153–167 and Lucian T. Butaru, *Rasism românesc: componenta rasială a discursului antisemit din România până la Al Doilea Război Mondial* (Cluj: Editura Fundaţiei pentru Studii Europene, 2010).

nationalism of the 1890s and the eugenic and biopolitical programme of the 1930s and 1940s that led to the Holocaust.

It is clear that cultural dialogue between Romania and such countries as Germany, France, and Italy had significant implications, and not only for the internal dynamics of academic life,[28] but also for the development of anthropology as a scientific discipline and of eugenics as a biosocial and medical movement.[29] Even if they adopted certain Western cultural models where theories about race were concerned, the discussion of national specificity was nevertheless a reflection of realities in Romania. The Romanian eugenic movement, as it developed after 1900 and especially after 1918, defined itself in relation to the ample national project of creating a state of the Romanians. With this objective in view, Romanian eugenicists took on a dual mission: first, to identify who those Romanians who needed protecting were, and then, to conceive a strategy by which to convince them of the responsibility they had for the future of the nation.

As in other European countries, 'race' (*rasă* in Romanian) became a widely used concept in modern Romania. It was the subject of constant debate, with Romanian authors debating its significance and its application to the local context of an ethnically very heterogeneous population. At the beginning of the twentieth century, *rasă* had numerous meanings, proposed by writers with a greater or lesser degree of familiarity with anthropological research, but there was a consensus among them that the term was necessary for the programme of constructing a national identity. In this context, race became a notion used to legitimize and justify the political geometry of the modern Romanian state, with regard not only to the majority population, but also to the ethnic minorities, especially the Jews, but also the Roma, Szeklers, and Csángós.[30]

28 Irina Nastasă-Matei, *Educație, politică și propagandă: Studenți români în Germania nazistă* (Cluj-Napoca: Şcoala Ardeleană, 2016) and Georgiana Ţăranu, *Nicolae Iorga şi seducţia fascismului italian* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2025).

29 Marius Turda and Aaron Gillette, *Latin Eugenics in Comparative Perspective* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) and Marius Turda, *Știință și etnicitate I: Cercetarea antropologică în România anilor 1930* (Bucharest: Editura Muzeului Municipiului București, 2018).

30 Marius Turda and Bolaji Balogun, 'The Racialization of Roma as "Black" in Interwar Romania and Beyond', *Slavic Review* 84, no. 3 (2025): 546–554; Cosmin Koszor Codrea, 'Mismeasuring Diversity: Popularizing Scientific Racism in the Romanian Principalities around the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Romanian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2022): 37–56; Anca Pârvulescu and Manuela Boatcă, *Creolizing the Modern Transylvania across Empires* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022); Constantin Bărbulescu, 'Rasa', in *Enciclopedia imaginariilor din România*, vol. III: *Imaginarul istoric*, ed. Sorin Mitu (Iași: Polirom, 2020), 160–176; and R. Chris Davis, *Hungarian Religion, Romanian Blood: A Minority's Struggle for National Belonging, 1920–1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018).

This racial terminology was then reproduced in the specialized literature and circulated in the universities, the research institutes, and the eugenic societies founded after 1918, before being presented to the general public via newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts, and public lectures. There is thus a need for an investigation of the specific regional contexts in Romania and of the multiethnic environments in which the eugenic ideas and practices of this period developed. Furthermore, for such a historical project, we must take into account the various cultural associations and publications that took it upon themselves to promote eugenics, together with the public responsibility of those with eugenicist opinions who held political or academic posts and thus influenced several generations of students and modelled the scholarly discourse on the nation in interwar Romania.

Inasmuch as sero-anthropological research could explain the so-called ethnic differences between Romanian and non-Romanians, it is no wonder that many nationalists invoked the power of racial categories to draw attention to the danger of racial degeneration and the need for social selection in a period of profound transformations both within Romania and elsewhere. This proximity to the political sphere sometimes led writers who described the 'race' of the Romanians to propose narratives about national specificity, degeneration, and social selection that we now consider xenophobic and racist.

The role played by the concept of race in the debate about national specificity in modern Romania needs to be brought into the open. This is what I have set out to do in this book. I have also sought to describe the reservoir of eugenic ideas from which the Romanian elites drew inspiration in the first half of the twentieth century, and how these elites in their turn promoted and justified policies of inclusion and exclusion not only of ethnic groups such as Jews and Roma, but also of persons with hereditary illnesses and disabilities. These racial and eugenic discourses had in common a biological determinism and the conviction that it was heredity that influenced, either positively or negatively, the evolution of the individual and of society.

In the pages that follow, I propose to uncover the intellectual links between nationalism, antisemitism, racism, biopolitics, and eugenics, and to show their contribution at key moments in the modern history of Romania such as the Holocaust. Ultimately, this is the historical context that can tell us more about the relation between race and nation and about the intimate connection between science and politics. It can also help us to answer the fundamental question: how was it possible for the Romanian state to deport and to kill by shooting, starvation, and illness hundreds of thousands of Jews and tens of thousands of Roma?

The deportation of the Roma to Transnistria must be seen as part of the process of ethnic purification initiated by Ion Antonescu and his regime after 6 September 1940. At that date, solving the 'Gypsy problem' in Romania was one of the principal objectives of Romanian biopolitics and eugenics, along with the 'final solution' of the 'Jewish problem' and the 'Romanianization' of the economy and of the public space. The Romanian state had become, to use Zygmunt Baumann's term, a 'gardener', assuming as its main role that of protector of the nation and of its racial identity.[31] However, this practice of eugenic 'gardening' did not start with Ion Antonescu, but much earlier, along with the achievement of Greater Romania in 1918. Throughout the interwar period, the Romanian state strove to maintain the territorial integrity of the country and, at the same time, to construct a stable social order, capable of standing up to internal ethnic tensions and competing political visions. In this respect, biopolitical nationalism aspired to offer the longed-for physical protection of the nation's biological borders, while at the same time promoting its own vision of a Romanian version of eugenics.

Relations between the various ethnic communities in Romania were continually changing, and the boundaries between them were less rigid than they seemed at first sight. These aspects mean that the historical study of eugenics and biopolitics in interwar Romania is faced with certain conceptual and linguistic difficulties. The interwar period reflects the interwoven relations between the ethnic communities in Romania in terms not just of a shared cultural and political history, but also of common eugenic dilemmas. The Hungarians and Germans expressed similar unease to the Romanians about their need for demographic growth and racial renewal. These ethnic minorities too embraced eugenics as a defence strategy to protect the future of their communities.[32]

Romanians were the most numerous ethnic group in the country, but they were not the majority in all the towns and villages of Transylvania and the Banat, and there were even regions, like the Szeklerland (Hu. Székelyföld), where there were few Romanian villages. Moreover, the urban elites of Bukovina, Transylvania, and the Banat were made up predominantly of Germans, Hungarians, and Jews. Similarly, there were zones, especially in

31 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

32 Tudor Georgescu, *The Eugenic Fortress: The Transylvanian Saxon Experiment in Interwar Romania* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2016); Zsuzsa Bokor, *Testtörténetek. A nemzet és a nemi betegségek medikalizálása a két világháború közötti Kolozsváron* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităţilor Naţionale, 2013); and Zsuzsa Bokor, '"Separation is Required in Our Special Situation": Minority Public Health Programs in Interwar Transylvania', *Hungarian Historical Review* 12, no. 23 (2023): 395–432.

the Banat, where the Romanian population was declining, which served to refuel a more general feeling of demographic imbalance in the region. It is well-known that, against a background of increasingly pronounced political radicalization, the Hungarian and German elites of interwar Romania opposed political centralization, denationalization, and the loss of civic privileges. Less often discussed in current historiography is the fact that they were also fighting against their own demographic and biological decline. Consequently, in the interwar period, the Hungarian and German elites strove to defend their demographic position in the towns and villages of Transylvania and the Banat in the face of the biopolitical offensive of the Romanians. Although demographic growth seemed to be the only thing that mattered, this brought with it additional eugenic anxieties, among which may be noted the allegedly negative impact of mixed marriages.

Any comprehensive study of the history of eugenics in Romania in the interwar period (when such a study is written!) will thus have to consider not only the Romanian eugenic movement but also the minority eugenic subcultures that sought to develop defensive strategies with which to protect themselves from the expansionist biopolitics of the Romanian nation-state.[33] Romanian racial science maintained that some ethnic minorities either were 'inferior' and, consequently, to be removed (as happened in the case of the Jews and the Roma) or were to be redefined from a racial point of view as being really Romanians (as was attempted with the Csángós and the Szeklers, who were considered to be 'de-nationalized Romanians').

Racial theories thus could be and were adjusted in such a way that they corresponded to a number of nationalist interpretations. It is edifying to examine the reasons why one of the theories about race proved to be more seductive than the rest, and the way in which this one contributed to the development of anthropology as a scientific discipline. Romanian anthropological science, as it was defined in the 1920s, demonstrated, on the basis of an analysis of blood groups and physical features, that certain people belonged to certain ethno-racial groups that could be identified beyond any doubt. Let us take the Romanian language as an example. It could be learned easily, and a great many people declared themselves to be Romanian if they were speakers of the language. This was the case of many of the Roma, who, the eugenicists of the interwar period complained, claimed to be Romanian. However, culture, religion, and language could not change the ethnic origin of the Roma, who were described, as were the

33 Marius Turda, 'Romanian Eugenic Sub-Culture and the Allure of Biopolitics, 1918–1939', *Acte Poloniae Historica* 114 (2016): 29–58.

Jews, as non-European and consequently foreign to the autochthonous Romanian people. This argument led to the notion formulated perfectly by Nae Ionescu in the question he put to Catholic Romanians: '*Good* Romanians you may be, and indeed you are. Are you though *Romanians*?'[34]

'Correcting' the result of the unhappy decisions of successive generations of ethnic mixing between Romanians and 'inferior elements' such as Roma was considered too costly and often inefficient. The solutions preferred by the eugenicists, such as sterilization, segregation, and legislation against the crossing of 'races', were considered more practical and were seen as having an immediate effect on the health of the Romanian people. Especially in the 1930s and the early 1940s, this type of racial reasoning was frequently used as an argument to define the *perfect* Romanian from an ethnic point of view. He/she had been defined in terms of language, culture, and religion from the eighteenth century onwards; by means of the medical and biological sciences it was possible now to add the final element of belonging to the community of Romanians: the ethnic criterion, that of race, of 'blood', as many liked to put it.[35] Decades of antisemitism and racism prepared the way for pogroms and deportations of Jews and Roma to Transnistria, but other elements of Romanian nationalism also played their part, together with the conviction that it was possible to improve the quality of future generations of Romanians by means of eugenic and social selection. Through such biopolitical initiatives and a number of eugenic laws (for example, making it obligatory to obtain a medical certificate before marriage) the Romanian state hoped to ensure the protection of the 'race' and of the health of the Romanian people.

Using the scientific methods of the time, anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists studied the population of the country intensively with the aim of identifying and defining the physical and psychological characteristics specific to Romanians. Anthropology thus offered a *physical* description of the nation. What was the Romanian of the plains like? Was he/she different from the Romanian of the mountains? These composite *descriptions* (text and image together) of the types of Romanians need to be analysed and understood appropriately, both from within the discipline of anthropology and from outside it, that is, from the perspective of the

34 Nae Ionescu, 'A fi bun român (30 octombrie 1930)', in Nae Ionescu, *Roza vânturilor, 1926–1933*, edited by Mircea Eliade (Bucharest: 'Cultura Națională', 1937), 198.

35 Alexander Rubel, 'Dacian Blood: Autochthonous Discourse in Romania during the Interwar Period', in *Digging Politics: The Ancient Past and Contested Present in East-Central Europe*, ed. James Koranyi and Emily Hanscam (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 257–286.

cultural debates about national specificity and national identity in the interwar period.[36]

It was important to identify a Romanian ethno-racial nucleus, and many researchers placed this in Transylvania. Some writers suggested that the *Moți* of the Apuseni Mountains were these ideal Romanians, being the 'purest' of their nationality, keepers of ancient traditions and of the autochthonous spirit. Others found them among the peasants of Maramureș in the north of the country, who were believed to be descended from the 'free Dacians', who had remained unconquered by Rome. This is also the region from where local notables Dragoș and Bogdan had set out to establish the first ruling dynasties of medieval Moldavia. These anthropological speculations were merely creations of the nationalist imagination. But the imagination was more powerful than reality itself, feeding a veritable obsession, especially in the time of the Holocaust, with the achievement of an ethnically homogenous Romanian state.

Racism and eugenics are global phenomena.[37] At the same time, they must be understood in their national and regional context, keeping in view the problems specific to each modern state. The case of modern Romania is no exception.[38] Consequently, it is necessary to return to the original texts, to the authors and the press of the period in order to recover a story that has long been hidden in the dust of libraries and archives and neglected by national historiography. To create a feeling of unity, of acceptance and inclusion, together with the capacity to respond decisively to any form of discrimination, we must confront our eugenic past and its present-day legacy. The eugenic movement came to an end in Romania, officially, between 1948 and 1950. However, many of the eugenic ideas continued to make their impact felt in the socialist period, not only in reproductive policies connected to the health of the nation, but also in debates about the criteria of value of social groups, in the biomedicalization of the excessive fertility of certain groups such as Roma, and in programmes for the education and segregation of orphan children considered 'deficient' and 'irrecuperable'. Feeding on persistent discrimination against persons with disabilities, socialist eugenics intersected with racism and xenophobia. Through eugenic dehumanization, social and institutional structures functioned as a racist

36 *România. Reprezentarea identitară a portului popular în artă*, curated and edited by Erwin Kessler (Bucharest: Muzeul Național de Artă al României, 2026).

37 Marius Turda, 'Legacies of Eugenics: Confronting the Past, Forging a Future', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45, no. 13 (2022): 2470–2477.

38 Oana Dorobanţu and Carmen Gheorghe, ed., *Problema românească: o analiză a rasismului românesc* (Bucharest: Hecate, 2019).

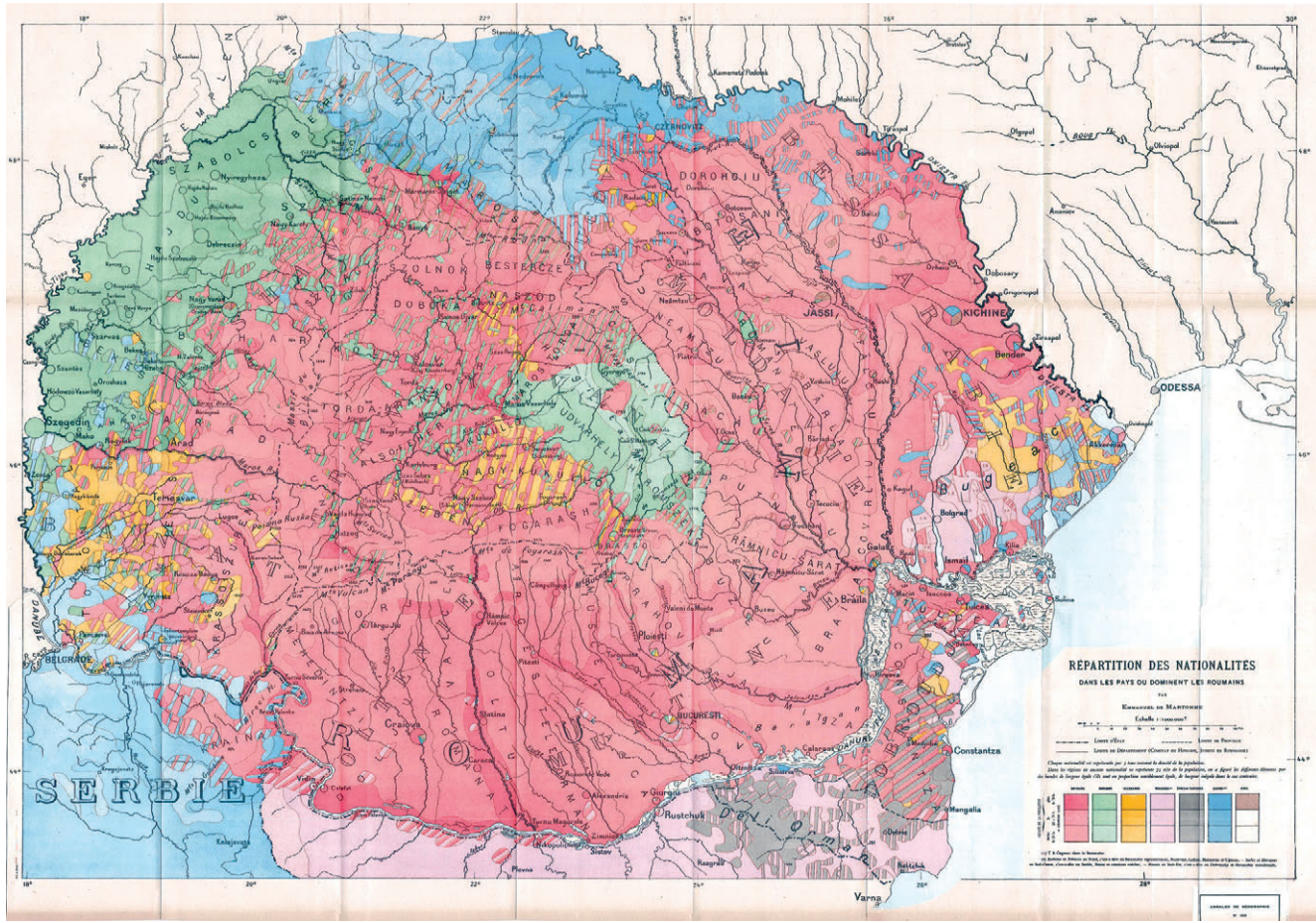
mechanism of exclusion, and the ways in which contemporary realities in Romania continue to be rooted in racist and eugenic concepts developed in the interwar period and under communism need to be highlighted.

To educate the general public regarding the history of Romanian racism and eugenics and to publicly condemn them constitutes the essence of our effort, individually and collectively, to understand a hidden and dark past, while we work together for a fairer and more just society for all.[39] We can cast aside the obsession with national specificity or with the 'pure-blooded Romanian' only by a recognition of our past, an official recognition by Romanian state institutions of the human tragedies that took place in the name of a racist and eugenicist utopia. Who is Romanian? What does it mean to be Romanian? These are questions to which we shall continue to seek answers. The *perfect* Romanian never existed and never will exist. We can, however, hope for a tolerant Romanian, understanding towards others, who is at the same time a patriotic Romanian, animated by civic and democratic values.

Romanians today must expose the heritage of racism and eugenics in order to move forward as a society and as a country. The rights of all citizens must be respected and there should be no discrimination against those who belong to religious, ethnic, or sexual minorities or who have disabilities. The healing of the deep wounds caused by antisemitism, racism, and eugenics requires a public recognition of the treatment to which those who suffered persecution, stigmatization, dehumanization, and elimination in the past were subjected. Romanians must discuss these themes publicly, taking them out of the narrow space of scholarly seminars and conferences. Racism may never disappear, but it can be stopped through good laws, through education, by institutional means, through systematic management of abusive and offensive political behaviour. But to change the thinking of the 'man and woman in the street' in Romania will take more than just academic debate. Romanians must first know their own history.

That is what I offer them in this book.

39 Alexandru Florian, ed., *Holocaust Public Memory in Postcommunist Romania* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018).



Map 1. 'Répartition des nationalités dans les pays où dominent les Roumains'. In Emmanuel de Martonne, 'Essai de carte ethnographique des pays roumains', *Annales de Géographie*, vol. 29, no. 158 (1920).

2. Ethnic Nationalism

Abstract: This chapter introduces some of the intellectual sources of modern Romanian nationalism and antisemitism. It discusses the impact of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's racial ideas on three Romanian authors who shaped the debate on national specificity at the end of the nineteenth century. It also highlights the growing importance attached to the so-called 'Jewish Question' in Romanian political culture and how fears of ethnic miscegenation grew in intensity after 1900.

Keywords: racism, antisemitism, miscegenation, ethnic assimilation, 'Jewish Question'

The idea of 'race' had a decisive influence on the development of Romanian nationalism and antisemitism in the early years of the twentieth century, and it went on to shape the biopolitical ideas that circulated in Romania between the two world wars. A discussion of the way in which these ideas became important for the Romanian cultural elites of this period is thus necessary, not least as it can help us to better understand the intellectual sources of the nationalist programme that prepared the way for the creation of Greater Romania in 1918.[1]

My intention in the following pages is to analyse the impact of race in the writings of three Romanian authors – Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, A. C. Cuza, and Aurel C. Popovici – who considered that the conservative traditions of the past constituted a model for ethnic regeneration and the source of the rejuvenation of the Romanian nation. They were firmly

1 'România Mare' (in Romanian): the enlarged Romanian state resulting from the addition to the pre-war territory of Romania (Wallachia, Moldavia, and Dobrogea) of Transylvania, Bukovina, and other former Austro-Hungarian territories to the north and west, together with the former Russian territory of Bessarabia (corresponding approximately to the present-day Republic of Moldova) to the east.

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opposed to liberalism and socialism, and one of them, A. C. Cuza, was an open antisemite. As Romania was a predominantly agrarian country, with one of the most traditional rural societies in Europe, these writers pleaded the case for an organic community, integrated in its own natural and cultural space, namely the village. Their insistence on the racial quality of the peasant and the antinomy between rural Romania (truly Romanian from an ethnic point of view) and urban Romania (foreign, Jewish, etc.) was bound together with a rejection of modernity, perceived as harmful to the national spirit, to the spiritual values of the people, and to traditional institutions such as the Orthodox Church.

It was no accident that these writers were among the promoters of the ideas of Houston Stewart Chamberlain. A Germanized Englishman, he was not only a promoter of the work of the composer Richard Wagner but also a passionate advocate of ideas of German racial superiority. In the first place, both Rădulescu-Motru and Popovici had studied at universities in Germany and Austria in a period when Chamberlain's ideas were very much discussed in academic and cultural circles. Secondly, they made their name as public figures, and sometimes, as in the case of A. C. Cuza, as controversial writers, in a time when debates about the nation in Romania had become increasingly intense. Finally, these writers were responsible for the development of more radical theories of national specificity and social selection that would flourish in Romania after World War I, serving as models for the political and intellectual elites of the 1920s and 1930s.

The Jew and the Teuton: Racial Conflict in Chamberlain's Vision

Before discussing the influence of Chamberlain's ideas on Romanian culture in the early years of the twentieth century, it is necessary to outline briefly the main ideas of his theory about race, as they were presented in his influential book, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*.[2] The philosophy of history conceived by Chamberlain brought together the main elements of nineteenth-century racial theory: the idea of Nordic-Aryan supremacy, social Darwinism, and the recent doctrines of eugenics and anthroposociology. To these theories, Chamberlain added antisemitism and his version of German nationalism.

2 Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols (Munich: F. Bruckmann Verlag, 1899). See also Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. John Lees, 2 vols (London: John Lane, 1911). Subsequent references are to this English edition.

Like Arthur de Gobineau, the first writer to formulate a theory of racial degeneration, Chamberlain was obsessed with this idea, even if he did not share de Gobineau's fatalism. The ethnic mixing that Chamberlain saw in Habsburg Vienna and the growing influence of writers of Jewish origin both depressed and challenged him. In many ways, the three fundamental principles proposed in his book were responses to his experience in Central Europe, namely: a) that the human races differ not only in their physical and mental structure but also with regard to their moral qualities, b) that the struggle between races is the driving force of history and the key to understanding the cultural, political, and social development of humankind, and c) that the history of Western civilization is a constant struggle between German Teutons and Jews. Chamberlain's theories of race took shape at the meeting point of these three principles. Like other writers, he took advantage of the dual character – biological and cultural – of race, which allowed him sometimes to offer intuitive, almost spiritual definitions. For example, he maintained that:

> Nothing is so convincing as the consciousness of the possession of Race. The man who belongs to a distinct, pure race, never loses the sense of it. […] Race lifts a man above himself: it endows him with extraordinary – I might almost say supernatural – powers, so entirely does it distinguish him from the individual who springs from the chaotic jumble of peoples drawn from all parts of the world […].[3]

Chamberlain's vision of race was also heavily influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, although he often distorted Darwin's arguments. For example, Chamberlain rejected the idea that natural selection was only to the advantage of the strong. He hoped in this way to do away with the contradiction in his own theory of race, according to which the innate hereditary characteristics of certain races ensured their cultural superiority, while at the same time he insisted that in the process of racial selection, external conditions, conditioned by the environment, played a decisive role. Selection was thus both natural and cultural, and presupposed numerous interactions between ethnic groups, regardless of their racial origins. It was therefore impossible, he considered, to claim racial purity for any modern people.

This was the argument that preoccupied many theoreticians of race at the end of the nineteenth century. For Chamberlain, racial mixing could

3 Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1, 269.

have positive as well as negative consequences, and indeed was sometimes a necessary process, since it contributed to the spread of superior racial characteristics. Darwin's laws regarding the disappearance of original traits in a population through continuous crossbreeding underlined the specific combination of hereditary factors, geographical and historical. In turn, crossbreeding and social selection 'ennobled' the racial quality of a group or individual. Chamberlain considered the concepts of 'crossings' and 'selection' to be the most important factors in determining the character of a race. The ideal, he maintained, was for the so-called 'superior races' to interbreed among themselves, and not with those considered inferior to them. Through interbreeding with inferior races, the specific qualities of the superior race were gradually diminished and in time disappeared, as had happened in the case of the Ancient Greeks.

Consequently, Chamberlain established five eugenic criteria to protect the race from degeneration and to 'prevent', as he put it, 'the prostitution of the noble in the arms of the ignoble'.[4] These criteria were: (1) 'the presence of excellent [racial] material' and (2) 'continued inbreeding', which meant 'avoidance of all foreign mixture of blood'. Then followed (3), 'artificial selection', which, Chamberlain explained, was similar to the 'principles of artificial breeding in the animal and vegetable worlds'.[5] The mixing of races had happened countless of times in history, but what he wanted was to avoid (4) 'continued inbreeding within a narrow circle', which led to 'degeneration and particularly to sterility'. Therefore, he insisted on (5): 'The mixture of blood must be strictly limited as regards time, and it must, in addition, be appropriate; not all and any crossings, but only definite ones can form the basis of ennoblement'.[6] These criteria needed to be respected and supervised by eugenicists. Only the country which successfully integrated the five eugenic criteria into its national politics could be sure both of survival and of historical development.

On the one hand, Chamberlain's racial philosophy glorified the cultural and historical achievements of the Germans, and on the other, it discredited the contribution of the Semitic races, especially the Jews. The German people thus embodied the best qualities of the Aryan race and were destined to save Western culture from its presumed state of degradation caused by the Jews. In illustrating the alleged 'negative' and 'destructive' effects of the Jews on Western civilization and in introducing the idea of Jewish inferiority

4 Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1, 288.
5 Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1, 276–277.
6 Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1, 282–283.

into a racial system that aimed to explain the entire history of humanity, Chamberlain included common late nineteenth-century prejudices about the Jews in a broad, philosophical perspective. At the same time, he linked modern antisemitism to its religious roots, considering the historical conflict between Judaism and Christianity to be irreconcilable.

While other antisemitic authors of the period – including the German journalist Wilhelm Marr, who popularized the term 'antisemitism' – built their arguments upon the supposed dichotomy between 'inferior' Jews/Semites and 'superior' Aryans, Chamberlain took a more sophisticated, albeit equally racist, approach. For him, 'qualities' and 'defects' were not innate characteristics of the race, but resulted from the interaction of races with different intellectual abilities. An optimal distribution of racial qualities would lead to cultural progress, as had happened in the case of the Germanic peoples. The opposite phenomenon could be identified in the case of the Jews, who, in Chamberlain's opinion, had suffered as a result of racial mixing, with disastrous results both for them and for any nation in which they assimilated. In short, for him, the presence of the Jews in Western Europe, had 'exercised a large, and in many ways an undoubtedly fatal, influence'.[7]

Chamberlain's antisemitism operated on more than one level. The first concerned the physical characteristics of the Jews, which he considered to be specific and thus easy for anthropologists and eugenicists to identify. The second referred to their 'peculiar mental characteristics', namely 'their lack of imagination'.[8] Finally, he underlined the theological aspect of his theory, maintaining that the Jews had never had a religious consciousness. These characterizations were used to demonstrate the alleged degeneration of the Jewish race and to suggest the need for a eugenic intervention aimed at combatting the effects of racial mixing between 'those who are really Teutons or at least have much Germanic blood in their veins'[9] and the Jews.

Chamberlain's book immediately enjoyed remarkable success. Its enthusiastic readers included the German emperor Wilhelm II himself. European racism had a new leading theoretician. 1906 saw the publication of a popular edition, over 100,000 copies of which had already been sold by 1914. The book was first translated into English in 1911 and was enthusiastically received by public opinion in Europe and the United States. Although it was not translated into Romanian, it was widely discussed in Romania, where Chamberlain's ideas were interpreted in very different ways. Some

7 Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1, 351.
8 Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1, 224–225.
9 Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1, 538.

authors, such A. C. Cuza and Aurel C. Popovici, considered his racial theory essential for the formulation of a theory of Romanian national specificity, while others, such as Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, saw it as an obstacle to the development of a theory of Romanian nationalism, which he aimed to infuse with critical and objective thinking. Rădulescu-Motru recognized the importance of Chamberlain's attempt to construct a racial theory with spiritual foundations but considered that this theory lacked a scientific basis. His criticisms of Chamberlain are relevant to early twentieth-century Romanian debates on racial degeneration and social selection and, therefore, deserve some attention here.

Racial Philosophy and Nationalist Epistemology

The philosopher and psychologist Constantin Rădulescu-Motru [figure 1] belonged to a generation of Romanian nationalists who attributed to Chamberlain's theories a specific epistemological function which they believed was particularly relevant to Romanian debates about national identity. In 1900, Rădulescu-Motru published a substantial review of Chamberlain's book in *Noua Revistă Română pentru Politică, Literatură, Știință și Artă* (*The New Romanian Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art*). While recognizing the massive impact of Chamberlain's ideas, Rădulescu-Motru was not convinced that the scientific basis of his theories was as solid as Chamberlain himself maintained. He remarked from the start that the book belonged to a category of writings on race that contained 'sophisms' and 'speculations' on the subject rather than a proper philosophical system. Consequently, Rădulescu-Motru was determined to present Chamberlain's ideas about race 'in the most complete and most objective manner possible'[10] – the only way, he believed, that scientists should write about race.

Chamberlain's subjectivism in his treatment of the social and psychological aspects of race was not the only warning sign for Rădulescu-Motru. He was also worried by the absence of comparative-historical methodology in Chamberlain's study. Rădulescu-Motru was a supporter of the new theories of mass psychology, especially so-called *Völkerpsychologie*, a field that at the end of the nineteenth century had found a new application in the works of the German physiologist and psychologist Wilhelm Wundt.[11] Rădulescu-Motru's

10 Constantin Rădulescu–Motru, 'Filosofia lui Houston Stewart Chamberlain asupra raselor', *Noua Revistă Română pentru Politică, Literatură, Știință și Artă* 2, no. 17 (1900): 165.

11 Wilhelm Wundt, *Völkerpsychologie*, 10 vols (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1900–1920).

evaluation of Chamberlain's ideas about race was thus more than a conventional review; rather it was an essay in cultural syncretism, starting from the conviction that a world fragmented by modernity and morally adrift could be recomposed and reintegrated and that, moreover, through the intermediary of science, it could be given a new meaning. Indeed, what Rădulescu-Motru hoped to see in Chamberlain's work was a scientific theory of race, constructed on a philosophical and empirical foundation. Chamberlain, however, he observed, was 'an enemy of scientific method in philosophy. For him, to find the truth does not require detailed analysis and research; the truth can also present itself to the intelligence in an intuitive manner; it can be sensed before it is proven'.[12]

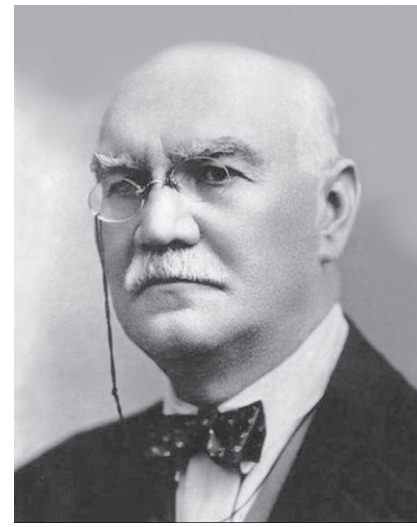


Fig. 1. Constantin Rădulescu-Motru (Courtesy of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest)

Rădulescu-Motru made a systematic analysis of Chamberlain's five eugenic criteria, emphasizing that these were not the only ones that could 'give a clear notion about race and its importance in the history of civilization'. This observation provided him with the occasion to raise an issue of particular relevance in the Romanian context: the relation between nation and race. According to Chamberlain, a race could only fulfil its cultural destiny within the framework of a national state. Rădulescu-Motru agreed, emphasizing that 'the state by its cultural means maintains and forges shared memories and hopes in the consciousness of the race'. This idea was combined with Chamberlain's description of 'heroes' and 'geniuses', whom he considered to be the historical product of a nation's racial superiority. The consequence was that individuals gifted with extraordinary intellectual qualities could achieve personal and collective fulfilment only in a suitable racial environment. This 'individual racial character' was best expressed, Rădulescu-Motru noted, through the ethno-national solidarity of the group to which the individual belonged. 'Only through race', he declared, could the individual 'strive towards immortality. For, indeed, what would the life of a single individual mean, if it were not tightly bound to the idea of race! The individual is the product of a moment; the race alone is of indefinite

12 Rădulescu–Motru, 'Filosofia lui Houston Stewart Chamberlain', 165.

duration'.[13] As Chamberlain saw it, the nation was the guardian of the 'soul of the race'. For as long as it remained faithful to its racial nature, it need not fear degeneration. The state occupied a role closely connected to the importance of the nation in modelling racial character. Both for Chamberlain and for Rădulescu-Motru, the resulting nation-state was not only the inevitable product of history, but also the biological expression of social organization, the only structure that reflected the fundamental truth of the race.

Another theme treated by Chamberlain was the role of Christianity in history. This, too, was discussed by Rădulescu-Motru. Those who understood and assumed this role, such as the German Teutons, were 'the bearers of a new culture' and 'the regenerators of a world that had come to putrefaction under the Roman Empire'.[14] For Chamberlain, it was the Germanic peoples who had created modern Europe, from the Renaissance to the Reformation and the Enlightenment. It is also interesting – as indeed Rădulescu-Motru appreciated – that Chamberlain considered that all the European peoples, from the Celts to the Slavs and of course including the French and the English, were in some way influenced by 'German blood and German spirit'. One people, however, was explicitly rejected: the Jews. It was Chamberlain's antisemitism, Rădulescu-Motru acknowledged, that had ensured his public success; yet this did not prevent him from adopting the English author's theory of a universal conflict between Jews and their national host cultures, pointing out that a similar conflict might consume Romania as well.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Rădulescu-Motru synthesized many of the themes that would dominate the debate on national specificity and ethnic belonging ('by blood') during the interwar period. Rădulescu-Motru was not an antisemite, but his approach mirrored a new tendency of the time, shared by other Romanian nationalists, to embrace biopolitical and eugenic visions of national rebirth. Cultural metamorphosis, he believed, was the only way in which the nation could leave behind its state of ethnic lethargy and offer the Romanians a historical meaning.

In a text in which he criticized Bulgarian nationalism for its imperialist tendencies in the Balkans, Rădulescu-Motru underlined that 'only the nations that are capable of their own culture, only they have a right to emancipation and self-government'.[15] These two elements, a national culture and political

13 Rădulescu–Motru, 'Filosofia lui Houston Stewart Chamberlain', 167–168.

14 Rădulescu–Motru, 'Filosofia lui Houston Stewart Chamberlain', 169.

15 C. Rădulescu–Motru, 'Naționalism arhaic și civilizațiune', *Noua Revista Română pentru Politică, Literatură, Știință și Artă* 2, no. 16 (1900): 122.

emancipation, he treated together, thus giving shape to the hope that ethnic unity founded on religion and race would lead to the rebirth of the nation. Romania, however, or so Rădulescu-Motru believed, was only beginning its journey towards the formation of an authentic national culture, and not only because it was 'a conglomerate of different races' – in other words, it had numerous ethnic minorities – but also because of 'differences of social class'. An ethnic uniformization was likewise necessary, Rădulescu-Motru believed, including the assimilation of minorities and the rejection of the 'distorted ideal, which some egotistical souls, in our days, present as the property of a supposed pure race'. 'The Romanian race', he continued, 'will be selected in time from all the sons of today's Romania'.[16]

Like other intellectuals of the time, Rădulescu-Motru had become a promoter of scientific research on the 'Romanian racial type' (*tipul rasial românesc*) – research which he considered essential for the definition of Romanian national specificity.[17] The French anthropologist Paul Topinard had already made the important distinction between racial type and race. The former referred to the totality of psychosomatic characteristics specific to an individual, while the latter was the hereditary stock.[18] In a detailed study on the subject of race, published in 1902, Elie Georgescu, a teacher of natural sciences at the Carol I High School in Craiova, explained that it was possible to speak of race 'in the scientific sense of the word', that is describing 'the totality of individuals who have in common a hereditary type. It [race] is known from the sum of physical, physiological, and psychological characteristics that constitute its type'. Thus, he continued, it was possible to speak of 'a French, English, or Romanian national type', but not of 'a French, English, German, or Romanian race'.[19] These 'races', Georgescu considered, were social and political constructions. Psychologist Dumitru Drăghicescu was equally categorical in his assertion that 'the Romanian people does not belong to one historical race, but it is a people which consists of an unclear, chaotic mixing of various and many races'. According to Drăghicescu, what defined the Romanians was not their racial composition but their 'soul' and

16 Rădulescu-Motru, 'Naționalism arhaic și civilizațiune', 123

17 Other writings by Rădulescu-Motru on this theme include *Românismul: Catehismul unei noi spiritualități* (1936) and *Etnicul românesc* (1942).

18 Paul Topinard, 'De la notion de race en anthropologie', *Revue d'anthropologie* 8, no. 2 (1879): 589–660. See also Joseph Deniker, *The Races of Man: An Outline of Anthropology and Ethnography* (London: Walter Scott, 1900); and Adrian Ionescu, 'Problemele biologiei sociale', *Sociologie Românească* 2, no. 4 (1937): 150–158.

19 Elie Ștef. Georgescu, 'Rasa și naționalitatea românilor', *Literatura și Arta Română* 6, no. 4 (1902): 377.

'mentality'.[20] The Romanian soul drew on ethnic streams flowing into the national body, but its character was ultimately cultural not racial.

Rădulescu-Motru interpreted things slightly differently. Race existed, he believed, and it embodied physical and moral qualities, transmitted from generation to generation. At the same time, his ideas about race were in perfect harmony with other theories, according to which the Romanian nation, in order to flourish, needed a new nationalist spirituality. The arguments in favour of a spiritual renewal led in their turn to the idea that not only was the Romanian nation in a process of linguistic unification and territorial expansion at the beginning of the twentieth century, but its existence was also a natural phenomenon resulting from an ethnic synthesis that had begun centuries before. Hence the designation of the Romanian peasant as the symbol of the nation was only natural. Had not eternity been born in the village?[21] For the poet and philosopher Lucian Blaga and for many other believers in a Romanian national essence, this was the undeniable truth.

Consequently, urban modernity and the social degeneration that it produced were at the opposite pole to the idealized Romanian community. Rădulescu-Motru was also inspired by the celebrated poet Mihai Eminescu, who had considered the peasantry to be 'the Romanian people itself, the true Romanian people by race'.[22] Eminescu's anti-modernist vision was adopted by the interwar nationalists. Thus, in the biopolitical language that became current after World War I, the peasantry was 'a biological unity in eternity! The hereditary patrimony of our ancestors, their blood and their soul, is transmitted over the centuries and through individuals'.[23]

The Romanian peasant, Rădulescu-Motru similarly remarked, was not merely a social category, but also an ethnic one, the only one in which historicity and collective spirituality were combined, the only source of national regeneration. Starting from this premise, he believed, it might be hoped that there would be a cultural mobilization befitting the national project of forming a 'new soul',[24] without which *Romanianism* – the name he gave to

20 Dumitru Drăghicescu, *Din psihologia poporului roman* (*Introducere*) (Bucharest: Leon Alcalay, 1907), 126–127.

21 An allusion to the well-known saying, 'Eu cred că veșnicia s–a născut la sat' ('I believe eternity was born in the village') from the poem *Sufletul Satului* ('The Soul of the Village') by Lucian Blaga (1895–1961).

22 Mihai Eminescu, *Opere*, vol. 13: *Publicistică* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1985), 48.

23 Gheorghe Vornica, *Gândirea biopolitică a lui Eminescu* (Sibiu: Editura Astrei, 1943), 10.

24 C. Rădulescu-Motru, *Sufletul neamului nostru. Calități bune și defecte* (Bucharest: Lumen, 1910), 22.

his theory of national specificity – could not exist. Yet Rădulescu-Motru did not, like conservative traditionalists of the same period, propose a Romanian rural utopia. His programme of ethnic regeneration was conceived not as a return to the past, but as a plan for the future, part of a general effort to improve the deplorable condition in which the Romanians found themselves. Motivated as he was by such a desire to change Romania culturally, it was perhaps inevitable that Rădulescu-Motru, too, would be drawn into the debate about the 'Jewish question'. He addressed the problem of the supposed degenerative effects of racial interbreeding, explaining it through the prism of his theory of ethnicity. Let us dwell briefly on this aspect.

Emancipation, Assimilation, Rejection

At the end of the nineteenth century, the situation of Jews in Romania was complex. Antisemitism had become popular among Romanian political leaders and cultural elites, and the problem of Jewish emancipation frequently dominated political debates. In this context, the already deeply rooted stereotype that presented Jews as 'exploiters' of the peasantry came to be associated with the notion that they were also contributing to the racial 'ruin' of the nation. These antisemitic representations dovetailed with the metaphor of degeneration and with the representation of modernity as 'foreign' to the Romanian spirit.[25]

After the Peace Congress of Berlin in 1878, the naturalization of Jews in Romania was long debated at the international level. The Great Powers conditioned their recognition of Romanian independence on the modification of article 7 of the 1866 constitution, which granted Romanian citizenship only to those belonging to the Christian religion. The Romanian parliament accordingly modified the offending article, but provided that the naturalization of Jews would be on an individual rather than a collective basis. The antisemitic agenda of the period was dominated by the argument that Jews refused to be assimilated by Romanian society, opting instead for ghettoization.[26] Gradually, this idea was replaced by its opposite: the integration of Jews in Romanian society should be avoided because it constituted a threat to the Romanian national character. In these circumstances, the debate over the political rights of Jews took on a new significance.

25 Berlindo Giannetti, 'Ebrei ed ebraismo nella vechia Romania', *Difesa della Razza* 4, no. 2 (1940): 23-26.

26 Johann Kaspar Bluntschli, *Der Stat Rumänien und das Rechtsverhältniss der Juden in Rumänien* (Berlin: Verlag von W. und S. Loewenthal, 1879).

In 1900, under the title 'European Public Opinion and the Israelite Question in Romania', Rădulescu-Motru launched a debate in the journal *Noua Revistă Română pentru Politică, Literatură, Știință și Artă* about the political emancipation of Jews. He represented those 'true Romanian patriots [who] strive to find a solution [to the Jewish problem], according to the country's interests, while, at the same time, benevolent towards a foreign race'. The question he posed was simple: 'Would you advise Romanians to grant Jews a complete equality of political and civil rights?'[27] Among the foreign experts who accepted the invitation to contribute to the discussion were Émile Zola, Cesare Lombroso, Max Nordau, Tomáš G. Masaryk, Charles Richet, Karl Lueger, Georges Clemenceau, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain.[28] To complete the list of contributors, Rădulescu-Motru also invited Romanian personalities to contribute, including Theodor Rosetti, Constantin Boerescu, Take Ionescu, Gheorghe Panu, Vasile Lascăr, and P. P. Carp. They all agreed that, at that moment, there were no viable solutions to the 'Jewish Question' in Romania and that it might take another two decades before a satisfactory solution could be found.[29]

Chamberlain's response, sent on 15 September 1900, deserves a mention.[30] Expressing his 'sincere admiration and warm love' for the 'vigorous Romanian nation', he opened his letter with a series of observations, comparing the Romanians with other peoples who had survived Ottoman occupation. He then remarked that, in contrast to these peoples, 'in the mixed blood of the Romanians of today, there seems to be preserved something of the blood of the old Romans, which manifests itself in a salutary manner as political instinct'. This was an important trait, as, Chamberlain explained: 'without this instinct a nation cannot be created; and without a nation neither civilization nor culture can exist'.[31] After praising the efforts of the period from 1856 to 1866, which had led to the creation of the modern Romanian state, Chamberlain criticized the intrusion of the Great Powers in the internal affairs of Romania, especially the insistence with which they

27 C. Rădulescu-Motru, 'Opinia publică europeană și cestiunea israelită în România', *Noua Revistă Română pentru Politică, Literatură, Știință și Artă* 2, no. 16 (1900): 127.

28 Their responses varied, from Max Nordau's enthusiastic support for emancipation to Karl Lueger's urging not to emancipate the Jews.

29 'Amânarea oricărei soluțiuni în cestiunea israelită. După opinia d–lor Teodor Rosetti, E. Costinescu, Em. Porumbaru, Take Ionescu, G. Panu, ș.a.', *Noua Revistă Română pentru Politică, Literatură, Știință și Artă* 2, no. 21 (1900): 321–325.

30 H. St. Chamberlain, 'Opinia publică europeană și cestiunea israelită în România', *Noua Revistă Română pentru Politică, Literatură, Știință și Artă* 2, no. 19 (1900): 241–248.

31 Chamberlain, 'Opinia publică europeană', 242.

had requested, during the Peace Congress of Berlin, that Romania grant citizenship to its Jewish population. Citing the example of his own native country, Chamberlain pointed out that between 1290 and 1657, Jews had been excluded from England, and that it was only in 1723, after centuries of development of the English nation, that they had been permitted to buy properties. 'If Romania wishes to follow England's glorious example', Chamberlain suggested, 'she should immediately expel all Jews and accept them again only after three or four centuries when the nation has grown strong enough'.[32]

An additional argument was that Jews were numerous in Romania: Chamberlain estimated that there were twenty-five times more Jews in Romania than in England at the end of the nineteenth century. Consequently, a strategy of political exclusion was called for. Moreover – and also in contrast with the situation in England – the Romanians still lacked a 'fundamental attribute' as a nation, namely what Chamberlain termed 'national character', that trait that marked 'a particular race as different from others'. In Romania, he wrote, 'historical circumstances have prevented the formation of a unitary, national race'. Thus, he recommended the assimilation of ethnic minorities, especially those belonging to the same racial family. The Romanians had, however, to be discouraged from mixing with the Jews. This mixture, Chamberlain considered, was harmful because it would lead to 'the degeneration of the Romanian nation'. Given the large number of Jews living in Romania, encouraging Romanian-Jewish marriages would 'completely destroy the strength of the much-dreamed-of great Romanian state, specifically any possibility of breeding a new strong national race'.[33] According to Chamberlain, a truly organic political bond between race and nation could only be established by a state that maintained and strengthened Romanian racial traits, through carefully planned political measures similar to those orchestrated by other states in Western Europe, and especially in England.

The prospects for Romania were gloomy, Chamberlain maintained, unless Jews were excluded from political life. Nevertheless, this exclusion should not be achieved through violent measures, but in accordance with the legal protection of the constitution. In support of this idea, he admonished the Romanians for sometimes acting 'barbarously', for their inability to control their 'absurd medieval prejudices', and for their 'social contempt and personal animosity' towards Jews. 'Grant the Jews all the legal protection

32 Chamberlain, 'Opinia publică europeană', 243.
33 Chamberlain, 'Opinia publică europeană', 246

that you grant to all other foreigners!' he said. 'But do not, however, give them political rights and rural property rights!'[34] They should be helped to emigrate, not encouraged to become naturalized.

The political emancipation of Jews was a possibility that the Romanian elites of the time were not prepared to take into consideration. Associated with the growing popularity of ideas of racial degeneration, the heated topic of Jewish political rights also brought forth Romanian antisemitic attitudes. As was to be expected, most of Chamberlain's arguments were based on racial studies in anthropology, medicine, and eugenics, fields in which so-called 'Jewish degeneration' was intensely debated. At the end of his letter, Chamberlain offered a clarification regarding the argument put forward by some authors that 'there was no Jewish race, no "true Jewish people", but only a Jewish religion'. Invoking the research of the German anthropologist Rudolf Virchow and the Austrian anthropologist Felix von Luschan, Chamberlain stated categorically that the 'Jewish race' not only existed, but was in fact the 'purest' of races, because the Jews had always insisted on endogamous marriages.[35] If the Romanians hoped to assimilate them, he concluded, they would be bitterly disappointed. In other words, though the emancipation of the Jews was necessary to demonstrate Romania's political maturity, it had to be carried out with great care, in order to avoid weakening the ethnic body of a nation still young. This was the dilemma that the Romanian state faced: failure to emancipate the Jews might attract the condemnation of the European powers and have a negative effect on the image abroad of the young Romanian state; yet their assimilation might produce social and ethnic changes that were considered to be to the detriment of the Romanian nation.

Recalling his enquiry decades later, Rădulescu-Motru commented sadly that the debate that he had initiated had not clarified the 'Jewish Question' as he had hoped. The reason, he noted, was that those whom he had asked to contribute to the debate 'were politicians and publicists, widely respected, but with no special scholarly training in the matter'. The only one whom Rădulescu-Motru considered to have any kind of authority was Chamberlain, 'a renowned philosopher and one of the foremost researchers on the subject of race'. However, even he 'did not use anthropological measurements, statistics, and the methods of comparative psychology' – the scientific methods used by Rădulescu-Motru himself. Chamberlain was a philosopher of race and, consequently, 'all his philosophical construction built upon the

34 Chamberlain, 'Opinia publică europeană', 247.
35 Chamberlain, 'Opinia publică europeană', 248.

distinction between Aryanism and Semitism [was] rather romantic than scientific'.[36] However, this did not make antisemitism any less attractive to other Romanian authors, as is clearly demonstrated by the case of A. C. Cuza, who has already been mentioned and to whom we shall now briefly turn our attention.

Antisemitism and Ethnic Ontology

One of the most prolific Romanian antisemites and promoters of biological racism as a dynamic component of nationalism was the professor of political economy at the University of Iaşi, Alexandru C. Cuza.[37] He maintained that his antisemitism was based on 'scientific beliefs', alongside his own interpretation of Romanian social and historical conditions. A self-styled 'defender of the nation', he was inspired in equal measure by the tradition of organic nationalism developed by Eminescu and by Chamberlain's theories of race and degeneration. Cuza was one of those authors who constructed a theory of national specificity, approached exclusively through the prism of the elimination of any Jewish influence in Romanian life, culture, and society.

Already in *Meseriaşul român* (*The Romanian Tradesman*), a brochure published in 1893, Cuza depicted the Jews in racial terms, describing them as 'a bastard and degenerate nation'.[38] Starting from the premise that incessantly repeating the same stereotypes would eventually lead to the anticipated result, Cuza became a successful polemicist and politician. His first public partnership was with the historian A. D. Xenopol, with whom he co-founded the League Against Alcoholism in Iaşi in 1897.[39] As it was Jewish merchants who largely monopolized the trade in alcohol in Moldavia, the activity of the League reflected Cuza's conviction that the Jews were exploiting the Romanian peasants.[40] Cuza's idolization of the Romanian peasant was interwoven with aggressive speculations about the glorious 'Romanian race' and with a mania for religious descriptions. To some, however, such as Rădulescu-Motru, such a stridently antisemitic

36 Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Revizuiri şi adăugări: 1943* (Bucharest: Floarea Darurilor, 1996), 98–99.

37 See Pamfil Şeicaru, *Un junimist antisemit: A.C. Cuza* (Madrid: Carpaţii, 1956).

38 Alexandru C. Cuza, *Meseriaşul român* (Iaşi: Tipografia Naţională, 1893).

39 *Programul Ligei române în contra alcoolismului* (Iaşi: Tipografia Naţională, 1897).

40 A. C. Cuza, *Ce–i alcoolismul?* Iaşi: Tipografia Naţională, 1897 and A. C. Cuza, *Lupta împotriva alcoolismului în România* (Iaşi: Tipografia Naţională, 1897).

discourse was counter-productive and detrimental to Romania. 'Our country', he noted, 'has adopted the organization of the European states, [and] consequently, it has thus committed itself to all the sacrifices required by civilization. We cannot pursue at the same time a policy of consolidating the state and an antisemitic policy; we must choose one or the other.' For Rădulescu-Motru, the road that Romania had to follow was obvious, and it was not that of antisemitism. In short, as he put it, 'a good patriot cannot approve of the antisemitic movement'.[41]

Cuza saw matters completely differently. For him, being patriotic *meant* being antisemitic. His racist language would become notorious in Romania, and his association with the renowned historian Nicolae Iorga strengthened his public credibility. The two men shared a version of conservative nationalism, which eventually took political shape in 1910, when they founded the Democratic Nationalist Party. Later, the extreme form of antisemitism promoted by Cuza led to Iorga's political distancing from him. The creation first of the National Christian Union – which Cuza co-founded in 1922 together with Nicolae C. Paulescu, professor of physiology in the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest – and then, in the following year, of the National-Christian Defence League cemented his political influence in the country.

Cuza's political programme was based on strict ethnic principles: 'to keep our race unmixed, our [customary] law untouched, and our land, even a small patch, shared with no one'.[42] Cuza introduced into Romanian political discourse numerous nationalist and racist themes, which were taken up not only by antisemitic groups but also by opinion leaders and intellectuals with great public influence in the interwar period. The most important of these themes centred on the idea of a fundamental conflict between Jews and Romanians, similar to that between Jews and Germans described by Chamberlain. This idea was reinforced by the presumption that the Jews were an inferior race. This was Cuza's political creed.

In 1905, Cuza published 'Nationality in Art', an article as confused as it was ambitious, and full of antisemitic and racist reflections. In 1908, he enlarged it into a book. In the preface he wrote for the third edition of the book, published in 1927, he defined the nation as being 'the totality of individuals of the same blood'.[43] Each nation had its own biological structure,

41 C. Rădulescu-Motru, 'Cât costă pe țară politica antisemită', *Noua Revistă Română pentru Politică, Literatură, Știință și Artă* 2, no. 18 (1900): 205.

42 L.A.N.C., *Călăuza bunilor români*, introduction by A. C. Cuza, 3d. rev. ed. (Iași: Institutul de Arte Grafice, 1927), 55.

43 Alexandru C. Cuza, *Naționalitatea în artă. Principii, fapte, concluzii*, 3d. enlarged ed. (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1927), vii.

the result of centuries of shared existence, and its own form of artistic and cultural expression. True art, Cuza believed, 'can only exist as national art'.[44] Consequently, only those who had the same 'Romanian' blood could create a Romanian national culture. Under the threat of the growing number of Jews, the Romanian nation was subject to a sustained process of degeneration, because, Cuza believed, 'in any society and in any of its branches of activity, the predominance of Jews is a *cause of sickness* – or in any case the *symptom* proving the onset of national weakening and degeneration'.[45]

For Cuza, the Jews were a 'foreign body', the cause of the country's economic difficulties and a threat to Romanian culture. He presented Jewish degeneration as a demonstrable scientific fact. The Jews were dangerous not only because they were 'foreign', but also because they belonged to an 'inferior race', as proven by their cultural and biological 'sterility'. The idea of Jewish 'sterility', which completed the picture of their 'degeneration', would be widely popularized in the interwar period.[46] According to Cuza, the 'sterility' of the Jews was the result of three factors: 'their Semitic *origin*, the Semites being themselves inferior; *crossbreeding*, that is, the mixing of incompatible races; and *alienation*, since they had lost their homeland and language, living in forms of culture contrary to their nature'.[47] The presence of the Jews, Cuza believed, could only be harmful to the Romanians.

For him, blood defined not only the nation, but also the race, defined as the result of 'a determined, limited mixing [of peoples] which reached complete unity after centuries of continuous interbreeding, taking place among the same related ethnic elements, shielded from any foreign immixture, in the same surroundings, both natural and social, and on the same territory'.[48] According to Cuza, there were no pure races or nations. However, he believed that all the modern nations originated from three great 'primary races' – white, yellow, and black – which were divided in their turn into 'secondary races', such as the Aryans and the Semites. Cuza considered the Aryans superior, and his hope was that the Romanians, too, would soon decide to distance themselves from the 'Semitic spirit' and adopt 'the characteristics specific to the Aryan race'.[49]

44 Cuza, *Naționalitatea în artă*, 9.

45 Cuza, *Naționalitatea în artă*, 33 (emphasis in original).

46 The poet and diarist Ilariu Dobridor (pseudonym of Constantin Iliescu Cioroianu), for example, described them as 'dry', 'inert', and 'barren'. Ilariu Dobridor, 'Sărăcia spirituală a evreilor', *Gândirea* 16, no. 10 (1937): 509.

47 Cuza, *Naționalitatea în artă*, 90 (emphasis in original).

48 Cuza, *Naționalitatea în artă*, 143.

49 Cuza, *Naționalitatea în artă*, 217.

By 1927, when the third edition of the book was published, the ideas developed in *Nationality in Art* had circulated widely, and were embraced by a new generation of nationalists, who defined Romanian ethnic ontology in terms of autochthonism, tradition, Orthodoxy, race, and blood. It was, as Nichifor Crainic also observed, Cuza who had 'given it the amplitude of a system as round and clear as a crystal sphere, unshifting in its inner logic'.[50] Cuza's explosive style, with his mixing of biological theories and metaphors, was perfectly suited to the racial nationalism of the 1930s.

Even after two decades had passed since the publication of the first version of this programmatic text, the idea that a Romanian national culture could not fully flourish because of the Jews had not disappeared; on the contrary, it had become an obsession for Romanian cultural and political elites. Cuza played a major role in establishing a direct link between ethnic nationalism and antisemitism in the early twentieth century. In the interwar period, 'Cuzism' became an antisemitic nationalist doctrine, with its own vocabulary and its own 'fundamental theses'. The first of these concerned nationality, considered to be 'the natural organic, spiritual power of the blood unified or of the "race", endowed with certain positive qualities, which are lost through crossbreeding and degeneration, leading to sterility and weakness'. For Cuza and his followers, race formed the basis of the Romanian nation and culture. It was the force generative of ethnic cohesion. The opposite of the Romanians were the Jews, stigmatized and rejected, described as 'a half-bred and degenerate nation'.[51]

Cuza's antisemitic and racist ideas were invoked repetitively and obsessively, and exerted a great power of attraction over the interwar generations. As was noted by the authors of the *Manifesto of National Revolution*, published in 1935, Cuza's antisemitic ideas formed 'a beautiful political bouquet', gathered in '40 years of struggle for the defence of the noble elements of the race from hybridization and cosmopolitanism'.[52] For these authors, Cuza was a born fighter for the ideal of Romanianism, a protector of the race.

While Cuza became an inspiration for the various political formations of the extreme right in the interwar period, others, like the author to whom we now turn, did not live long enough to play the role of leading theoreticians of the new nationalism, which after 1918 promised the racial and eugenic rejuvenation of Romania.

50 Nichifor Crainic, 'Naționalitatea în artă', *Gândirea* 14, no. 3 (1935), 116.

51 A. C. Cuza, *Cuzismul. Definiție, teze, antiteze* (Iași: Tip. Coop. 'Trecerea Munților Carpați', 1928), 12–13.

52 Sorin Pavel, Petre Țuțea, Ioan Crăciunel, Gh. Tite, Nicolae Tatu, and Petre Ercuță, *Manifestul revoluției naționale* (Sighișoara: Tipografia Miron Neagu, 1935), 41.

Racial Nationalism

After 1900, there emerged new advocates of the idea that Western liberal modernity was alien to Romanian national specificity and that democracy, as a political system, constituted a threat to the country's ethnic future. A native of the Banat region (at the time part of the Kingdom of Hungary), Aurel C. Popovici was already known as a passionate campaigner for the national rights of Romanians in Hungary and as the author of a famous plan for the federalization of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy on ethnic criteria.[53] He became popular in Romania too, known for his intransigent nationalism, with racial nuances, inspired by writers such as Gobineau and Chamberlain. The description of Popovici by Petre Pandea (literary pseudonym of Petre Marcu) is worth quoting here: 'Philosopher of the state and sociologist, Machiavellian political tactician and unfulfilled political prophet, Aurel C. Popovici remains one of the strangest, most complex, and greatest figures in the history of our modern culture.'[54]

Popovici published extensively in conservative newspapers and magazines, such as *Apărarea Națională* (*National Defence*), *Epoca* (*The Age*), *România Jună* (*Young Romania*), and *Sămănătorul* (*The Sower*). He joined those in Romania who argued for a conservative nationalism, one centred on the Romanian peasant and the rural world with its traditional customs. The peasant sowed his seed each spring, and this regenerative act perfectly illustrated the return to nature and to the simple rural life that the journal *Sămănătorul* promoted in its pages. It was a programme of change and cultural renewal, of critical evaluation of the past and of the present according to country's national specificity.

Popovici's contributions to *Sămănătorul*, of which he was editor between 1908 and 1909, were collected in a volume published in 1910. The title of the book, *Nationalism or Democracy: A Critique of Modern Civilization*, clearly expresses his nationalist position, regarding both the idea of modern democracy, and its application by political elites in Romania. The book was, according to its author, 'a critique of modern civilization, especially with regard to politics, to religious-moral philosophy, and to the spread of

53 The book, with the title *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich: politische Studien zur Lösung der nationalen Fragen und staatsrechtlichen Krisen in Österreich-Ungarn*, was published in Leipzig in 1906. It was translated into Romanian and given a preface by Petre Pandrea in 1939.
54 Petre Pandrea, Preface to Aurel C. Popovici, *Stat și națiune. Statele–Unite ale Austriei–Mari* (Bucharest: Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă 'Regele Carol II', 1939), x.

knowledge among the young and the general public'.[55] It was a project that some critics considered too ambitious.[56] Our attention here, however, will be focused specifically on Popovici's racial theories.

Popovici combined Eminescu's ideas regarding a Romanian society anchored in a medieval past with Cuza's antisemitism and Chamberlain's racial Darwinism to launch his own cultural critique of modernity. Following in the footsteps of the conservative philosopher Edmund Burke, he maintained that the French Revolution had destroyed not only the Ancien Régime but also cultural traditions and organic bonds between people. These relations informed the true sense of duty and of responsibility towards the national community. The French Revolution and then the revolutions of 1848 had led to the undermining of national specificity and ethnic homogeneity. The form of nationalism that Popovici preferred to see demanded 'respect for the specific individuality, the moral personality, and the character of the country, and thus implicitly of the people, as the centuries have handed them down to us'.[57] The Romanians, he believed, should aspire to become 'a true nation alongside other peoples of the earth; a *noble* people, with its own national culture, alongside other similar peoples, in the very *aristocracy, not the democracy and demagogy of humanity*'.[58]

At the same time, Popovici appealed to the arguments offered by the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, who, in his 1887 study *Community and Society* (*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*), eulogized community as the fundamental organic form of social life because it was based on tradition and on natural bonds between its members, while at the same time rejecting modern society, which, according to him, consisted of individuals brought together by superficial social relations.

Finally, Popovici, who had studied medicine in Vienna and Graz, was attuned to the latest specialized literature on race and eugenics. He familiarized his readers with such authors as Gobineau, Chamberlain, Ludwig Woltmann, George Vacher de Lapouge, and Francis Galton. In Romania, too, he argued, the racial potential of the national community needed to be realized. Convinced by Chamberlain's argument that 'rarely has the sentiment of race, the national sentiment and the possessive defence of the rights of personality, been affirmed as strongly as in our days',[59] Popovici

55 Aurel C. Popovici, *Naționalism sau democrație. O critică a civilizațiunii moderne* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1910), v.

56 See the critique in Virgil I. Bărbat, *Naționalism sau democrație* (Bucharest: Socec, 1911).

57 Popovici, *Naționalism sau democrație*, 134.

58 Popovici, *Naționalism sau democrație*, 152 (emphasis in original).

59 Popovici, *Naționalism sau democrație*, 308.

advocated a cultural purification and a re-evaluation of the ethnic priorities of the Romanian state. However, the political elites who governed Romania were, for him, a constant source of displeasure. Indeed, Popovici described the political scene in Bucharest as being 'a cosmopolitan fair of merchants dealing in fine phrases and lies, of clowns and organ-grinders, of tricksters and charmers of people'.[60]

Inspired by Chamberlain, Popovici further maintained that the stability and continuity of the nation depended on the social selection of racial characteristics. This, he believed, was the only way to protect Romanian national character. Popovici also borrowed from Chamberlain the idea of the supposed superiority of the Germanic-Nordic races and adapted it to his own theory of race and nation. The Romanians, although part of the 'Latin race', also had 'some German blood in their veins'. Thus, he claimed that the Romanians belonged, albeit incompletely, to the 'superior' European Nordic race. 'I realized long ago', he claimed, that 'in fact, many, very many Romanians have at least one, if not more, of the external features of the "Northern European race", as modern anthropology calls it'.[61] The Darwinian principles of natural selection also explained the differences between peoples. 'The principle of struggle, of selection, of the victory of the able over those lacking vital power',[62] he pointed out, had aged many European nations, which were already mature from a biological and cultural point of view, while other nations, such as the Romanians, were still young. The latter needed a national culture in order to develop fully, but, according to Popovici, even more important was 'the biological quality of that people, its character, its blood'.[63] The protection of ethnic character was absolutely necessary, just as a garden had to be protected from weeds. The reference to Francis Galton's eugenics is clear. 'Human culture is a sort of gardening', said Popovici: 'it all depends in the first place on the gardeners, on the soil and on the seeds'. Though not an adept of the idea of racial purity, he argued that there must be a balanced assimilation of foreigners, or else 'the ethnic stock of the people' would weaken and gradually disappear. 'A people so mixed that it no longer recognizes the broad lines of its physical, intellectual, and moral physiognomy is a mass of half-breeds, without creative powers, without guarantees of a future.' The examples he chose to illustrate this argument were the Poles and the Hungarians, peoples with significant Jewish

60 Popovici, *Naționalism sau democrație*, 312–313.
61 Popovici, *Naționalism sau democrație*, 350.
62 Popovici, *Naționalism sau democrație*, 351.
63 Popovici, *Naționalism sau democrație*, 352.

minorities living among them. The Hungarians, for example, were 'the living proof that aimless ethnic mixing weakens, bastardizes, and destroys the character of a people'. This specific national character was determined by the 'quality of the race'. If the Hungarians were considered to be 'degenerate', specifically as a result of their mixing with Jews, the Germans were cited as a positive example of racial and moral nobility. They had, in other words, a certain 'ethnic quality'[64] that had long disappeared in the Hungarians. Other major European peoples, such as the French, the Italians, and the English, also had a strong Germanic character, which, Popovici considered, explained their cultural, scientific, and industrial superiority.

Popovici's racial theories appeared in the context of cultural and political disputes about Romanian culture and about the limits of Jewish assimilation. Unlike A. C. Cuza, Popovici did not consider the Jews in Romania to be 'degenerate', but his theory about the danger posed by 'the mixing of races' was explicit. Crossbreeding between 'superior and related races' was welcome, but in the case of the mixing of one race 'with another absolutely foreign to its way of being', the results were harmful, leading to 'the bastardization of the blood and certain degeneration'.[65] In the context of these debates regarding national specificity, Popovici too proposed a theory of race that underlined the importance of historical origins and the transformative role of tradition and the instinct of conservation. His version of nationalism, based on the consciousness of race, was in opposition to the civic version generated by liberal democracy and by its accompanying political culture.[66] Cuza had summed up this dichotomy thus: '*The conservation of race as a necessary factor of human culture* – this is the principle of the *nationalist doctrine* – as opposed to *cosmopolitan humanitarianism*, which disregards national interests.'[67]

In this respect, Popovici's racial nationalism seemed to offer the much-desired physical protection of the biological borders of the nation, putting the emphasis on Romanianness not only at the symbolic level but also at the practical level, with reference to the individual, the family, and the community. His nationalism presupposed the erasure of the borders between the individual and the nation, an idea reinforced by the constant invocation of a collective racial identity which, Popovici suggested, transcended time and space.

64 Popovici, *Naționalism sau democrație*, 355–356.

65 Popovici, *Naționalism sau democrație*, 365.

66 A similar argument can be found in Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Cultura română şi politicianismul* (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Leon Alcalay, 1904).

67 Cuza, *Naționalitatea în artă*, 59 (emphasis in original).

In Popovici's thinking, the idea of national regeneration was bound together with a racial interpretation of nation and culture, constructed around the idea that the Romanian peasant was the essence of unadulterated ethnicity.[68] Both Cuza and Popovici believed that the regeneration of the Romanian political community could be achieved by an infusion of premodern traditions that had remained untouched by the corrosive effects of liberal modernity, favourable as it was to the assimilation of the Jews. It is hardly surprising that this mixture of racial and antisemitic theories gave rise to new cultural and political debates. However, their impact is not to be underestimated, as illustrated by the importance that interwar nationalists bestowed upon the critique of European modernity.

Writing in the right-wing newspaper *Axa* (*The Axis*) in 1933, the writer Octav Șuluțiu, for example, considered *Nationalism or Democracy* to be 'the Bible of Romanian nationalism',[69] and in his speech at the opening of the general assembly of ASTRA (the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People) in September 1937, Iuliu Moldovan, the director of the Institute of Hygiene and Social Hygiene in Cluj, considered Aurel C. Popovici to be a eugenicist *avant la lettre*, who saw the nation as a community that kept itself alive through ties of blood, connecting its own character with its own historical destiny.[70] This was a view shared by the physician and right-wing journalist, Nicolae Roșu, for whom, 'among our nationalist ideologues, only Eminescu and Aurel C. Popovici spoke of a Romanian race, using anthropological as well as spiritual arguments'.[71] Popovici, Roșu believed, had to be 'rediscovered' by the younger generation, and his ideas about race reintroduced into the political debate. The philosopher Nicolae Tatu was of a similar opinion: 'The hour has come', he wrote in December 1940, 'to search the spiritual treasury of this warrior of the race. The time has come to connect the broken thread of our history, and to appreciate properly those who have interpreted our true ethos'.[72] No doubt Popovici, who had died at the age of 54 in 1917, would have been more than delighted to read such appreciations.

68 Octavian Tăslăuanu, 'Două culturi. Cultura domnilor și cultura țăranilor', *Luceafărul* 7, no. 4 (1908): 59–64 and Aurel C. Popovici, 'Demagogie criminală', *Convorbiri Literare* 42, no. 3 (1908): 296–307.

69 Octav Șuluțiu, 'Un mare uitat: A.C. Popovici', *Axa* 2, no. 21 (1933): 4–5.

70 Iuliu Moldovan, 'Cuvânt de deschidere a Adunării Generale a ASTREI din Timişoara', *Transilvania* 68, no. 5 (1937): 368.

71 Nicolae Roşu, 'Hărţile rasei românești', *Revista Fundaţiilor Regale* 7, no. 10 (1940): 178.

72 Nicolae Tatu, 'Un uitat: Aurel C. Popovici', *Axa* 9, no. 43 (1940): 15.

For the authors discussed in this chapter, Romania's spiritual awakening had to be accompanied by a physical rebirth, by an improvement in the health of the Romanian people. Physicians such as Iacob Felix and Victor Babeș had repeatedly said so; writers like Aurel C. Popovici had developed the theme in a social Darwinist direction; and ASTRA had promoted it extensively in the interwar period, when the 'hygiene of the nation' and the 'health of the race' had become, as the writer and theologian Ion Agârbiceanu noted, 'problems of public interest', included in 'the programmes of governments'.[73] The result was a biomedical interpretation of the nation, and this was proposed as a political strategy from the very beginning of the complex political process following the creation of Greater Romania. For example, in the memorandum addressed to the Directing Council on 28 January 1919 by the bureau of the first congress of Romanian doctors in Transylvania, the Banat, and Hungary (i.e., the Partium and Maramureș[74]), it was emphasized that, 'only if our people is made healthy in body and soul, and only if care is taken that it multiplies to a normal extent, will it be able to survive and to emerge victorious from the struggle for existence that will be unleashed more intensively after the calming of the waves caused by the sufferings brought by the world war'. The moment was a historic one for all Romanians, but, the physicians, including Iuliu Moldovan and Iuliu Hațieganu, warned: 'let us not be deceived by the great good fortune that the present generation of our people has had. The future belongs only to vigorous and healthy peoples.'[75]

Popovici's long-time friend, physician and politician Alexandru Vaida-Voevod was thinking along the same lines when, as president of the Council of Ministers, he presented the programme of the newly installed first government of Greater Romania in parliament on 1 December 1919. As head of the government, Vaida-Voevod undertook to create 'ministries for [social] protection and public hygiene' and to introduce 'numerous laws aimed at preventing the degeneration of the race'.[76] We can thus see how eugenic and biopolitical nationalism was integrated early on in the political culture of Greater Romania. Echoing eugenic theories about the

73 I. Agârbiceanu, 'ASTRA și regenerarea naţiunii', *Tribuna* 2, no. 7 (1939): 5.

74 Former Hungarian territories with a considerable Romanian population to the north and west of Transylvania, incorporated in the enlarged Greater Romania proclaimed in December 1918.

75 'Memoriul înaintat de biroul congresului medicilor români din Ardeal Consiliului Dirigent (Sibiu, 8 February 1919)', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 9, nos. 11–12 (1938): 333–334.

76 *Expunerea d–lui Al. Vaida–Voevod, Președintele Consiliului de Miniștri privitoare la programul guvernului*, Bucharest: Tip. 'Cultura Neamului Românesc', 1919, 12. See also Muzeul Naţional de Istorie a Transilvaniei, Manuscrise. Fond Alexandru Vaida–Voevod, 'Caietul Negru', files 23–24.

biological protection of the peasantry, Nichifor Crainic emphasized that this post–1918 'integral Romanian nationalism'[77] was both biological and spiritual, and that the new generation of Romanians was becoming more and more aware of its biopolitical responsibility.[78] Like Aurel C. Popovici, Crainic suggested that 'the problem of regeneration' of the nation should be discussed in 'ethnic terms'. And how did Crainic define the ethnic? It was not, in his view, 'a general biological concept, but one specifically anthropological'. He continued: 'The idea of regeneration, as the new nationalism, founded on ethnicity, conceives it, thus encapsulates the whole person, in the harmonious fullness of their physical and moral powers.'[79] Social and human sciences, such as anthropology, were driven, Crainic believed, by the same desire to understand ethnicity and race.

These efforts had to be directed not only at the moral but also at the physical education of the nation, at the cultivation of a healthy and active younger generation. It was on this younger generation, driven by a eugenic responsibility towards the national interest, that the future of the country depended. In a talk given at the first Congress of Physical Education in Romania, organized in Bucharest in 1934, Iuliu Haţieganu declared with passion, but also with a degree of premonition: 'We do not have long until 1940, when all the signs point to a new storm, in which our nation will not emerge victorious if it is not prepared and organized.'[80]

Evoking a glorious past, as Mihai Eminescu had done, was certainly important in strengthening the feeling of unity and sacrifice, but it was not sufficient. There was at the same time a need for a protection against the future based on fostering a conscious sense of belonging to a single ethnic community, the Romanian community. Again, it was Nicolae Roșu who put it plainly and directly: 'A race does not live and does not regenerate itself through theories and optimism.' There was a need for intervention using eugenic methods to ensure 'the biological regeneration of the race'.[81] This was the belief of the philanthropist Alexandrina Gh. Cantacuzino, for whom the race was 'the guardian of the nation' and racism 'a necessity in the internal life of a state'.[82]

77 Quoted in Theodor Vlădescu, *Europa stat totalitar* (Bucharest: Dacia Traiană, 1941), 71.

78 S. Cristofovici, 'Generaţia biopolitică', *Românul* 2, nos. 33–35 (1933): 2.

79 Nichifor Crainic, 'George Coșbuc, Poetul rasei noastre', *Gândirea* 14, no. 5 (1935): 258.

80 Iuliu Haţieganu, *Educaţia fizică în universitate* (Bucharest: Tipografia 'Ion C. Văcărescu', 1934), 9.

81 Nicolae Roșu, 'Regenerarea rasei', *Cuvântul* 4, no. 1242 (1931): 1.

82 Alexandrina Gh. Cantacuzino, 'Ideea de rasă în viaţa internă şi în viaţa internaţională', *România Eroică* 5, nos. 9–10 (1942): 205.

This nationalist ideal was not, however, based on the idea of creating a pure Romanian 'race' and did not necessarily mean ethnic cleansing. Nicolae Iorga emphasized this in the lecture with which he opened the summer courses of the People's University in Văleni de Munte on 15 July 1935. On this occasion, Iorga spoke against German racism and the Nazi pretentions to racial superiority.[83] However the distinction that he made between Romanians and non-Romanians (i.e., minorities) was clear. Writing in *Românul* (*The Romanian*), the newspaper of National-Liberal youth, after listening to Iorga's lecture, Mihai Parpală noted: 'Our more or less pure, more or less doubtful, race constitutes the Romanian nation for whose development were are duty-bound to strive with all our might, clearing its path of the weeds that threaten to smother it.'[84] Here again is the eugenic metaphor of the garden (the Romanian nation) that must be protected from weeds (the ethnic minorities). Iorga, like Popovici and like Eminescu before them, advocated an ethno-cultural nationalism specific to the Romanians.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Rădulescu-Motru, Cuza, Popovici, and many others adopted a discourse on race that defined the Romanian nation as a natural, biological entity, with its own character, and a specific history, geography, and topography. Throughout history the Romanians had come into contact with numerous ethnic groups, some considered to be assimilable, others not, but they had maintained their own ethnic characteristics. The famous naturalist Grigore Antipa spoke admiringly of 'our people's power of assimilation', which, for him, provided 'on the one hand, a clear proof of the health and vitality of our organism and the superiority of our race, and, on the other, a guarantee of our future'. At the same time, Antipa continued, it must be acknowledged that 'some fragments of peoples', such as the Jews, could not be assimilated. Using the same antisemitic terminology as the authors already mentioned, he suggested that the Jews were 'for us, as for the other European peoples, a foreign body, unassimilable, and which, if introduced into our organism, could result only in serious physiological disorders, without, however, any real assimilation'.[85]

As I have already noted, the medical references are typical of this antisemitic interpretation, which reflects a broader tendency in the Romanian political culture of the early twentieth century to use the metaphor of the

83 'Rassismul n–are ce căuta la noi! Spune d. prof. Iorga', *Dimineața* 31, no. 10260 (1935): 5.

84 Mihai Parpală, 'Rassa și națiune', *Românul* 3, no. 121 (1935): 1.

85 Grigore Antipa, *Problemele evoluției poporului român* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1919), 111–112.

body of the nation and its protection. Of course, this was just one intellectual tradition. Chamberlain's work was only one – albeit a very important one – among the numerous intellectual sources that the Romanian nationalists discussed in this chapter used to justify their theories about race and national specificity.

In *Dialectica naționalismului* (*The Dialectics of Nationalism*), published in 1936, Nicolae Roșu maintained that the national revolution which had begun with Mihai Eminescu's conservative critique of modernity in the second half of the nineteenth century had continued with the 'political dream' of the Great War generation and had finally found its political expression in the creation of Greater Romania in 1918. The national rebirth advocated by Popovici during the 1910s would ultimately be achieved in various forms through the biopolitical programmes of ethnic purification that gained currency in the 1930s and 1940s. As will be discussed in the chapters that follow, national revolution required that all political and intellectual forces should work 'for the people' and serve the same idea: 'Romania for the Romanians'.[86]

86 Nicolae Roșu, *Dialectica naționalismului* (Bucharest: 'Cultura Națională', 1936).

3. The Degeneration of the Race

Abstract: This chapter discusses the obsession with racial degeneration and how it shaped the development of a medical discourse about the health of the Romanian nation in general and the Romanian peasant in particular. It shows how prominent physicians discussed the alleged degeneration of the race while, at the same time, embracing ideas of racial hygiene and eugenics. Their scientific expertise served the biopolitical aims of the emerging Romanian nation-state.

Keywords: medical discourse, sanitation, Romanian peasantry, public health, racial hygiene

Starting in the eighteenth century, European culture experienced a major transformation as a result of the progress of the natural sciences and the encyclopaedic effort of such writers as Georges-Louis de Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, Georges Cuvier, and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach to explain human diversity. There was a veritable revolution in the understanding of nature and of human origins, giving a new impulse to the idea of race, to which was increasingly attributed a biological significance based on the description of a group of people 'similar' with regard to their physical appearance. The principal consequence of the integration of the idea of race in modern scientific discourse was that the idea of human difference, modelled on European colonial representations of the 'Other', namely the non-European, and often non-white person, was reinterpreted as applying also to racial difference between ethnic groups and religious communities who had lived for centuries on the European continent. Moreover, this supposed racial difference was presented as a scientific fact. In Europe, Jews and Roma were often described as belonging to inferior races, partly due to the creation of a hierarchy of races by anthropologists and eugenicists, but

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also as a consequence of the racial antisemitism that developed particularly after 1870.

Some anthropologists of the late nineteenth century classified the Jews as being a 'race', a distinct human group, identifiable by their physical appearance, having a characteristic spirituality and their own history. In a famous lecture given in 1883, entitled 'Judaism as race and as religion', the French orientalist Ernest Renan had declared that 'there is not one Jewish type, but there are Jewish types'.[1] In the same year, the British scientist Francis Galton, generally considered the founder of modern eugenics, began photographing Jewish schoolchildren in the East End of London in order to demonstrate the contrary. Obsessed with human 'types', Galton carried out numerous anthropometric measurements in order to identify the typical criminal and mentally ill individuals who, were wandering the streets of the great metropoles unimpeded, spreading hereditary diseases and thus contributing to the decline of the race. Using anthropological and photographic methods, Galton suggested that the Jews had specific racial features, and that these were definitive of a specific anthropological type.[2]

Determining the physical features of the Jewish 'race' had become a legitimate scientific concern. As the German sociologist, Arthur Ruppin, remarked:

> Almost all enquiries into the social, intellectual, and physical differences between Jews and Christians address the question of whether these differences have their root in the particular racial make-up or in the unique economic and political conditions of the Jews over the past two-thousand years.[3]

The response of the American anthropologist Maurice Fishberg was the following: it was impossible in modern times to speak of a unitary 'race' of Jews. 'We have seen', he noted:

> [t]hat today the bulk of the Jews who have lived for centuries in Africa present predominantly an African physical type; those in Asia are mostly of Asiatic type, and the European Jews are mostly of the anthropological

1 Ernest Renan, 'Le Judaïsme comme race et comme religion', *Revue des Études Juives* 6, no. 11 (1883): 145.

2 Francis Galton, 'Illustrations of Composite Portraiture: The Jewish Type', *The Photographic News* 29, no. 1389 (1885): 243–245.

3 Quoted in Mitchell B. Hart, *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 169.

> types met with among the European races. The Jew in Russia has less kinship in blood with his co-religionist in the interior of Morocco than with the Slavs among whom he lives; the thirty per cent of Jewish blondes are nearer in blood relationship to the North European Teutons, or the East European blondes, than to their co-religionists in Yemen, Arabia; the brachycephalic Jews in the Caucasus are further removed racially from the dolichocephalic Jews on the oasis M'zab than are the Christian Lithuanians from the Germans in Europe.[4]

Fishberg rejected the idea of 'Jewish' racial specificity, but many other writers had no such reservations. The obsession with the race of 'the Jews' and its corollary, the theme of degeneration, found their way into European antisemitic discourse in this same period.

In this chapter, I propose to discuss the variations on this theme in Romania, especially in the interwar period. Antisemitism made use of the explanations about the variability and heredity of the morphological characters of the various human races offered by anthropologists in order to justify policies of segregation and discrimination. These explanations gradually began to circulate in the public space too and were reproduced in open lectures and popularizing articles. Moreover, these explanations and arguments were not always based on scientific evidence but made use of figures of style and metaphors. 'The degeneration of the race' was one such metaphor, and one that was extensively used in anthropological and medical texts as well as in political pamphlets and speeches.

The eugenicists, like other scientists preoccupied with the 'decline of the white race', seemed convinced that mixing with populations of inferior 'origin' was leading to the ethnic degeneration of the white Europeans, especially the so-called Nordic peoples. The Jews began to be considered one of these populations, described as a 'racial' threat to the majority. For example, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the leader of the Romanian Legionary Movement in the interwar period, considered that the Jews constituted 'the greatest national threat' because they had 'deformed' and 'disfigured our Daco-Roman racial structure'.[5]

Already by the end of the nineteenth century, the theme of the degeneration of the race was adapted to the local Romanian context, having been embraced enthusiastically not only by poets like Mihai Eminescu, philosophers like Vasile Conta, historians like A. D. Xenopol, and politicians

4 Maurice Fishberg, *The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 515–516.

5 Corneliu Z. Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, vol. 1 (Sibiu: Totul Pentru Ţară, 1936), 306.

like Grigore G. Păucescu,[6] but also by doctors like Vasile I. Agappi,[7] the psychiatrist Alexandru A. Sutzu,[8] the dermatologist Mihail Petrini-Galați,[9] and the hygienist Iacob Felix.[10] These writers popularized the theme of the 'degeneration of the race', linking it directly to the debate about the future of the Romanian state and nation.

Modern medicine had become a source of inspiration for social policies and public health programmes – and not only in Romania. The efforts of doctors, together with those of the young Romanian state, to improve the sanitary conditions and standards of hygiene of the rural population were often described as a noble struggle for the biological renewal of the Romanian people. It was the physician, noted Petrini-Galați, who by the nature of his work, knew better than anyone 'the progressive decline of the human race'.[11] However, without understanding the causes of its degeneration, it was impossible to begin the process, laborious but essential, of biological and spiritual regeneration. As the bacteriologist Victor Babeș said in 1901:

> We cannot deny that the Romanian population shows undoubted signs of degeneration. The degeneration of the upper levels having the same origin as that of our Roman ancestors and likewise manifesting itself especially through lack of patriotism and a distressing egotism, to which may be added that modern form of degeneration consisting of a scepticism, I would say a cynicism regarding notions holy, humanitarian, and national. In short, we suffer from the sins of peoples who have raised themselves too rapidly and do not know the hard struggle for existence.[12]

In order to survive, peoples, like the individuals of whom they are made up, must, on the one hand, be protected from illness and infection, from alcoholism and venereal disease, but, on the other hand, they must be helped

6 Grigore G. Păucescu, *Îmbunătăţirea stării ţăranilor: a II–a conferinţă la Ateneu* (Bucharest: Tip. Dor. P. Cucu, 1888).

7 Vasile I. Agappi, *Cercetări demografice asupra populaţiunii României şi în special a districtului şi oraşiului Jassi*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Typografia Laboratorilor Români, 1876).

8 S. [Alexandru Sutzu], 'Evoluţiunea şi hereditatea', *Gazeta medico–chirurgicală a spitalelor* 5, no. 12 (1874): 182–187.

9 Dr. Petrini (De Galatz), *Filosofia medicală. Despre ameliorațiunea rasei umane* (Bucharest: D. A. Laurian, 1876).

10 Iacob Felix, *Istoria igienei în România în secolul al XIX–lea şi starea ei la începutul secolului al XX–lea*, 2 vols (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice 'Carol Göbl', 1901 and 1902).

11 Dr. Petrini, *Filosofia medicală*, 19.

12 Victor Babeş, *Regenerarea poporului român* (Bucharest: Socec, 1901), 4.

to have numerous and healthy children. Babeș was not the only physician who thought this way. The military physician, Ioan Dănescu, was already noting in 1886:

> On the one hand, the feeble constitution with incomplete development of the body, on the other, hereditary ailments, bad living conditions, and irrational work, these are the causes that are producing the degeneration of our race, and compromising in the most serious manner the physiological solidity of future generations.[13]

And Iacob Felix completed this description in 1902, underlining the fact that dispersed among the Romanian population there were:

> numerous degenerate individuals, who can transmit their physical defects to their children, who can contribute to the gradual multiplication of the number of degenerate individuals, if nature does not bring the usual cure, the extinction of the degenerate families after one or more generations.[14]

In Felix's case, it should be noted that the ideas of racial degeneration and regeneration are combined with those of social hygiene and public health, and his comments regarding German eugenicists such as Ernst Haeckel and Alfred Ploetz are generally critical.

At the same time, the metaphor of racial degeneration was particularly interwoven with antisemitism and, in general, with the biomedicalization of interethnic relations between Romanians and non-Romanians. To better understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to study not only political speeches, but also the influence of antisemitism on medical theories, together with the scientific theories of race and their presence in the debates about the alleged degeneration of the Romanian people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These theories appear as distinctive modes of understanding the concept of national specificity, greatly helped by a transfer of knowledge between such different fields of study as literature, history, medicine, anthropology, sociology, and philosophy, the boundaries of which became increasingly permeable during this period.

13 Ioan Dănescu, *Încercări de demografie şi geografie medicală* (Bucharest: Tip. Curții Regale, 1886), iii.

14 Iacob Felix, *Istoria igienei în România în secolul al XIX–lea şi starea ei la începutul secolului al XX–lea*, part 2 (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice 'Carol Göbl', 1902), 139.

The Concept of Degeneration

Anthropometric and psychometric measurements were considered basic methods for the study of race. Countless tables were drawn up to determine the constitutive morphological variants in people, from hair and eye colour to height and chest circumference. To these, at the beginning of the twentieth century, were added serological testing, or blood-group analysis, and eugenics, which offered new interpretations centred on the study of human heredity. These new sciences, especially eugenics, provided a large part of the language and content of the new scientific discourse about racially determined morphological differences between individuals and the pretentions of some of them to intellectual superiority.

The racial representations of ethnic groups and nations likewise became essential elements in the construction of antisemitic narratives. The form of the head and of the nose, the colour of the eyes, the hair, and the skin helped researchers to define and to classify individuals and the communities to which they belonged. Just like language and history, physical traits were seen as constitutive elements of a certain human group. Typological thinking, which led to the persistence search for human 'types' and 'sub-types', gradually became the focus of racial anthropology and eugenics. Social condition and ethnic origin were thus frequently used as explanations for the moral behaviour and intellectual performance of an individual. Intelligence alone could no longer be taken as the only criterion for assessing abilities and intellectual achievements or, conversely, mental deficiency; the race to which the individual belonged was also considered.

The idea of racial degeneration became an obsession after 1850, especially in Europe. Among the leading writers who reflected on this problem, I would briefly mention only four. The first is the French diplomat and writer Arthur de Gobineau. His book, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (*An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*), was published in four volumes between 1853 and 1855, and had an enormous influence on the development of post-Enlightenment racist thinking. In it, Gobineau tried to elaborate a genealogy of the decline of civilizations, especially that of the so-called Aryan civilization.[15] 'Degeneration' (*dégénération*) is one of the most important arguments in his racial philosophy, which is based on the simple idea that the mixing of 'superior races' with 'inferior races' always

15 See especially the chapter 'De ce qu'on doit entendre par le mot dégénération; du mélange des principes ethniques, et comment les sociétés se forment et se défont', in Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1884), 22–34.

leads to the ruin and then the disappearance of the former. Contemplating the classical periods of European history and bearing in mind the more recent political decline of the French aristocracy after the Revolution of 1789, Gobineau foretold the inevitable end of his contemporary world, caused by continuous racial mixing and the degeneration of the great French aristocratic families. As it seemed to him that the mixing of races was impossible to stop, Christian European civilization would soon come to an end, because of generalized biological weakening and cultural mediocrity. Illustrative in this respect is his description of what he terms 'hybrids', i.e., those born of ethnically mixed marriages. They are 'beautiful without being strong, strong without being intelligent, intelligent with much ugliness and debility'.[16]

Gobineau's fatalistic vision regarding the future of European civilization was influenced by a profound contempt for the racial mixing created by the social uniformization and the egalitarianism proposed by the French First Republic after 1792. The idea of the decline of the aristocracy, considered not merely as a social class but even as belonging to a race apart, different from that from which the so-called 'lower' social classes originated, may be found in the works of numerous French writers of the eighteenth century, such as Count Henri de Boulainvilliers.[17] In this respect, Gobineau was not an original thinker, but his insistence on linking the destiny of nations and of peoples to the concept of degeneration is striking.

In 1857, just two years after the appearance of the last volume of Gobineau's study, the French psychiatrist Bénédict Augustin Morel published his own treatise on degeneration and its causes. Morel used the term in a medical sense: degeneration was a form of 'pathological deviation' of the human organism from its original form. Degeneration was caused not so much by hereditary factors as by external factors such as excessive consumption of alcohol or tobacco, although some infectious or contagious illnesses mentioned by Morel, such as syphilis, could be transmitted from one generation to the next.[18] Morel linked degeneration directly to the functions of the human body, especially reproduction. In short, for him, degeneration was an illness, in most cases untreatable, which continued to spread in all social classes because of the excessive urbanization and

16 Gobineau, *Selected Political Writings*, ed. Michael D. Biddiss (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 139.

17 Hannah Arendt, 'Race-Thinking before Racism', *The Review of Politics* 6, no. 1 (1944): 36–73.

18 Bénédict A. Morel, *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives* (Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1857).

industrialization brought by modern times. In the great European cities, the two clinical forms of degeneration, atavism, and premature aging, were widespread.

Another two writers followed the same direction of Gobineau's aristocratic lamentation and Morel's pathologization of hereditary illnesses, speaking in their turn of the danger that degeneration posed for race, society, and, by extension, the whole of modern European civilization. One of them was the Italian psychiatrist Cesare Lombroso, the founder of criminal anthropology. In his celebrated writings, including *Criminal Man* (*L'Uomo delinquente*) and *Criminal Woman* (*La Donna delinquente*), published in 1876 and 1893 respectively, Lombroso developed a complex theory of the 'type' of the born criminal. Not only were races classified by types and subtypes, but individuals in their turn belonged to a certain 'type': some were 'normal', while others were 'abnormal' or 'subnormal', irremediably marked by a physical stigma and a dysfunctional personality that led to murder, prostitution, etc. The role of criminal anthropology was precisely to identify and to describe these individuals.

According to Lombroso, atavism and physical degeneration were interdependent and frequently intersected. Thus, criminals could be identified physically, as they bore visible signs of degeneration, namely an enormous jaw, prominent cheekbones, and protruding ears, features 'observed in criminals, savages, and monkeys'.[19] Perhaps not surprisingly, Lombroso considered that criminals were irremediably lost to society. In their case, he maintained, capital punishment was part of a process of 'premeditated selection' that complemented natural selection by eliminating the socially 'inadequate'.[20] The association of innate criminality and degeneration was frequently criticized,[21] but this did not prevent some racists from using Lombroso's theories in their antisemitic propaganda.

Finally, another supporter of the concept of degeneration was the Hungarian-born Jewish journalist Max Nordau. The book that made him famous, *Degeneration*, published in two volumes in 1892 and 1893, was

19 Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man according to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso*, briefly summarized and edited by Gina Lombroso Ferrero (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), xv.

20 Lombroso, *Criminal Man*, xviii.

21 See, for example, E. Movilian, *Contribuțiune la studiul antropologiei criminale. Criminalitatea la femei* (Bucharest: Stabiliment Grafic Țăranu, 1904); Sandu Lieblich and Gustav Fastlich, 'Biotypologie des criminels', and Nicolae Minovici and Ioan Stănescu, 'Conceptions nouvelles sur l'étiologie du crime', both in *Volume jubilaire en l'honneur du Professeur Dr. C. I. Parhon* (Iași: Société Roumaine de Neurologie, Psychiatrie, Psychologie et Endocrinologie, 1934), 286–301 and 347–350, respectively.

dedicated to Lombroso.[22] The Romanian literary critic Garabet Ibrăileanu commented on its as follows:

> *Degeneration* is a work of science, inasmuch as it seeks to discover the causes of a literary phenomenon; it is a work of literary criticism, inasmuch as it appreciates the writings that serve as 'symptoms' for the 'diagnosis' made by the 'man of science'; it is a polemical work, inasmuch as it attacks one or another, or more precisely, all; but above all, it is a pamphlet, because this author takes the attitude of an advocate in the face of 'adversaries'.[23]

From the philosophy of history (Gobineau) to medicine (Morel) and anthropology (Lombroso), the concept of degeneration entered literary and cultural vocabulary through Nordau. His intention was to explain the so-called avant-garde art and literature of the *fin-de-siècle* via the concept of degeneration. Not only the European race but also its art was 'degenerate' ('/ *entartete Kunst*). 'The degenerates', said Nordau, 'are not only the criminals, the prostitutes, the anarchists, and the insane; they are also the writers and the artists'.[24] Nordau included among these the English Pre-Raphaelite painters – who had turned their back on idealism and classicism –, Auguste Rodin, and Toulouse Lautrec, but also writers such as Leo Tolstoy, Henrik Ibsen, and Émile Zola, and philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche. The modern world was 'tired', Nordau believed, affected by degeneration and hysteria. When educated French people and especially those of the upper classes speak of *fin-de-siècle*, he quipped, they should consider their own degeneration and say *fin-de-race*[25] instead.

Starting from Morel's definition of degeneration, and influenced by Lombroso's theories, Nordau offered a critical evaluation of the so-called existential themes of his time. In his criticism, which is infused with social Darwinist metaphors, he made a direct connection between the mental health problems of the individual and the degeneration of society. Europe was not only going through a spiritual crisis, but also through a physical one. Salvation, Nordau believed, could only come from a biological regeneration,

22 Max Nordau, *Entartung* (Berlin: Carl Duncker, 1892 and 1893). The book was translated into Romanian in 1894. For this study, I consulted the edition published in 1993 by University of Nebraska Press, a reprint of the first English edition, originally published in 1895, with an introduction by George L. Mosse.

23 Garabet Ibrăileanu, *Scriitori români și străini* (Iași: Cartea Românească, 1926), 257.

24 Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), v.

25 Nordau, *Degeneration*, 2.

from the creation of a 'new man' on the basis of the possibilities offered by science. The prognosis offered was the following:

> The hysteria of our days will not last. People will recover from their present fatigue. The feeble, the degenerate, will perish; the strong will adapt themselves to the acquisitions of civilization, or will subordinate them to their own organic capacity. The aberrations of art have no future. They will disappear when civilized humanity shall have triumphed over its exhausted condition.[26]

Nordau was also a convinced Zionist, especially after 1895, and became a close collaborator of Theodor Herzl. However, he did not abandon the concept of degeneration when he talked about the Jews, especially about those in Eastern Europe, whom he considered to be humiliated and ghettoized, backward and physically weak. What was needed, he said in his opening speech at the second Zionist congress, held in Basel in August 1898, was a new type of Jew. The 'Muscular Jewishness' (*Muskeljudenthum*) of the ancient Hebrew past had to be recreated. The national regeneration of modern Jewry could not take place without moral and physical rebirth; in short, it needed a racial and eugenic programme.

Gobineau, Morel, Lombroso, and Nordau contributed to the creation of a vocabulary of stigmatization and rejection used in the rhetoric of many racists. In Romania, such antisemites as A. C. Cuza and Nicolae C. Paulescu used many of these arguments in order to describe the Jews as a scourge on the Romanian nation. Both were convinced that the Jews were a degenerate and inferior race and that they wished to destroy the 'Romanian race'.[27] It should come as no surprise that Cuza and Paulescu were among the 'spiritual founders' of the extreme right movement of the interwar years,

The fact that Paulescu was also a renowned physiologist – the author of a popular *Tratat de fiziologie* (*Treatise on Physiology*), published in three volumes in 1919 and 1920 – does not prevent his being catalogued as an antisemite and racist. Educated in Paris, Paulescu became a professor in the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest in 1900. Like other racists with a medical training, he was preoccupied by the problem of degeneration. In 1928, he published a brochure on the subject, a synthesis of his racist and antisemitic visions.[28] It

26 Nordau, *Degeneration*, 550.

27 See Nicolae C. Paulescu, *Fiziologie filozofică. Spitalul, Coranul, Talmudul, Cahalul, Franc–Masoneria* (Bucharest: n.p., 1913).

28 Nicolae C. Paulescu, *Degenerarea rasei jidăneşti* (Bucharest: Tipografia Rădulescu, 1928), 11.

is one of the fundamental texts of Romanian racist thinking, and the fact that the swastika appears on its cover leaves no doubt as to the author's intentions.

Degeneration for Paulescu was not a biological but rather a spiritual and moral problem. 'Degenerates', he maintained, 'are incapable of understanding "the Word of God" – and, consequently, their vices are *incurable*'.[29] The Jews, he considered, suffered because of both a physical decline of their body and a spiritual degeneration; they embodied the malefic figure *par excellence*. Paulescu's antisemitic language was interwoven not only with religious metaphors, but also with medical and anthropological observations about the alleged hereditary predisposition of the Jews to mental illness, robbery, rape, and murder. Their mental health was feeble, Paulescu noted, and he considered this to be the most important cause of their degeneration. The 'degeneration' of the Jews, he maintained, was due to 'the hereditary transmission of malformations of the brain'.[30] For Paulescu, medicine and anthropology were the sciences that offered the necessary arguments to demonstrate the degeneration of the Jewish race, even if, as even he confessed, no craniological studies had been made to this end.

The collections in European museums did not contain sufficient examples of Jewish skulls, but Paulescu made use of the material gathered by the respected anatomist and anthropologist Francisc Rainer of the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest. Rainer had made an evaluation of the weight of the brains of twenty-three poor Jewish men and women, 'who died in hospitals or were brought to the dissection rooms' of his laboratory. He had then established that fifteen of them were below the normal average, which the French anthropologists Paul Broca and Paul Topinard had established to be around 1,421 grams in men and about 1,250 in women.[31] On the basis of these statistics, Paulescu suggested that not only Jews on '*the highest social level* – but also those belonging to *the lower class* are *degenerate*'.[32] This idea was taken up and further elaborated by the nationalist press, becoming a foundation stone of Romanian antisemitism and racism throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

Even if the medical arguments presented by Paulescu regarding the causes of the physical and mental degeneration of the Jewish population were erroneous, his racist and antisemitic message did not remain

29 Paulescu, *Degenerarea rasei jidăneşti*, 10 (emphasis in original).

30 Paulescu, *Degenerarea rasei jidăneşti*, 14 (emphasis in original).

31 Paul Topinard, *Anthropology*, trans. Robert T. B. Bartely (London: Chapman and Hall, 1878), 122

32 Paulescu, *Degenerarea rasei jidăneşti*, 21 (emphasis in original).

without an echo. A more careful look at the relation between medicine and antisemitism in interwar Romania will help us to bring to light the way in which the Jewish presence in society was racialized for the express purpose of dehumanizing Jews and turning them into elements that were 'racially foreign' and dangerous from a social point of view. If we want to understand what Hannah Arendt meant when she stated that: 'It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Romania was the most anti-Semitic country in pre-war Europe,'[33] then there is a need for a much more critical historical analysis of subjects that until recently were considered marginal.

Racial Hygiene and Rural Biology

Greater Romania was the scene of intense debates regarding the form of the new national state, considered to be an expression of the Romanian majority ethnic community. In reality, however, this vision conflicted with the presence of significant ethnic and religious minorities, such as the Hungarians, the Germans, and the Jews. These last were already the subject of public and political debates regarding their assimilation into Romanian society, the granting to them of civil and legal rights, and the process of their assimilation through naturalization as citizens.[34]

Far from being resolved after 1918, the tense relations between the Romanian majority and the ethnic minorities became aggravated. The poet and politician Octavian Goga declared it openly in a speech in the senate on 6 April 1927. For Goga, the ethnic minorities were 'parasitic elements in the first place, because they have no connection to the soil, they have no connection to this heritage, they have no connection of language, they have no connection of tradition, of race. They are, from an economic point of view, no more than an element of consumption and, in places, an element of despoliation.'[35]

The oppressed were the Romanian peasants, perceived as being 'pure' and uncontaminated by the pathologies of modernity, the effects of industrialization and urbanization. While poets like Goga saw in the peasant and in the village two symbols of uncontaminated Romanian ethnicity, some

33 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 190 [original ed. 1963].

34 Nicolae Iorga, *Problema evreiască la Cameră: o interpelare. Cu o introducere de A. C. Cuza şi note despre vechimea evreilor în ţară* (Vălenii de Munte: Tip. Neamul Românesc, 1910).

35 Octavian Goga, 'Politica etnică a României', *Ţara Noastră* 8, no. 12 (1927): 290.

physicians were of a different opinion. The founder of the Romanian school of paediatrics, Mihail Manicatide, without hesitation condemned those who described the peasant as 'a savage, a layabout, a drunkard, a brigand, or full of illness and filth, or a wretch who ought to be written about, spoken about with or without purpose; in any case, an inferior being whom we are doing a great favour when we deign to come down to his level'.[36] Unfortunately, the reality was bleak, and the social hygienists and public health reformers complained with good reason that the biological condition of the people was very precarious, affected by inadequate hygiene, undernourishment, social ailments (such as alcoholism), sexually transmitted diseases (especially syphilis), and infant mortality. The fact that very few physicians were willing to go to the villages and hamlets of Romania to change the deplorable conditions of the peasants was another decisive factor contributing to the precarious state of their health.[37]

In the interwar period, the debate about the health of the Romanian people was based not only on medical initiatives on the part of state institutions, but also on eugenic and biopolitical ideas about the protection of the majority ethnic population. As Sabin Manuilă, the future director of the National Institute of Statistics in Bucharest, showed in a detailed study of demographic strategies in the towns of Transylvania published in 1929, the Romanian state urgently needed a new population policy, 'from the eugenic point of view as well as from the national point of view'.[38] This was the new eugenic vision of the nation's health, which was attached to Greater Romania's project of territorial centralization and internal consolidation.[39] Some decades earlier, in 1883, Francis Galton had defined eugenics as: 'the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally'.[40] He believed that eugenics could identify and correct the unwanted elements in a population through social and medical control, such as sterilization, while at the same time encouraging the reproduction of individuals considered

36 Mihail Manicatide, 'Pentru ce medicul rural nu–şi poate face datoria', *Viaţa Românească* 1, no. 2 (1906): 315.

37 For example, in the years 1921–1922 in Tulcea County, there were only two doctors for a population of 173,599. See Dumitru Şandru, *Populaţia rurală a României între cele două războaie mondiale* (Iași: Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1980), 188.

38 Sabin Manuilă, 'Evoluţia demografică a oraşelor şi minorităţile etnice din Transilvania', *Arhiva pentru Știința și Reforma Socială* 8, nos. 1–3 (1929): 203.

39 Sabin Manuilă, 'The Present Situation and the Future Ethnical Evolution of the Cities in the New Provinces of Rumania', in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale per gli Studi sulla Popolazione*, ed. Corrado Gini (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1934), 103-109.

40 Francis Galton, *Memories of My Life* (London: Methuen, 1908), 321.

superior.[41] The founder of Romania's school of hygiene and public health, Iacob Felix proposed a similar programme in 1902, using the term 'the hygiene of the race'. This, he noted:

> Should be both negative and positive; negative, in order to remove or at least to limit those illnesses of both sexes that give rise to the sterility of present and future generations and cause the degeneration of their progeniture; positive, because it will increase the vital force of the descendants by strengthening the resistance of the present generations to illnesses, by perfecting their constitution.[42]

Eugenics was, he considered, the most effective new scientific method for preventing the degeneration of the race. In his reception speech delivered at the Romanian Academy in 1906, Gheorghe Marinescu, the founder of the Romanian school of neurology, described the method of 'improving the human race and the biology of races' as one of the research directions of modern medicine. Marinescu was familiar with the progress made by the movement for the protection of the race in Germany, and spoke with admiration about the eugenic studies of racial hygienists such as Alfred Ploetz, which he described as both 'humanitarian and beautiful'. It was true, Marinescu argued, that eugenics was a new science, still in its early days, but it promised to offer 'the optimal conditions for the maintenance and development of the different races and consequently of humanity'.[43]

Marinescu's conviction, which would lead, thirty years later, to the establishment of the Romanian Society of Eugenics and the Study of Heredity, was shared by other physicians. In his doctoral thesis, defended in 1925 at the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest, Herman Fischgold – who would leave Romania for France in 1929, later becoming one of world's leading specialists in electroencephalography (EEG) – directly linked eugenics to racial degeneration.[44] So did Ludwig Erich in his doctoral thesis on the problem of 'dysgenics', defended in 1937 at the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj.[45]

41 See also Salvator P. Cupcea, 'Ce este Eugenia?', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 12, nos. 5–8 (1941): 74–75.

42 Felix, *Istoria igienei în România în secolul al XIX–lea*, part 2, 137.

43 Gheorghe Marinescu, 'Progresele şi tendinţele medicinei moderne', in *Academia Română. Discursuri de Recepţiune* (Bucharest: Inst. de Arte Grafice 'Carol Göbl', 1906), 33.

44 Herman Fischgold, *Degenerare și eugenică cu o încercare de aplicare în România* (Bucharest: Tipografia Brănişteanu, 1925).

45 Ludwig Erich, *Problema disgenicilor* (*referinţe speciale asupra situaţiei disgenicilor de la noi*) (Cluj: Tipografia 'Record', 1937).

Other physicians also recommended eugenics as the best strategy to ensure the biological future of the Romanian nation. The Romanian state, they argued, must become modern not only in terms of infrastructure and political institutions, but also regarding sex education, public health, and social hygiene. For example, in a study dedicated to the application of modern gynaecology at the Maternity Institute in Bucharest, published in 1914, Constantin Andronescu defined eugenics as 'the modern science which has as its aim the choice of parents and how to look after them to be healthy, in order to have well developed, well born children'. He lamented the fact that 'the idiots, the goitrous, the degenerates, and the sick [were permitted] to reproduce'.[46] This, he considered, must end. Also necessary was the introduction of eugenic education for future mothers.

Schools, in their turn, must educate the younger generations in the spirit of eugenic responsibility towards their own nation. In 1924, the professor of gynaecology at the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj, Dominic Stanca, maintained that eugenic education should begin in high school, and that the state, the community, and the family should work together to create the necessary conditions for Romanian youth to flourish both physically and mentally.[47] The future anthropologist Iordache Făcăoaru wrote the following, from his position as a high school teacher in Râmnicu Vâlcea:

> [T]he incorporation of eugenics in [the teaching of] general biology would contribute massively to the citizen education of our youth. Only then would the young man realize the great importance of marriage both for him and for the nation. He would be taught in a timely manner about the principal responsibility of any state: the quantitative and qualitative growth of the population. He would understand the danger threatening us: the degeneration of the nation. He would thus understand his first duty as a citizen.[48]

All these efforts were perceived as necessary to preserve the biological capital of the Romanian nation. Language, religion, and culture were important in defining membership of the ethnic community, but the racial heritage of

46 Constantin Andronescu, *Institutul Maternitatea. Şcoala de moaşe urbane şi rurale din Bucureşti* (*Studiu critic*) (Bucharest: Wilhelm Brozer, 1914), 56.

47 Dominic Stanca, *O anchetă sanitară la un liceu* (Cluj: Editura Revistei 'Societatea de Mâine', 1924). See also Simion Mehedinţi, *Şcoala română şi capitalul biologic al poporului român* (Cluj: Institutul de Igienă şi Igienă Socială din Cluj, 1927).

48 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Concepția despre viață și învățământul biologic', *Cuvântul* 3, no. 597 (1926), 1–2.

the Romanian people, the eugenicists considered, should not be neglected. 'I am a Romanian', declared Iuliu Moldovan,

> because I have the conviction that in my veins there flows a blood different from that of other peoples, and even, through grandparents and great-grandparents, a drop of the blood of those who contributed to the forging, to the moulding of my nation. This bond of blood, this biological bond of race, makes us Romanian.[49]

Anthropological research, Moldovan considered, had established that each people had a 'biological index of race', a specific 'hereditary patrimony' that must be cherished and transmitted to future generations. For him, the identification of the racial characteristics of the nation was a precondition for the maintenance of the ethnic specificity of the Romanian majority.

It was in this context that the theory of the hygienist Gheorghe Banu [figure 2] regarding social biology and its relation to racial hygiene also took shape. In the mid-1920s, Banu worked as an expert for the Ministry of Health and was associate professor at the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest, where he taught courses on puericulture, social hygiene and the medical care of children.[50] In April 1927, he published a short article in the first issue of the short-lived journal *Sănătate Publică* (*Public Health*), in which he sketched the principal directions of social biology. This was a field that combined biology with sociology, its principal aim being to offer a theory of population health through the methods of social selection.[51]

Banu would develop these arguments in a fuller article, published in 1927 in *Arhiva pentru Ştiinţa şi Reforma Socială* (*Archive for Science and Social Reform*), edited by the Romanian Social Institute. Banu considered that the time had come for social hygienists to involve themselves actively in the social and national transformation of the country. He saw in social biology a form of militant medicine, an efficient strategy for dealing with the particularities of rural communities in Romania and the sanitary problems specific to them. These were, beyond doubt, 'problems of great national interest', but in order to understand them and to solve them in a satisfactory manner, it was necessary first to explain social biology. According to Banu, this was 'the science of all the factors that condition the creation, the selection, and the defence of the health' of an individual and of a community. In

49 Iuliu Moldovan, *Igiena naţiunei: Eugenia* (Cluj: Institutul de Igienă şi Igienă Socială, 1925), 9.
50 Gheorghe Banu, *L'hygiène sociale de l'enfance* (Paris: Masson, 1930), 1-39
51 Gheorghe Banu, 'Biologie socială', *Sănătate Publică* 1, no. 1 (1927): 3.

contrast to social hygiene, 'which deals only with the protection of the *subject's* health, social biology considers the individual not only as an independent factor and a mere component of the human order, *but as a creator and generator of life and as an influenceable factor susceptible to biological selection and perfection*'.[52] What counted was, in the first place, the selection, and thereafter, the perfection of the individual, the two being in a close relationship.



Fig. 2. Gh. Banu (Courtesy of Biblioteca Documentară de Istoria Medicinii, Institutul de Sănătate Publică, Bucharest)

At the level of the rural world, what Banu termed rural biology applied, that is to say the study of those biological, social, and pathological factors that conditioned the development of the life of the Romanian peasant. Among the environmental factors, Banu listed 'the air, the winds, the hygrometric conditions, the altitude', while the social factors included 'dwelling place, wealth, food, clothing, conditions of work and rest'; among the medical problems he identified 'hereditary illnesses, epidemics or social diseases'.[53] There was, as may be observed, a preoccupation with the manner in which the ideal combination of these factors could be achieved, but Banu wanted a shift from an environmental approach to the health of the Romanians to one that would highlight the hereditary factors. This detail shows how Banu linked his theory of rural biology, based on hygiene and social medicine, to the general debate about the eugenics of the Romanian village.

Consequently, in the first part of his study, Banu did not deal with medicine, but with race. The Romanians had healthy racial qualities, he maintained, because they were descended from the Thracians, who, in their turn, were of Aryan origin. The racial superiority of the Aryans needed no further demonstration, and the Romanian people too had acquired a part of it, while the other ethnic qualities that they had in the present day were the result of later mixing with Roman elements. Similar

52 Gheorghe Banu, 'Biologia satelor', *Arhiva pentru Știința și Reforma Socială*, 7, no. 1–2 (1927): 87 (emphasis in original).

53 Banu, 'Biologia satelor', 87.

to Paulescu, Manuilă, and Moldovan, Banu considered that it was in the mountain villages of Romania that 'the race has been conserved in its pure form',[54] as defined on the basis of anthropological and serological research.

Banu went on to explain how the qualities of the race could be protected by means of the methods of village biology, namely by cultivating two fundamental features: prolificity and longevity. Romania's birth rate was high: 36.6 per 1,000 inhabitants, a figure exceeded only by Yugoslavia, with 38.6 per 1,000. The fact that Romania had a higher birth rate than most European countries was considered both a biological advantage and a distinctive feature of the Romanian people: high fertility was one of its natural racial qualities.

The emphasis that Banu put on rural communities seemed to be justified. Like other physicians at the time, he considered that the starting point for the transformation of Romania into a modern state must be the protection of the biological value of its human capital. Post–World War I Romania presented a sombre reality which Banu described as a 'decay of the ideal biological type, from the physical point of view'. The symptoms of this degeneration were visible in a statistical survey of young men from the countryside recruited for military service. According to this survey, 'almost half' the young men were 'unserviceable at the age of twenty-one'; in short, they were, in Banu's terms, 'unfit'.[55]

Another important concern for eugenicists was reducing infant mortality by means of various puericulture and child protection projects. These projects for the improvement of the health of the population were perceived as being at the same time a political and a scientific matter, a 'biopolitical' issue according to the definition of the term given by Iuliu Moldovan and which I shall discuss in a later chapter. The theme of the health of the people was thus becoming a resource for those mechanisms of power used by the state to monitor and supervise the biological attributes of the Romanian population.

While the physical environment and the climatic conditions were considered favourable to a healthy biological development, Banu's opinions regarding the social conditions in Romania were not encouraging. The peasants' diet was simple but healthy, but alcohol consumption was very high: the ordinary Romanian consumed on average 10 litres of refined ethylic alcohol (100% concentration) per year, compared with, for example,

54 Banu, 'Biologia satelor', 88.

55 Banu, 'Biologia satelor', 94.

2.5 litres per year in the case of the Norwegians.[56] Like other physicians and social reformers, Banu considered excessive alcohol consumption to be both an individual problem and one of public health, contributing to the biological degeneration of the population. For example, following an investigation carried out in 1925 in forty-four villages in Maramureș County, Vasile Ilea, director of the psychiatric hospital in the town of Sighetu Marmației, noted that 'at a wedding 30–40 litres of *horincă* [plum brandy] is drunk, at a christening, 5–10, at a funeral, 20–30'. Given that in the course of that year, there had been '2,133 funerals, 4,292 christenings, 500 weddings, some 800 betrothals, some 1,000 commemorations and other events', Ilea established that in those forty-four villages – with a total population of 108,667 – approximately 150,000 litres of *horincă* had been drunk in a year. Alcoholism, he reflected bitterly, 'has imprinted its disastrous consequences on the majority of the population'.[57]

Many eugenicists at the time, in Romania and elsewhere, suggested that chronic alcoholism could be inherited and contribute to the development of a morbid nervous predisposition. Together with tuberculosis and syphilis, alcoholism was one of the principal causes of the degeneration of the race and, in the circumstances, was defined as a public threat that must be limited by means of social hygiene and eugenic measures. Although Banu maintained that progress in education, improvement in living conditions, and public health measures were the preconditions for a healthy life, he concluded that the action taken to this end was sometimes inefficient, as the illnesses were not always conditioned by environmental factors but might result from the individual's genetically determined traits. A unitary national health programme had to start from the cause of illness in rural and urban zones. Thus, Banu maintained that highly infectious diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis, and also malnutrition could be combatted efficiently by establishing hygiene centres and clinics and by educating the peasants with regard to modern methods of medical treatment. However, the fact that he insisted on the improvement of the living conditions and standards of hygiene of the peasantry did not weaken Banu's conviction that the 'constitutional diseases' were due to anomalies in the genetic composition of the individual, resulting from hereditary factors.

Banu recognized the importance of the natural constitution of the individual in determining the superior potential of the nation and, at the same time, maintained that biological improvement did not depend only

56 Banu, 'Biologia satelor', 99.

57 Vasile Ilea, 'Din necazurile Maramureșului', *Sănătatea Publică* 1, no. 4 (1927): 9.

on heredity. From a study of the general health of the Romanian population, he came to the worrying conclusion that certain hygiene measures needed to be adopted immediately. Rural biology, he insisted, should be based on two principles: 'biological selection' and 'protecting the normal subject', in other words, the healthy Romanian peasant. A new strategy was needed. 'Rural collective society', Banu recommended, 'will have to eliminate those elements that are inferior in biological and intellectual value, applying the principles of mental hygiene'. The Romanian villages were, for him, the ethnic reservoir of the country, the sacred space where 'the race instinct is preserved'; ultimately, these villages were, 'from a biological point of view the guarantee of our nation's life'.[58] The central point of his study of rural biology was the need to intensify the implementation of social and racial-hygienic policies. The relation between hygiene and the racial health of the majority ethnic community had to be redefined, and the main idea of this project was the establishment of a synergy between eugenics, social and health policies, and the biological selection of the rural population. Like other eugenicists, Banu believed that the purpose of rural biology was to introduce the debate about racial degeneration in Romania into the wider framework of a theory of culture, science, and social progress. Eugenic research was not separated from the population that it studied, and medical questions – like the interpretations that physicians extracted from their empirical studies – were modelled on cultural attitudes, social needs, and political possibilities. It was important, Banu emphasized:

> to make, periodically, a comprehensive biological examination of the nation, in order to gather scientific conclusions about its subsequent evolution. Action is all the more necessary, inasmuch as history teaches us that there are cycles in the life of peoples, ending in their ageing and disappearance, from multiple factors: economic causes, the disappearance of the ruling and intellectual elite, the domination of mediocrity, falling natality, and the moral corruption of the race.[59]

The central idea was that the biological evolution of the Romanian people could not be left to chance; the state's direct intervention was needed in order

58 Banu, 'Biologia satelor', 120–121.

59 Gheorghe Banu, 'Biologia poporul român', *Revista de Igienă Socială* 5, no. 2 (1935): 99. See also Gheorghe Banu, 'Redresarea biologică a națiunii', *Linia Dreaptă* 3, no. 1 (1938): 5 and Gheorghe Banu, 'La politique médico-sociale dans la Roumanie rurale', in Dimitrie Gusti et al., *La vie rurale en Roumanie* (Bucharest: XIV–e Congrès International de Sociologie, 1940), 135–204.

to predict and eradicate contagious illnesses, to improve living conditions and health, especially in the countryside, and not least, to protect the racial quality of the predominant Romanian element.

Banu's theory of rural biology brought a distinctive contribution to the debate on the degeneration of the race in 1920s Romania, namely a reformulation of the health problems characterizing the peasantry, by integrating them within broader eugenic themes. Indeed, Banu was to become one of the most important Romanian eugenicists, the author of synthetic works on social medicine, eugenics, and racial hygiene, and the holder of the first chair of social medicine in Romania, inaugurated at the University of Bucharest in November 1942.

In a text prepared for a homage volume in honour of Dimitrie Gusti, published in 1936, Banu specified the objectives and tasks of what he termed racial hygiene, namely 'the study of factors subject to the control of human society and capable of modifying, for better or for worse, the racial characteristics – physical and mental – of future generations'. Racial hygiene was, however, but one chapter in a science with a larger sphere of operation that he called 'the biology of race'. Following the German eugenicist Alfred Ploetz, Banu attributed to the biology of race all 'the vital and evolutive manifestations of the permanent life of the race, beyond the life delimited in time of the individual'. The biology of race, he continued, was 'a process in continual "becoming": reproduction, heredity, mutations, selection, the struggle for existence, the rise and fall in the number of individuals'.[60] In short, according to Banu, racial biology dealt with all that was alive, whether plant, animal, or human.

The application of the principles of racial hygiene was justified by multiple motives, some biological, others social, statistical, and economic. The prevention of racial degeneration was one of the principal biological motives. Without a control of reproduction, said Banu, 'dysgenics and biologically inferior elements' might become 'threatening for the rest of the collective organism'.[61] Consequently, the objectives of racial hygiene were, on the one hand, 'the prevention of the multiplication of hereditarily defective elements and asocial elements', and, on the other, 'favouring, supporting, advantaging families from the hereditary and racial point of view'.[62]

Banu did not specify in this text which members of society were racially 'defective' and who the 'asocial' were, but other writers suggested similar

60 Gheorghe Banu, 'Igiena rasei și obiectivele ei', *Arhiva pentru Știința și Reforma Socială. Omagiu profesorului D. Gusti* 14 (1936): 565.

61 Banu, 'Igiena rasei', 567.

62 Banu, 'Igiena rasei', 575.

eugenic strategies, based not only on accountability and responsibility towards all citizens, but especially on finding the 'guilty' who, because of hereditary illnesses or their ethnic origin, were described as being a threat to the biological development of the Romanian people.

Medicine and Antisemitism

Physicians such as Iuliu Moldovan and Gheorghe Banu believed that the hereditary attributes of the race had a direct impact on the health of the nation and consequently on its social, cultural, and political development. The health of the Romanian people was thus to be monitored closely in order to be able to sound the alarm at the dangers that threatened it. This eugenic protection of the nation required both the creation of an efficient public health system and a reduction in social diseases, such as alcoholism and prostitution, and in criminality.

While medicine helped in the identification, prediction, and curing of diseases, eugenics proposed a selection of those individuals who posed a threat to the health of the majority. Eugenics was, as Gheorghe Marinescu also emphasized, 'the base, the foundation of a people'.[63] Thus, along with those who suffered from tuberculosis, alcoholism, or mental illnesses, certain ethnic groups were considered to be carriers of various 'maladies'. One such ethnic group was the Jews. According to Romanian antisemitic racists, such as Toma Petrescu, the Jews were in an advanced stage of degeneration and, by their mere presence in society, they constituted a eugenic and racial threat. The Jews were a 'danger for the health of the [Romanian] race'.[64] Although economic and social factors constituted important arguments in the developing of antisemitism in interwar Romania,[65] the spread of racism also owed much to the bio-medical and eugenic discussion about the protection of the health of the Romanian peasants.

Moreover, for those engaged in the debate about 'the Jewish question', racist and eugenic theories offered arguments for rejecting the assimilation of ethnic minorities. Consequently, these theories provided a variety of biological arguments, for example regarding mixed marriages of Romanians

63 Gheorghe Marinescu, 'Eugenia și românismul', *Revista Sănătatea și 'Viața Fericită'* 35, no. 9 (1935): 359. See also G. F., 'Eugenia și îmbunătățirea neamului românesc. Conferința d–lui prof. dr. G. Marinescu', *Curentul* 9, no. 2896 (1936): 2.

64 Toma Petrescu, *Ni se pierde neamul. Activitatea jidanilor împotriva nației românești* (Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1940), 36.

65 Gino Lupi, 'Ebrei in Romania', *Difesa della Razza* 2, no. 22 (1939): 20-23.

and Jews, which worked their way into the forms of expression of Romanian nationalism and antisemitism. In the words of the journalist Nicolae Roșu: 'The composition of a race is determined by homogeneity of blood preserved through marriages between individuals with the same historical and anthropological origin.' The Jews might be citizens, but could they be *Romanian*? Not for Roșu, who, like other antisemites, made a distinction between citizenship and nationality, the ethno-racial criterion being the one that counted. His explanation was the following:

> Blood is the biological basis of heredity, and consanguinity, on the intellectual, spiritual, and social level, means the same sentiments, the same ideas, and the same tendencies. Race is thus the condition for the existence of a people; it is its very conception of life. It is on this fundamental truth that the principle of nationalities is based. There is thus a profound difference between the members of the same state, incorporated in a heterogenous mixture by the notion of citizenship, and the members of the same race, predestined, by virtue of heredity, to work together in harmony and unity.[66]

For the philosopher Emil Cioran too, there was an ontological barrier between the Jew and the Romanian, as he remarked in his much-discussed *Schimbarea la față a României* (*The Transfiguration of Romania*):

> The theory of races seems to have been born only to give expression to the feeling of abysmal separation that differentiates any non-Jew from a Jew. This abyss is born not from antisemitism or from any sort of conception, but from the plain or hidden antagonism that characterizes two essentially different beings. The Jew is not our fellow, our neighbour, and whatever intimacy we may permit ourselves with him, a chasm separates us, like it or not. It is as if they were descended from another species of monkey than us and had been condemned from the start to a sterile tragedy, to hopes forever betrayed. Humanly, we cannot approach them, because the Jew is a Jew first and a human being second.[67]

Towards the end of the 1930s, these arguments were integrated into a biomedical agenda that combined eugenics with politics and antisemitism.

66 Nicolae Roşu, 'Ideea de rasă la doi gânditori români', *Revista Fundaţiilor Regale* 8, no. 2 (1941): 400.

67 Emil Cioran, *Schimbarea la faţă a României* (Bucharest: Vremea, 1936), 130.

However, as Europe headed towards a new war, and Greater Romania lost some of its territory, there was a feeling that without the adoption of a racial biopolitical programme, the very future of the Romanian nation was in question. Nicolae Roșu was giving voice to this feeling in October 1940 when he wrote: '[W]e have missed the political moment to use the maps of the Romanian race, but we have not missed the other, which obliges us to strengthen it by a racial policy of the State.'[68] In this context, 'saving' the nation had become the principle priority of the Romanian state, and the Jews had become 'undesirables', not only from a political but also from a racial point of view. They had, Roșu believed, to be eliminated.

It was a gradual process of ethnic 'purification' of the country, a process in which racist and eugenic arguments received a new and powerful impulse. 'Racial degeneration' was already one of the most frequently used arguments for the stigmatization of the Jews. As the psychiatrist Dumitru Grigorescu of the neurology clinic of the Colentina Hospital in Bucharest put it:

> The Jews – a people exposed, over the centuries, to so many misfortunes, so many emotions – have become arthritic, nervous, the majority of them sickly. Close marriages among them, added to the other causes, cause this race to degenerate so that we find a whole series of types where we see modifications even of a pathological nature – not to mention those of an aesthetic and morphometric nature. These defective individuals do not disappear but, on the contrary, they procreate (and the high natality among the Jews is well known) a whole series of elements, deviated, vulnerable to quite distinct maladies – specific to their race.
> The Romanian people possess from the racial point of view a solid nucleus – with incontestable physical and moral qualities – and with the good fortune to have been thrown onto a land with a good climate and with food rich in all the salts necessary for the maintenance of a good biological equilibrium. However, external causes, both toxic (alcohol) and infectious (syphilis and tuberculosis), seem to knock on our door and even to have long ago crossed the threshold here and there, with horrible tendencies to spoil this superior race. Let us open our eyes an hour earlier and all will be put right.[69]

Eugenicists thus imagined a healthy national community based on the exclusion of all those whom they considered 'antisocial', 'hereditarily ill',

68 Nicolae Roşu, 'Hărţile rasei românești', *Revista Fundaţiilor Regale* 7, no. 10 (1940): 181.
69 Dumitru Grigorescu, 'Fundamentul biologic al rasei', *Gândirea* 14, no. 2 (1935): 107.

or 'dysgenic'. According to Ludwig Erich, this last term was applied to individuals 'who as a result of a hereditary illness are in a state of manifest inferiority'. Either their condition was one of 'definitive or temporary impossibility of maintaining themselves by their own means', or their existence constituted a 'danger for the safety of society'.[70] As well as such cases, there were also some criminals, prostitutes, and alcoholics who, Erich believed, displayed 'dysgenic syndromes'. They were considered 'inferior and morbid personalities, without necessarily all being also dysgenic'.[71]

Iosif Glicsman, the director of the Statistics Section of the Ministry of Labour and Health, who signed with the pseudonym 'Doctor Ygrec' (using the Romanian name of the letter 'Y'), offered the following explanation: '"Dysgenic" expresses a notion opposite to that corresponding to the word "eugenic". "Dysgenic" means the person, the child, born with physical or psychical defects, signs of degeneration, just as "eugenic" (eu=good, genic=born) means the child born perfectly healthy.'[72]

It was also the eugenically minded physicians who offered explanations about 'the valorization of the biological capital of the nation'; they defined the issues regarding the population of Romania, such as ethnic mixture, depopulation, and protection of the family and of children, in eugenic terms. The social role of the physician was redefined, and medicine was invested with a new responsibility. As Iuliu Hațieganu, a leading advocate of eugenics in interwar Cluj, said in 1925:

> Today's generation of physicians needs to be imbued with the conviction that it has a sacred duty to come with its contribution, in these great days, when, after the ancestral land has been conquered, upon it is built the great edifice of the Romanian state, on the durability of which will depend the fate of this country.[73]

Nicolae Minovici, the founder of the Romanian school of forensic medicine, offered a similar perspective:

> As physicians, we are servants in the service of the collective interest; the medical function is an eminently social function, so that, in our

70 Erich, *Problema disgenicilor*, 14.

71 Erich, *Problema disgenicilor*, 28.

72 Doctorul Ygrec, 'Disgenicii', *Adevărul* 48, no. 15353 (1934): 1.

73 Iuliu Hațieganu, 'Rolul social al medicului român în opera de consolidare a statului național', *Transilvania* 56, nos. 11–12 (1925): 588.

> capacity as exponents of moral consciousness, we must treat the sick not as mere individuals, but as individuals integrated in the synthetic unity of the state, as elements without a precise identity in the great mass of the collectivity.[74]

It was hoped that this social vocation of the physician would be an inspiration also for the profession with the most significant impact on the population: the priesthood. In an article published in 1927, the future Orthodox bishop of Cluj, Nicolae Colan, described the 'hygienic-social role' of the Orthodox priest. The contemplative spirit of Orthodoxy, Colan maintained, should not lead to social inactivity. The priest, he explained:

> through his direct and daily contact with the population (especially the rural population) could easily fulfil the role of a wonderful sanitary agent, the role of a wonderful collaborator of the sanitary service. Alongside the physician – or even alone – he is called to watch not only over the spiritual but also the bodily health of his congregation.[75]

The physician and the priest working together to protect the health of the nation would, Colan hoped, lead to a radical transformation in the role of social medicine in Romania. In reality, this collaboration would remain an unfulfilled ambition of the interwar period.[76]

At the same time, we may observe a radicalization of public discourse and a growing interest in the definition of national specificity in terms not only cultural and religious but also biological. The Romanian nationalism that was taking shape in the 1920s and would dominate the 1930s highlighted the biologization of the concept of race in terms of 'blood'. Race gradually became the keyword around which gravitated the debate over the national character, understood not just abstractly, but in a real, palpable manner. As the radical nationalist poet Ion Foti put it, 'apart from the primordial interests of the Romanian race, all the other internal national problems are purely secondary'.[77] In a time when racial and biological theories were seducing both political and intellectual elites, the eugenicists offered a theory for the protection of the nation based on evolutionism, Darwinism, and notions of

74 Nicolae Minovici and Ioan Stănescu, *Secretul profesional* (Bucharest: Atelierele Grafice 'Socec', 1938), 64.

75 Nicolae Colan, 'Rolul igienico–sanitar al preotului', *Sănătatea Publică* 1, no. 1 (1927): 10.

76 Gheorghe Popovici, *Biserica și protecția familiei, mamei și copilului* (Sibiu: Tip. Arhidiecezană, 1943).

77 Ion Foti, *Concepția eroică a rasei* (Bucharest: Biblioteca Eroică 'Generația Nouă', 1936), 180.

human genetics that were, at the same time, in complete harmony with the resurgence of ethnic nationalism in Europe and elsewhere. It was important, however, some of them emphasized, for the socio-historical conditions specific to Romania to be considered.

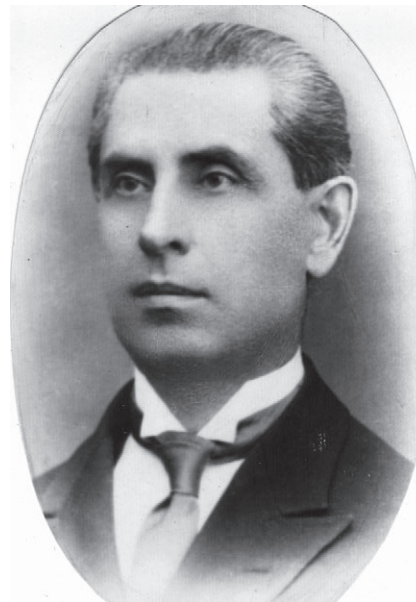


Fig. 3. Grigore I. Odobescu (Courtesy of Biblioteca Documentară de Istoria Medicinii, Institutul de Sănătate Publică, Bucharest)

In order to have a 'Romanian eugenic policy', said Grigore I. Odobescu [figure 3], psychiatrist at the Central Hospital for Nervous and Mental Illnesses in Bucharest, it was most important 'that we concern ourselves in the first place with satisfying the requirements that arise from our realities'. This called for a 'serious and extensive education of the masses', which, Odobescu believed, could lead to 'the raising of the biological level' and then to a 'eugenic policy'.[78] However, the implementation of such a national programme of eugenic education would require resources and time. Odobescu thus also suggested an immediate solution, one that also reflected Romanian realities. He called for the introduction of a 'severe sanitary control of immigration'.

But who was immigrating to Romania? According to Odobescu, the country was being invaded by 'self-styled workers of all categories and unemployed manual workers and intellectuals of completely inferior quality, sick people and propagators of various serious diseases (especially syphilis and tuberculosis), neuropaths, the unbalanced and the unadaptable'. If there was any doubt about whom he was referring to, this was dispelled by the clarifications that followed. An 'abominable and dangerous' category was that of 'foreign procurers and impresarios who recruit and export underage girls snatched perfidiously from their families'. Then, Odobescu continues, these 'sick, unbalanced, antisocial, etc.' individuals

> during their stay here procreate and leave us their degenerate progeny; while the exporters of live flesh snatch away those of our offspring who are most full of promise for the future of our race, that is, those girls who

78 Grigore I. Odobescu, *Politica eugenică* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice 'Eminescu', 1936), 10–11.

> are the best-built, the most attractive, and the most capable of becoming mothers bearing strong and healthy children.[79]

In just a few sentences and by making use of a number of stereotypes, Odobescu clearly formulated a Romanian version of eugenics that was at the same time directed against the Roma, especially the nomads among them, and against the Jews.

The 'eugenics for the Romanian people', as it was conceived by Odobescu, referred *solely* to the protection of the ethnically Romanian. The solution Odobescu offered in order to forestall the degeneration of the race was not the eugenic sterilization of the Romanian population, in the manner so popular among European and American eugenicists. His proposal was the elimination of *foreigners*, regarded as parasitic elements and harmful to the racial health of the 'true Romanian', the indigenous peasant.

Finally, Odobescu insisted that the Romanian peasant's precarious physical and mental health was not caused by a harmful genetic inheritance, but rather by exploitation, poverty, inadequate diet, a lack of sanitary measures, and precarious conditions of personal hygiene. In other words, for Odobescu, the so-called degeneration of the race was caused by precarious living conditions and not by heredity. The degeneration of the race, he went on to suggest, was not the same as the physical or mental degeneration of individuals. This point of view was also upheld by Leonida Iosif, a village physician in Poseşti-Pământeni in Prahova County. Iosif believed 'that we should not talk of "the degeneration of the race" but of "the degeneration of the peasant"'. For him, 'the "race" of the peasant' was 'an abstraction, which does not degenerate. The alcoholic, tuberculous, syphilitic peasant, yes, he degenerates.'[80] Iosif's remark came as a reaction to the new penal code introduced in March 1936 – also known as the Carol II Penal Code – and especially to article 446, which states the following:

> The cohabitation in concubinage of minors under 16 years for girls and 18 years for boys constitutes the delict of degeneration of the race.
> The parents or their legal representatives who facilitate or approve such connections are punished with correctional imprisonment from one month to one year and with a fine of 5,000 to 20,000 lei, and the children or

79 Grigore I. Odobescu, *Eugenie pentru neamul românesc* (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1936), 11.

80 Leonida Iosif, 'Eugenie sau etnologie?', *Mişcarea Medicală Română* 9, nos. 11–12 (1936): 692–693.

> adolescents guilty of this act will be interned in an institute of corrective education, from one to three years.[81]

According to the penal code, having children at too early an age was considered a sign not just of immaturity, but also of failure to understand one's responsibility towards one's family and nation. As was specified in the commentary provided by the jurist Vintilă Dongoroz, professor in the Faculty of Law in Bucharest, 'the delict of degeneration of the race' had 'as its juridical object the same institution of the family regarded as a setting to ensure the continuity and fulfilment of the race in the most favourable physical and moral conditions'.[82] The young people and their parents were punished by the law if they did not take seriously this form of eugenic protectionism. Many welcomed the 'eugenic tendencies of the new Penal Code',[83] and the newspapers of the time offer us cases of young people who were arrested and put on trial for 'the delict of degeneration of the race'.

One such case is that of nineteen-year-old N. B. of Sâmbăteni in Arad County, who was living in cohabitation with a girl of fifteen. The trial took place on 9 July 1937 at the tribunal of Arad, and led to the sentencing of the boy's parents and the girl's tutor to one month's imprisonment.[84] Another case, reported by the newspaper *Universul* on 14 September 1943, concerned a young man of seventeen, S. M. P. from Vărăși, in Ilfov County, who had a child with a girl younger than himself. The law declared this child 'a priori degenerate and a factor of degeneration of the race'.[85] The idea of protecting the Romanian race through controlling the reproduction of those the law considered not to be prepared for parenthood thus had its supporters.

These young people were not 'degenerates'. Their only 'defect' was that they had fallen in love and had children prematurely. Some of them, however, did not return to their families, but ended up in the Institute of Moral Re-education (Institutul de reeducare morală) at Slatina in Olt County. In July 1942, 335 minors were detained there, their ages ranging from six to twenty-one. Some of them were detained there 'because they vagabonded, stole, or begged', but others had been brought there because they had married before reaching the age of eighteen, thus contributing to the 'degeneration of the race'.[86]

81 *Codul Penal Carol al II–lea adnotat*, vol. 3 (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Socec), 18.
82 *Codul Penal Carol al II–lea adnotat*, 20.
83 'Tendinţele eugenice în noul Cod Penal', *Curentul* 10, no. 3451 (1937): 2.
84 'Proces pentru degenerarea rasei', *Universul* 54, no. 190 (1937): 4.
85 'Au fost trimişi în judecată', *Universul* 60, no. 251 (1943): 3.
86 C. S., 'Institutul de reeducare morală dela Slatina', *Universul* 59, no. 176 (1942): 5.

Eugenicists, in search of 'degenerates', first leafed through the registers of prisons and hospitals.[87] Erich, for example, tried to determine the percentage of 'dysgenic insane, in the first place of schizophrenics and manic depressives', among the patients of the Hospital for Mental Illnesses in Sibiu. The results that he arrived at were the following: 'schizophrenics 33.2%, manic depressives 11.4%, epileptics 6.5%, alcoholics 4.4%'. His conclusion was that over 50% of the patients were 'dysgenics'. Following the same line of logic, Erich then arrived at the idea, popularized especially by German eugenicists, that Jews were predisposed to hereditary psychosis. To test this hypothesis, Erich compared the frequency of schizophrenia and manic-depressive psychosis in the main ethnic groups of Transylvania: Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, and Jews.

His material for this comparison was collected from the psychiatric clinic in Cluj (patients admitted during the period 1930–1937), the hospital of Sibiu (patients admitted in 1935), and the hospital of Oradea (patients admitted during the period 1932–1937). The results, as was to be expected, indicated a high percentage of cases of schizophrenia and manic-depressive psychosis among the Jews. At the clinic in Cluj, for example, 222 Romanians and 110 Jews were hospitalized with manic-depressive psychosis, and 52 Romanians and 51 Jews for schizophrenia. However, Romanians constituted 58.5% of the total population and Jews only 3.6%. For Erich, the high number of 'mentally dysgenic' among the Jews was due both to their 'higher frequency of pathological dispositions' and to consanguinity, which favoured 'the appearance and accumulation of recessive defects'.[88]

This type of analysis – inspired by the antisemitic writings of Nicolae Paulescu – appears also with Petru Tipărescu, a journalist who had studied philosophy and medicine, who in 1941 published *Rasă și degenerare, cu un studiu statistic asupra jidanilor* (*Race and Degeneration, with a statistical study of the Jews*). Convinced that in Romania, 'perhaps more than in any other country, an immediate and intense eugenic action is necessary, because too many curses have accumulated in recent times, against the young and far too tolerant Romanian race',[89] Tipărescu tried, in his turn, to demonstrate the harmful racial influence of the Jews on the Romanians.

Tipărescu's book begins with an account of the various racial theories, starting with that of Gobineau, and continuing with those of Lombroso,

87 Mina Minovici, *Catalogul cu condamnații din toată țara în cursul anului 1892* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1893). Minovici included 6,248 inmates in his survey.

88 Erich, *Problema disgenicilor*, 46–49.

89 Petru Tipărescu, *Rasă şi degenerare, cu un studiu statistic asupra jidanilor* (Bucharest: Tip. Bucovina, 1941), 8.

Cuza, and Paulescu. Then he mentions the sero-anthropological studies carried out on various ethnic groups in Romania by Sabin Manuilă and Gheorghe Popovici. A whole chapter is devoted to the relation between heredity and race, in which Tipărescu proves to have a good knowledge of the specialized literature, both regarding evolutionism and Darwinism and eugenics and human genetics, from Lamarck and Darwin to Francis Galton and Charles Davenport. The main aim is to show the predominant influence of heredity on the destiny of the individual and the collective destiny of the nation, while also insisting on the necessity of biological continuity in the same geographical environment and territory of what Tipărescu terms 'the constant biological stock of the race's continuity'. His intention here was to draw attention to an important aspect of the discussion about the 'inadaptability' of the Jews to Romanian specificity. 'The race uprooted from its soil of origin', he writes, 'bears its curse until [its] definitive racial degeneration'.[90]

After this introduction to the theme of race and eugenics, his study continues with a short history of the migration of the Jews into Europe and, in particular, to Romania, which, in turn, introduces the discussion of the degeneration of the Jews 'as a race'. Tipărescu drew on the general census of the population carried out by the Central Institute of Statistics in 1930 to show the geographical spread of the Jewish population in terms of ethnicity, language (Yiddish), and religion. According to these statistics, there were 756,930 declared Jews in Romania, amounting to 4.2% of the total population.[91] The most numerous Jewish communities were in regions such as Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Maramureș. Their percentage was thus small, but, according to Tipărescu, in Romania – as indeed in Hungary, Poland, and Russia – there lived the most 'disintegrating microbes of their race', those who did not want to 'perish' and did not want to 'assimilate' and 'so as not to die, slowly kill the national elements with which they come in contact'.[92]

At the same time, the Jews, according to Tipărescu, were predisposed to certain mental illnesses, because of their ethnic specificity. In support of this claim, he cites the French paediatrician and psychiatrist Eugène Apert, a founder member of the French Society of Eugenics, who in his 1919 book *L'hérédité morbide* (*Morbid Heredity*), suggested that Polish Jews were different from Polish Catholics 'not only in their physical characters and intellectual aptitudes, but also in the maladies that are specific to their

90 Tipărescu, *Rasă şi degenerare*, 28.
91 Tipărescu, *Rasă şi degenerare*, 40.
92 Tipărescu, *Rasă şi degenerare*, 45.

race, in particular amaurotic familial idiocy, a malady well characterized by lesions at the back of the eye which are not seen in any other case; all the typical cases have been observed uniquely in Jews of Polish origin'.[93]

Encountering such a case at the Central Hospital of Mental and Nervous Illnesses in Bucharest, Tipărescu described it as being specific not only to the family in question, as the hospital psychiatrists suggested, but also to 'a certain race, or more precisely a subdivision of a race, the Polish Jews'. This case, together with his reading of Apert's book, caused Tipărescu to make up his mind to establish a classification of mental illnesses, as 'racial, familial, and individual or accidental'. Constitutional psychopathies, though they might be improved, were incurable. Racial illnesses, however, he considered were incurable 'by virtue of the irreducibility of racial characters'.[94] Schizophrenia, for example, was one of the incurable constitutional psychopathies.

Tipărescu was thus convinced that the Jews were 'a degenerate race' and that they were 'everywhere the vanguard of decadence'. This was for him a fact already 'proven' by science. What, then, could the Romanian state do? In the first place, he said, an efficient eugenic policy had to be applied. Eugenics had already made significant progress in this direction in Romania, and Tipărescu pointed out that 'at last, today, these works for the hygiene of the race have begun also to influence our state policy, with measures in view for the supremacy of the majority ethnic element and for the defence of the future of our race'. Second, he continued, 'necessary in our country too [is] the foundation of an official institute of eugenics, for the study of the races and for the finding of eugenic methods, adapted to the conditions of our country'.[95]

Tipărescu did not stop here, however. Inspired by Nicolae Paulescu, who, he said, had 'proven with figures the degeneration of the Jewish race, stated for the first time here in a scientific work',[96] Tipărescu dealt in the final chapter of his book with 'the constitutional psychopathies' or, in other words, 'the mental maladies with a hereditary base' encountered among the Jews. This argument was based on an earlier study, carried out a decade before at the clinic of the renowned psychiatrist Alexandru Obregia in Bucharest, together with the psychologist Alfred Dimolescu, who worked at the Central Hospital of Mental and Nervous Illnesses. Obregia and Dimolescu's study

93 Eugène Apert, *L'hérédité morbide* (Paris: Flammarion, 1919), 26. The translation from French into Romanian belongs to Tipărescu, *Rasă şi degenerare*, 50.

94 Tipărescu, *Rasă şi degenerare*, 51.

95 Tipărescu, *Rasă şi degenerare*, 45.

96 Tipărescu, *Rasă şi degenerare*, 52.

involved a sample of 325 women and another sample of 322 men, without any mention of their ethnic origin. In fact, it made no connection between hereditary mental illnesses and Jews.[97] In Tipărescu's 1941 book, however, the ethnicity of the patients and the place of origin of those hospitalized were mentioned. The mental patients at the Central Hospital for Mental and Nervous Illnesses came from the provinces of Oltenia, Muntenia, and Dobrogea: 1,959 were Romanian (1,108 men and 851 women) and 280 were of Jewish origin (147 men and 133 women). By setting the numbers of patients against the total number of Romanians and Jews in these three provinces, according to the census of 1930, Tipărescu arrived at the following conclusion: out of 5,597,364 Romanians, 1,959 suffered from mental illnesses, giving a proportion of 3.49 per 10,000 inhabitants; for the Jews, on the other hand, the figure of 280 patients out of a population of 93,645 meant a proportion of 29.9 per 10,000 inhabitants.[98]

Continuing the line of argument at the level of the whole population, Tipărescu proposed the following conclusions, illustrated by a series of tables. Taking as his reference a population of 100,000 inhabitants, he established that, for example, 2.84 Romanians were 'degenerate', compared with 22.42 in the case of the Jews. But that was not all: 11.88 Romanians suffered from constitutional psychoses, while in the case of the Jews, the number affected was 161.24. On the basis of these statistics, Tipărescu arrived at the conclusion that:

> compared with the entire population of Romanians, the Jews give a percentage in degeneration seven times higher; in constitutional psychoses ten to thirteen times higher; regarding toxic psychoses four or five times higher; in organo-toxic psychoses four times higher; in organic psychoses eight to ten times higher.[99]

As for constitutional psychoses, as those determined by heredity were labelled, Tipărescu offered the following data: out of 100,000 inhabitants, 1.07 Romanians were maniacs, compared with 14.94 Jews; 1,16 Romanians suffered from manic-depressive psychoses and periodic melancholy, compared with 25.6 Jews; and finally, when it came to schizophrenia and precocious dementia, Tipărescu suggested that these appeared in 5.71 Romanians, but in 77.95 Jews.

97 Alfred Dimolescu and Petre Tipărescu, 'Cercetări asupra heredității în psihopatiile constituționale', *Revista Științelor Medicale* 19, no 10 (1930): 1171–1180.

98 Tipărescu, *Rasă și degenerare*, 53.

99 Tipărescu, *Rasă și degenerare*, 56.

On the basis of these data, Tipărescu described the Jews as being predisposed to psychoses. These, of course, were also present among the Romanians, but in much smaller percentages. The difference was not just numerical, but etiological. Among the Romanians, schizophrenia was 'the correlative of alcoholism', but among the Jews, 'who do not abuse alcohol, schizophrenia is of a hereditary nature'.[100] The same illness, it seemed, had different 'causes' according to the ethnic origin of the individual. In other words, the Romanians would eventually sober up, but the Jews could not be cured of schizophrenia! This, Tipărescu argued, was evidence of their pathological condition.

The conclusions of the book – translated into French, German, and Italian in order to have a greater impact – were partly a call for more thorough research on the races of Europe, especially the 'three peoples as interesting as their Asiatic ancestors: the Hungarians, the Gypsies, and the Jews', but they also included a very interesting commentary on 'the much-debated theme, as yet unclarified, of the inequality of races'. In view of Tipărescu's arguments in the preceding chapters, this final commentary seems as if written by another person. Here is what he said: 'The insufficiency of the laws applied in the study of races permits a harmful diversity of criteria, and, consequently, under the appearance of scrupulous research, numerous false interpretations are made regarding the theory of races or a particular race.'[101]

The examples chosen by Tipărescu to illustrate his claims are also surprising. The first concerns the opinion, generally accepted at the time, that Americans of colour were inferior to white Americans. This prejudice against the 'black race' was, for Tipărescu, the result 'of popular and popularized falsehoods, transoceanic errors of our century'. How would it be, he wonders, if an impartial and comparative study 'reached the conclusion that the Blacks have a superior value as a race, compared with the conglomerate of dosed immigrations in the "New World"?'[102] The same view should be taken of the so-called 'yellow peril', which, he believed, was a fabrication without any scientific basis.[103] These false ideas about races, he said, should be eliminated not only from political discourse but also from specialized literature.

100 Tipărescu, *Rasă și degenerare*, 57–58.

101 Tipărescu, *Rasă și degenerare*, 59.

102 Tipărescu, *Rasă și degenerare*, 58–59.

103 Interestingly, a similar critique of European racism towards the Asians was made by Mircea Eliade, following the viewing of the film *The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu* (1929), which abounds in racist metaphors about the 'Yellow Peril'. See Mircea Eliade, 'Rasism în cinematograf', *Cuvântul* 9, no. 3006 (1933): 1.

Finally, the racial indices of cranial capacity, established by Topinard at around 1,421 grams and used by Paulescu to suggest that Jews were below this average, raised problems for Tipărescu. His irritation stemmed not from the use of this average to demonstrate the 'inferiority' of the Jews, but from the fact that the Slavs, whose index was, apparently, above this average, could thus be considered racially 'superior'. Writing in 1941, at the time of Romania's 'crusade against Bolshevism' and the war against the Soviet Union, it was inconceivable for Tipărescu that the Slavs might be a 'superior race'.

Of course, this critical commentary on the falsity of racial theories does not refer in any case to his own theory about the 'degeneration' of the Jewish 'race'. Tipărescu declared, without any hesitation in his tone:

> On the other hand, when I find in the Jews a constant series of stigmata of degeneracy, to which are added certain hereditary flaws permanent and specific to them, may I be permitted to be convinced by my own figures and by the statements of the knowledgeable Prof. Dr. N. C. Paulescu, included in his study 'The Degeneration of the Jewish Race'.[104]

No further explanation was necessary; it was already sufficiently clear what was to be done. Tipărescu's final message was the following: 'We need to defend our country, our people, our race!'[105] For some commentators, such as the author of a review published in the Iași magazine *Cetatea Moldovei* (*Moldavia's Fortress*), Tipărescu had 'the merit of demonstrating with statistical data, within the limits of a rigid scientific spirit, the microbic danger that the Jews represent through their infiltration into the Romanian race'. Described thus, it is no wonder that in the case of this reader, the book 'strengthened his conviction that antisemitism is not a matter of social hatred, but a justified defence of the national heritage'.[106] And this favourable opinion was shared by the Bucharest newspapers *Curentul* (*The Current*) and *Universul* (*The Universe*), where Tipărescu was congratulated for the way in which he had brought 'into the light, with erudition and deep understanding of the problem, the causes of the degeneration of our national organism, which calls for an extensive and urgent eugenic action'.[107] By the beginning of the 1940s, antisemitism in Romania was no longer just a political

104 Tipărescu, *Rasă și degenerare*, 60.
105 Tipărescu, *Rasă și degenerare*, 64.
106 'Recenzii', *Cetatea Moldovei* 2, nos. 11–12 (1941): 358–359.
107 L., 'P. Tipărescu: Rasă și degenerare', *Universul* 58, no. 187 (1941): 2 and Victor Const. Bercescu, 'P. Tipărescu: Rasă și degenerare', *Curentul* 14, no. 4795 (1941): 2.

discourse, it was an undeniable historical reality, expressed through racial laws, deportations, and massacres.

Conclusions

In a study of the relation between 'normal and pathological heredity' and eugenics, published in 1936, Gheorghe Marinescu offered the following definition of the ethnic community: 'The people is a synthesis: race + culture. Environmental hygiene and education have a great importance, but they cannot achieve anything if nothing is done against degeneration.'[108] In the early decades of the twentieth century, various Romanian physicians wanted to plan and to control the future of the nation, not only through social and medical policies, but also through eugenic education and, equally importantly, through the protection of the biological value of the country. The discourse of racial degeneration was not just a medical one, however, but also included popular elements of racism and nationalism, which were widely used by politicians and scientists alike. These individuals are well known. Not only political leaders, but also historians and philosophers of culture,[109] theologians and poets appealed to 'race' to explain their vision of the historical destiny of Romania. In 1929, the poet and philosopher Nichifor Crainic wrote:

> [B]lood itself is a tradition, a biological tradition. It is what is handed down, what passes from one to another, from mother to child, from one generation to the next. It passes and yet remains; we remain and yet we pass. But such as we are – a momentary creation of an evening – we are through the permanent tradition of blood. Can there be a tradition more alive and more current than the tradition of blood?[110]

Crainic's answer to this question was a resounding 'No!'

The fact must be accepted that other writers in interwar Romania were involved in the formulation of ideas of race and degeneration. Physicians, anthropologists, geographers, historians, and sociologists together created a conceptual framework that formed the basis not only for the scientific

108 Gheorghe Marinescu, 'Despre hereditatea normală și patologică și raporturile ei cu Eugenia', *Academia Română. Memoriile Secţiunii Ştiinţifice*, series 3, 11 (1936): 306.
109 See Corneliu Crăciun, 'Rasismul în concepţia lui B. P. Hașdău', *Vremea* 13, no. 589 (1941): 6.
110 Nichifor Crainic, 'Sensul tradiţiei', *Gândirea* 9, nos. 1–2 (1929): 5.

legitimacy of eugenics, but also, more generally, for the racist and antisemitic thinking of the cultural and political elites. The literary historian Dan Smântânescu, Nicolae Iorga's private secretary in the 1930s, also maintained that race was not 'an amalgamation' of various ethnic times. 'It is preserved intact', he asserted, 'it is sometimes strengthened by vigorous grafts, it is true, but it is never extinguished for as long as the blood is not mixed – disharmoniously – begetting half-breeds, that is to say, bringing the lineage down into the abyss of rotten cosmopolitanism'.[111]

There were, however, also writers who saw things differently. The philosopher Petre P. Negulescu, for example, offered a comprehensive analysis of the biological and serological theories used to define belonging to an ethno-national group. Interested in deciphering the cultural mechanisms that could influence the formation of national identity, Negulescu also reflected on the relation between racial serology and national essence. His sceptical conclusion was that 'by way of analysing blood, we cannot arrive, at least not yet, at the establishment of a "national specificity" in the sense in which it is claimed that there exists such a factor that determines cultural manifestations'.[112]

The writer and journalist Felix Aderca likewise suggested that 'the most rational policy is not "racial purity", by arbitrary elimination – but the incorporation and assimilation of the most varied elements: *assimilation*, meaning *nourishment* of the first principle of life, of the vital forces refreshed'.[113] For Aderca, the assimilation of minorities, rather than their rejection, was the ideal method for creating a modern state. This point of view was also maintained by the economist Titus Cristureanu – who in the mid-1950s would head the first Romanian mission at the United Nations in New York. Cristureanu also declared that no 'Romanian race' existed. Moreover, the problem of race, he believed, 'does not even count, and does not even arise for our country, [because] we do not have pure races, [because] there are no pure races, there is no consciousness of race and in no way can the unity of the state be conditioned by the breadth of foreheads or the colour of eyes'.[114]

The journalist Beno Brănișteanu similarly warned against the danger posed by 'the racist madness'.[115] Dr. Ygrec underlined the same issue in his

111 Dan Smântânescu, 'Problema rasei', *Pandectele Românizării* 1, no. 10 (1941): 307.

112 See Petre P. Negulescu, *Geneza formelor culturii: Priviri critice asupra factorilor ei determinanți* (Bucharest: Tipografia 'Bucovina' I. E. Torouțiu, 1934), 375.

113 Felix Aderca, 'Rasa pură', *Realitatea Ilustrată* 8, no. 389 (1934): 15. (emphasis in original)

114 Titus Cristureanu, 'Antropogeografia României', *Viața Românească* 26, no. 13 (1934): 68.

115 Beno Brănişteanu, 'Nebunia rasistă', *Adevărul* 49, no. 15812 (1935): 1.

articles published in the newspaper *Adevărul* (*The Truth*)[116] and, especially, in the antiracist pamphlet *Rasa și rasismul* (*Race and Racism*), published in 1936.[117] The sociologist Petre Andrei, in his turn, warned about the biologization of the debate over national specificity, highlighting the contradictory opinions expressed by anthropologists about the physical features of the Romanians or about their cephalic indices, which, according to them, were different from one geographical region to another.[118] Animated by the same desire to reject the politicization of research on race and racial types, the journalist Geri Spina (Schreiber) saluted the anti-racist position adopted at the International Congress of Anthropology organized in Bucharest at the beginning of September 1937.[119] Finally, in a remarkable text written that same year, the anatomist Grigore T. Popa offered a critical introduction to the 'problem of races' and the 'racist fashion', clearly demonstrating the political and ideological abuses of the term 'race' as used in anthropology, psychology, and sociology.[120] As we approach the end of the 1930s, however, such moderate opinions become increasingly rare.

In this chapter, I have shown that, in the interwar period, antisemitism and degeneration were intrinsically bound together in the medical and eugenic discourse on race. With regard to the racial antisemitism of the interwar period, the concept of degeneration as such became essential for the stigmatization of the Jews. The new eugenic and racial order promoted by Tipărescu and others was founded on a 'pure' nationalism for which mixing with 'elements foreign to the body of the nation'[121] had to be avoided. The 'purification of the nation', meaning the elimination of all those considered 'foreign' or 'degenerate', was seen as a political imperative, as a call to ethnic renewal. The category included Jews, Roma, and those with physical or mental disabilities. Obviously, there were significant differences regarding the degree of persecution to which these groups were subjected.

116 See, for example, Ygrec, 'Rasism… "pur sânge". Cercetări ale antropologilor români asupra poporului român', *Adevărul* 48, no. 15353 (1934): 1.

117 Doctorul Ygrec, *Rasa și rasismul* (*cea mai mare escrocherie științifică a secolului*) (Bucharest: 'Adam', 1936), 36.

118 'Noi concepții în sociologie. Conferința d–lui prof. Petre Andrei', *Dreptatea* 10, no. 2496 (1936): 2.

119 Geri Spina, 'Erezia rassistă în lumina antropologiei', *Adevărul* 51, no. 16442 (1937): 1–2.

120 Grigore T. Popa, 'Problema raselor (15 iulie 1937)', in Grigore T. Popa, *Viață și societate* (Bucharest: Fundația Regală pentru Literatură și Artă, 1946), 129–161.

121 Sorin Pavel, Petre Țuțea, Ioan Crăciunel, Gh. Tite, Nicolae Tatu, and Petre Ercuță, *Manifestul revoluției naționale* (Sighișoara: Tipografia Miron Neagu, 1935), 44.

In interwar Romania, eugenics enjoyed ever greater popularity.[122] None other than Ion I. Cantacuzino, the founder of the Romanian school of immunology, stated that, 'The notion of the purification or improvement of the race, that is *eugenics*, has made a place for itself in the mind of the general public.'[123] As will be seen in the following chapters, the theories and practical suggestions of the eugenicists migrated from a framework more of preventive medical eugenics towards one of eliminationist racist eugenics.

The degeneration of the race had become a threat to the Romanian nation and state. Beyond doubt, Romanian eugenicists were influenced by the social and biological schemes implemented by the Nazi regime in Germany. However, many of their biological arguments about the nation were not mere imitations but evolved out of local intellectual traditions. There was always a certain reticence among them regarding the application of racist theories in the Romanian context. For example, in an article published in the magazine *Luceafărul* (*The Bright Star*) in 1941, the anatomist Victor Papilian looked at the contribution brought by anthropologists and biologists, himself included, to the debate about national specificity and 'ethnic consciousness'. His conclusion was that 'neither racial composition nor the somatometric characteristics of the skull can define the Romanian nation in terms of its ethnic kinship'. Nor was the analysis of blood groups more convincing: 'The biochemical index of the blood can indicate up to a point the group to which the nation belongs, but neither anatomy nor biology can define the nation.'[124]

That same year, Papilian's colleague, Iuliu Moldovan, pointed out that 'for us Romanians, and it is good to be aware of this, the concept of race can never be a dominant idea and an ideal, bringing us together in supreme efforts and sacrifices'.[125] And three years later, Moldovan reiterated the same message. 'For us', he argued, race 'cannot be the final end of the study of humankind, just as racial purity or the protection of one component race or another in the ethnic body cannot be the final end of politics or of our state organization'.[126] It was an appeal for moderation, certainly addressed also to some of his collaborators. It was, however, too late. The Galați massacre of June 1940, the Iași pogrom of June 1941, the deportations

122 'Eugenics in Roumania', *Eugenical News* 11, no. 4 (1936): 84–85.

123 Ion I. Cantacuzino, 'Higiena și profilaxia mintală în România', *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* 4, no. 10 (1937): 101.

124 Victor Papilian, 'Conștiința etnică', *Luceafărul* 1, new series (1941): 204–205.

125 Iuliu Moldovan, 'Statul etnic', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 14, nos. 1–2 (1941): 16.

126 Iuliu Moldovan, *Introducere în etnobiologie și biopolitică* (Sibiu: Institutul de Igienă şi Biopolitică al Universității Cluj-Sibiu, 1944), 73.

of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Bukovina and Bessarabia, and of tens of thousands of Roma to Transnistria had already happened. The country's ethnic 'purification' was no longer just a nationalist fantasy; it had become a dark chapter in the history of Romanian racism.

4. Biopolitics, Anthropology, and Serology

Abstract: This chapter focuses on Romanian biopolitics and how it intersected with racial anthropology and serology. It demonstrates how biopolitics was proposed as an answer to Romania's specific historical circumstances, particularly the homogenizing nation-state building project which began after 1918. It also discusses the nationalization of anthropology during the interwar period, and the role it played in shaping the narrative about national specificity.

Keywords: racial anthropology, craniology, blood group research, ethnic minorities, Greater Romania

The slim volume *Biopolitica* (*Biopolitics*) by the Transylvanian doctor Iuliu Moldovan [figure 4] was published in 1926, in ASTRA's collection 'Biblioteca Eugenică și Biopolitică' ('The Eugenic and Biopolitical Library'). Proposing 'biopolitics' as a new form of politics in the modern state, Moldovan gave the term a strong nationalist nuance. His declared intention was 'to guarantee above all the biological prosperity of the human capital'. But what did this actually mean? Moldovan offered the following clarification: 'Human capital is physical, intellectual, and spiritual integrity. Physique, intellect, and character constitute a whole, and it is only from their harmonic equilibrium that true biological prosperity results.'[1]

Things did not look good in the 1920s, after a world war in which millions of people had died and an epidemic of the so-called 'Spanish flu' that had claimed even more victims. The 'biological prosperity of human capital', Moldovan claimed, was 'in a deplorable state'. Moreover, he warned,

1 Iuliu Moldovan, *Biopolitica* (Cluj: Institutul de Igienă şi Igienă Socială, 1926), 5.

Turda, Marius. *In Search of the Perfect Romanian: National Specificity, Racial Degeneration, and Social Selection in Modern Romania*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press / Central European University Press, 2026.
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Fig. 4. Iuliu Moldovan (author's personal collection)

avoidance of natural and social selection was leading to the biological decline of the population. The scenario he described was similar to that already seen in pre–World War I prophecies of racial degeneration: 'The final result will be a progressive reduction in the superior qualities, a quantitative and qualitative domination by those with serious hereditary defects, by those who in their whole being come close to primitiveness and savagery'.[2]

Fortunately, Moldovan believed, the situation of the Romanian people was not as disastrous as that of other European peoples, and this was principally due to the capacity of biological regeneration of the Romanian peasant. He saw in the peasantry a living organism, functioning according to biological laws, and endowed with physical and moral attributes, symbols of innate virtues transmitted from generation to generation. As has been seen in the previous chapters, the idealization of the peasantry as an uncorrupted ethnic reservoir of the nation already had a long and rich tradition. What Moldovan brought to the foreground was the importance of state intervention in the daily life of the citizen. The state was, for him, 'a political formation, a collective organization with the purpose of guaranteeing the maximum possible biological prosperity of its citizens' by respecting 'the laws of both individual and general human biological evolution'.[3] The state was becoming a protective parent whose principal concern was to ensure the future of the family and its children. With the achievement of Greater Romania, the dispersed family of the Romanians was finally made whole. The national state, Moldovan considered, had a responsibility towards the majority Romanian population, just as that population, in turn, had to assume its responsibility towards future generations. The name he gave to this strategy of protection of the health of the Romanian people on the part of the state by scientific methods founded on eugenics, anthropology, demography, and social medicine was *biopolitică* ('biopolitics').

Biopolitics had already featured in the discussions held at the first congress of Romanian doctors in Transylvania, the Banat, and Hungary, held in Sibiu on 8 January 1919.[4] A clear definition of the term appears in Moldovan's report on the activity of the Institute of Hygiene and Social Hygiene in the academic year 1921–1922. On this occasion, biopolitics was described as 'the science based on the unalterable laws of biology' that studied 'the links of all the manifestations in the life of a state with the

2 Moldovan, *Biopolitica*, 5 and 9.

3 Moldovan, *Biopolitica*, 17.

4 'Acum douăzeci de ani. Întâiul congres al medicilor români din Ardeal şi Banat ţinut în Sibiu la 8 ianuarie 1919. Memoriul Congresului – O academie biopolitică', *Tribuna* 2, no. 27 (1939): 6–7.

dominant problem of health and eugenics'.[5] In the same year, when he was still sanitary inspector general of Transylvania, Moldovan had proposed a law to establish biopolitical academies associated with the Institute of Hygiene in Bucharest and that of Social Hygiene in Cluj. According to his proposal, the academies were to be made up of a number of institutes, including an institute of eugenics and one of biopolitics. The former, he wrote, 'will study in a historical, experimental, and statistical manner the characteristics of our race and the principles by which it may be directed for the best', while the latter 'will prepare in the same manner, especially on the basis of comparative studies, the way to harmonize cultural, economic, financial, and administrative activity in the district and the municipality, to guarantee work for the healthy population in conditions favourable to body and soul'.[6] The aim of biopolitics was thus the political expression and practical implementation of the eugenic programme of protecting the health of the Romanian people. Moldovan underlined this in the report that he presented to the congress of the General Association of Romanian Doctors, organized in Timișoara from 6 to 8 July 1924. 'The hygiene of the nation, like biopolitics', he noted, 'can be achieved only by the effective collaboration of the whole country, with as its basis the instinct and consciousness of race'.[7]

Two years earlier, in 1922, the rector of the University of Cluj, physiologist Dimitrie Călugăreanu, had also published an article, under the title 'Biopolitica', in which he suggested the need for a closer connection between politics and biology. His sources of inspiration were the embryologist Oscar Hertwig and the biologist Ernst Haeckel, both of them promotors of Darwinism in Germany, who maintained that biology, as a science of life, should be placed at the centre of social and political concerns. Călugăreanu made no allusion to the application of this theory to any particular state or to a specific population; his attention was directed at humanity in general.[8]

5 'Dare de samă asupra activităţii institutului de igienă şi igienă socială în anul şcolar 1921–22', in *Anuarul Universităţii din Cluj pe anul şcolar 1921–22* (Cluj: Institutul de Arte Grafice 'Ardealul', 1923), 73

6 'Adresă şi proect de lege privind înfiinţarea unei Academii biopolitice. Inspectoratul general sanitar şi de ocrotire Cluj. No. 31628/921', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 9, nos. 11–12 (1938): 337–338. See also I. Moldovan, 'Spre o facultate de etnologie şi biopolitică', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 9, nos. 3–4 (1938): 67–74.

7 'Organizarea sănătăţii publice. Raportul profesorului Iuliu Moldovan la Congresul Medicilor', *Patria*, vol. 6, no. 153 (1924): 1.

8 Dimitrie Călugăreanu, 'Biopolitica', *Revista Ştiinţifică 'V. Adamachi'* 8, no. 2 (1922): 57–62.

Moldovan's position, however, was different. For him, biopolitics acted by way of the biological processes that regulated the relation between individual, nation, and state. The biopolitical project was necessary for the protection of the health of the Romanian nation and for the eugenic improvement of the Romanian family.[9] Conceived in these terms, biopolitics was 'neither of the right nor of the left' and had 'nothing in common with racism either'.[10] Biopolitics was the embodiment of the new post-1918 nationalist ethos. According to Moldovan, all the activities of the state should be placed in the service of the nation. As a founder of institutions, university professor, government minister, and president of ASTRA, Moldovan's contribution to the development of Romanian social and biomedical research in interwar Romania was significant, comparable with that of the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti. Although his involvement in political life varied over time, his plea for eugenics, biopolitics, and physical education would remain constant until the end of World War II.

Biopolitics, Moldovan maintained, should become the foundation stone of the new Romanian nationalism, and all his efforts were directed in this direction. In November 1925, the Medical and Biopolitical Section of ASTRA, affiliated to the Institute of Hygiene and Social Hygiene in Cluj, was established, with Iuliu Haţieganu as president, Iuliu Moldovan as vice-president, and Aurel Voinea as secretary.[11] One of the section's declared aims was to explain 'all the knowledge of the biology of race and the means of its amelioration, to have an impact on the future of this race'.[12] It, in turn, established a subsection for eugenics and another for physical education. Then, in 1927, the Feminine and Biopolitical Section of ASTRA was created, headed by Maria B. Băiulescu, the president of the Union of Romanian Women.[13] At the 1926 general meeting of ASTRA, held in Zalău, Moldovan had already proposed the adoption of biopolitics as a programme of the association. His suggestion was well received and subsequently led to the foundation in 1929 of a new organization, named Șoimii Carpaților (The Carpathian Falcons), under the leadership of Hațieganu. Its principal

9 See 'Igiena socială şi igiena naţiunii. Conferinţa d–lui profesor dr. Iuliu Moldovan', *Adevărul* 38, no. 12665 (1925): 1–2.

10 Traian Herseni, 'I. Moldovan: Introducere în etnobiologie şi biopolică', *Transilvania* 75, nos. 6–7 (1944): 465.

11 Iuliu Haţieganu, Aurel Voina, 'ASTRA medicală şi biopolitică', *Societatea de Mâine* 2, nos. 46–47 (1925): 813–814.

12 'Proces verbal luat în şedinţa a treia plenară a secţiilor literare şi ştiinţifice ale Asociaţiunii, în Cluj, 22 Maiu 1925 în sala de conferinţe a Bibliotecii Universităţii', *Transilvania* 56, nos. 9–10 (1925): 515.

13 'Secţia femenină–biopolitică a ASTREI', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 2, nos. 1–2 (1928): 63–64.

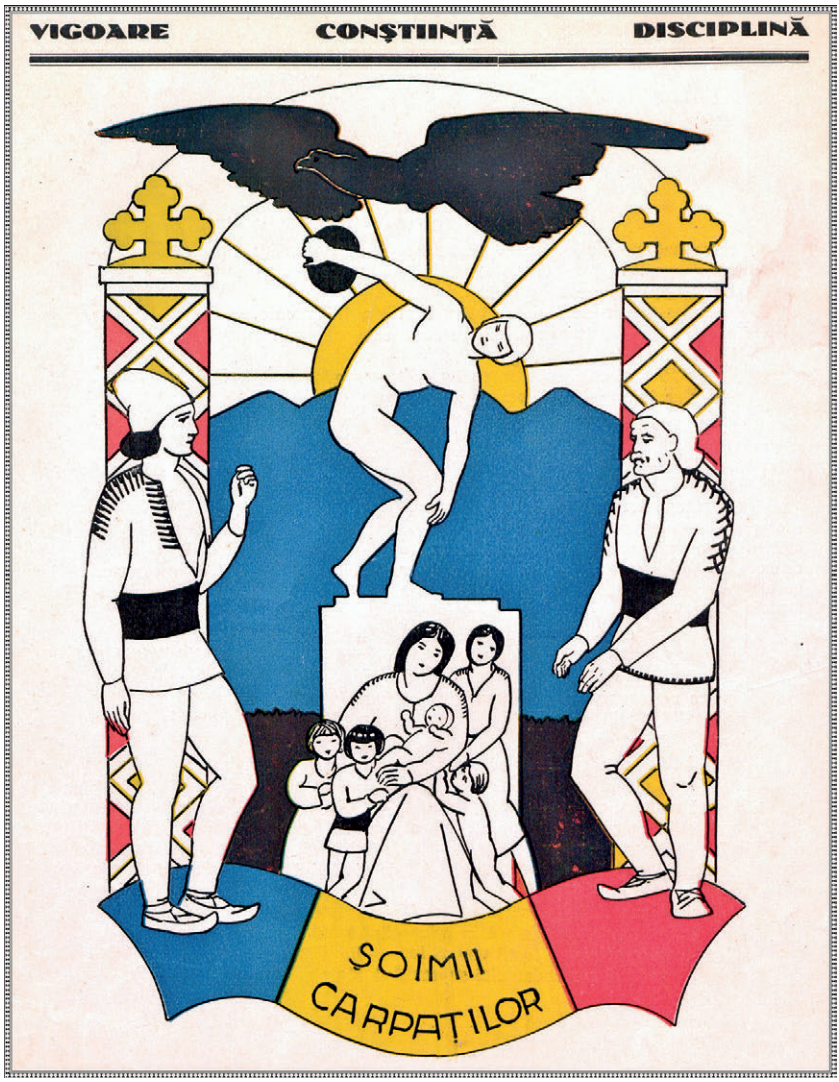


Fig. 5. *Șoimii Carpaților*, Cover, vol. 1, 1938 (Courtesy of Biblioteca Centrală Universitară 'Lucian Blaga" Cluj-Napoca)

objective was the physical education of Romanian youth.[14] [figure 5] The prolific Haţieganu also founded the first Romanian medical society of physical education and sport in Transylvania in 1930.

14 Tiberiu Spârchez, 'Activitatea culturală în cadrul Asociaţiunii Astra: Şoimii Carpaţilor', in *Douăzeci de ani de activitate românească în Clinica Medicală I din Cluj, 1919–1940* (Sibiu: Tip. Cartea Românească din Cluj, 1941), 237–246.

The first issue of *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* (*Bulletin of Eugenics and Biopolitics*) was published in 1927 under the aegis of the Medical and Biopolitical Section, and – apart from a short interruption in 1931–1933 – the journal continued to appear until 1947. In 1934, the Medical and Biopolitical Section was renamed the Eugenic and Biopolitical Section, with Moldovan as president and Iordache Făcăoaru as secretary, and after the transfer of the Institute of Hygiene to Cluj, following the return of Northern Transylvania to Hungary on 30 August 1940, it became the Institute of Hygiene and Biopolitics, arguably the first institution in the world to be so named. In 1942, a department of biopolitics was founded in the University of Cluj-Sibiu.

It is also interesting that there were other attempts to create an institute of the biology of race – one of which materialized in December 1936 at the Carol II National Academy of Physical Education in Bucharest. The new academy, which replaced the National Office of Physical Education, also included, together with an Institute of Physiology and a Laboratory of Applied Psychology, an Institute of Racial Biology, the aim of which was 'to examine all the problems of structure of race, of anthropometry, of development of children under the influence or outside the influence of physical education'. The same institute was to deal with 'all the problems of hygiene and eugenics of the race'.[15] We do not know very much about the activities of this institute, but in the summer of the following year, a team led by Horia Dumitrescu, the director of the Anatomy and Biotypology Laboratory of the same academy, carried out 315 anthropological measurements in a number of villages in Argeș County.[16]

Another proposal came from Liviu Câmpeanu, the director of the 'Gh. Mârzescu' Hospital in Brașov, who on 18 August 1937 sent to King Carol II a memorandum in which he explained the need for the foundation of an institute of biotypology in Bucharest, modelled after the Biotypological Institute created by the Italian endocrinologist Nicola Pende in Genoa in 1926. Câmpeanu hoped that the 'first custodian of the country', as the king liked to define himself, would understand the importance of such an institute, where 'with the help of biotypological methods', it would be possible 'to restore the biological value of Romanian youth by means of vigorous

15 See 'Academia naţională de educaţie fizică Regele Carol al II–lea', *Universul* 52, no. 338 (1936), 3 and 'Cum va fi organizată Academia Naţională de Educaţie Fizică', *Gazeta Sporturilor* 13, no. 2255 (1936): 1.

16 See 'Din activitatea Institutului de biologia rasei al Academiei Naţionale de Educaţie Fizică', *Universul* 54, no. 282 (1937): 2.

action'.[17] Pende's visit to Bucharest and Cluj in 1935 also contributed in important ways to the development of this line of research among Romanian physicians, anthropologists, psychologists and educationalists.[18]

As we have seen, concepts borrowed from biology and medicine were already integrated in the debates about national specificity, race, and modernity, and not only in Romania. This obsession regarding the physical characteristics of the nation and the real life of the individuals of whom it was composed, led to the transformation of biopolitics into a fundamental theory for the definition of ethno-national belonging; indeed, in the interwar period, the individual need for biological identification and the collective process of renewal of the ethnic community were interwoven with biopolitical fantasies based on racial and eugenic selection.[19] 'The ennoblement of the race', declared Petru Suciu, president of the ASTRA section in the town of Turda, 'must be a capital, indeed existential issue for our state'.[20]

It is easy to demonstrate that many writers of the interwar period, not only eugenicists and anthropologists, made use of racial typologies and arguments when they tried to define Romanian national specificity.[21] Adding their literary, abstract contributions to this cultural debate over 'who the Romanians are' or 'what the Romanians are like', anthropologists and eugenicists concentrated on quantifiable things like human skulls and blood groups. Using anthropological and serological methods, they hoped

17 Liviu Câmpeanu, 'Memoriu către Majestatea sa Regele Carol al II–lea al României', Braşov, 18 August 1937, Casa Regală, Cabinet, Probleme Interne, dos. 11/1937, files 7–10, Arhivele Naţionale ale României (hereafter ANR), Bucharest. See also Liviu Câmpeanu, 'Educaţia fizică a tineretului în lumina noilor cercetări biotipologice', radio lecture (5 May 1941), Arhivele Societăţii Române de Radiodifuziune (hereafter ASRR), Bucharest.

18 Gheorghe Banu, 'Biotipologia şi ameliorarea constituţiei umane', *Curentul* 8, no. 2539 (1935): 2 and Iuliu Haţieganu, 'Senatorul Nicola Pende', *Endocrinologie, Gynecologie, Obstretică* 1, no. 3 (1936): 193–195. In 1942, psychologist Iabob-Marius Nestor proposed the creation of an Institute of Biotypology and School Eugenics in Bucharest. See Iacob-Marius Nestor, *Probleme de psihologie şcolară*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Societatea Română de Cercetări Psihologice, 1942).

19 Aurel Voina, 'Doi factori de progres: igiena şi eugenia', *Societatea de Mâine* 1, no. 8 (1924): 183–184; Aurel Voina, *Eugenia şi igiena naţiunii* (Cluj: Tipografia Naţională, 1924); and Aurel Voina, 'Câteva cuvinte despre eugenie', radio conference (9 February 1937), ASRR, Bucharest.

20 Petru Suciu, 'Drumul spre omul nou. Răspuns la ancheta biopolitică a revistei Societatea de Mâine', *Societatea de Mâine* 20, nos. 8–10 (1943): 137.

21 Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, 'Rassa, cultura şi naţionalitatea în filosofia istoriei', *Arhiva pentru Ştiinţa şi Reforma Socială* 4, no. 1 (1922): 18–34; Garabet Ibrăileanu, 'Caracterul specific în literatura română', *Viaţa Românească* 14, no. 11 (1922): 239–252; Henrik Sanielevici, 'De ce rasă e poporul român', in Henrik Sanielevici, *Noi probleme literare, politice, sociale* (Bucharest: Ancora, 1927), 127–136; Henrik Sanielevici, 'Rasa, limba şi cultura băştinaşilor Daciei', in *idem*, *Literatura şi ştiinţa* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1930), 17–46; and Lucian Blaga, 'Despre rasă ca stil', *Gândirea* 14, no. 2 (1935): 69–73.

to obtain what they considered to be scientific knowledge about the nation. Already in 1900, Iacob Felix had been urging his anatomist colleagues to study 'the affinity of the modern Romanian skull with the Dacian skull and the ancient Roman skull'.[22] And in 1919, Grigore Antipa had published his study *Problemele evoluției poporului român* (*Problems concerning the Evolution of the Romanian People*), in which he sought 'the clarification of a purely scientific question: that of the laws that govern the life and evolution of peoples in general and of the Romanian people in particular, considered as organisms'.[23] In other words, anthropologists and eugenicists wanted to study the *real* Romanian people and to understand its physical existence and biological development. Their ambition was to create a scholarly discipline in the service of the nation. As the historian Alexandru A. C. Sturdza saw it: 'anthropology will strengthen the proof of the Daco-Latinity of the Romanian race, the undoubtable proof, the key to the ethnographic mystery, to the historical enigma regarding the Carpatho-Balkanic races'.[24] And the critic and literary historian Marin Simionescu-Râmniceanu added:

> [T]he history, the national treasury, the pride, and the organic and living being of a people and of a country do not find their complete fulfilment until the entire national edifice has been set on the foundations of a historical myth that not only can rely on the framework of historical exactitude, but is [also] synonymous with the organic past of a people.

What was needed, he continued, was not only 'anthropological and political racism' but also 'historical and territorial racism'.[25]

Research carried out in the villages and towns of Romania, in schools and hospitals, among recruits and other young people, among ethnic Romanians and minority groups, enabled anthropologists and eugenicists to initiate supposedly objective interventions in the ethnic fabric of society, comparing their interpretations of national specificity with those from literary texts, which were considered too subjective and often abstract. In view of the

22 Iacob Felix, 'Antropologia. Studiu relativ la români', *Buletinul Societății de Sciințe din Bucuresci–România* 9, no. 6 (1900): 723.

23 Grigore Antipa, *Problemele evoluției poporului român* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1919), vii.

24 Alexandru Sturdza, 'Rasa românească din punctul de vedere antropologic și etnografic', *Revista Istorică* 9, parts 1–2 (1912–13): 113. See also Alexandru Sturdza, *La Terre et la race roumaines depuis leurs origines jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Librairie J. Rothschild, 1904).

25 Marin Simionescu-Râmniceanu, *Contribuțiuni la o ideologie politică specific românească* (Bucharest: Impress, 1939), 23–24.

historiographical disputes regarding the continuity of the Romanians to the north of the Danube and within the Carpathian basin, such anthropological studies were all the more important. As the diplomat and anthropologist Nicolae Lahovary stated very clearly in 1927:

> Those who should be first to make use of the material gathered by anthropologists are Romanian historians, for out of all the peoples of Europe, it is the Romanian people about which written testimonies are most lacking, at least until late in the Middle Ages, and anthropology is the only science that can throw more light on the long centuries during which our people was formed and on its relations – in the most comprehensive sense of the word – with the ethnic groups around it.[26]

In what follows, I shall offer a sketch of anthropological and serological research in interwar Romania and analyse the manner in which this research influenced biopolitical visions of an ideal ethnic community. At the time, the physical features of the national body attracted the attention of specialists and casual commentators alike, from the sceptical adepts of the historical destiny of the nation to those excessively preoccupied with national specificity. In this context, anthropological and serological research offered an apparent legitimacy to the scholarly theory that the Romanian people had a racial nucleus that had formed in the course of time and that, as the science of heredity showed, had been transmitted from generation to generation. This racial nucleus was what anthropology, and serology had identified as 'the Romanian by blood'. This *perfect* Romanian was no longer a literary fiction, a product of the imagination, but was becoming a *real* person to be found among the peasant communities living in the villages of Romania's valleys and mountains. And once found, such *perfect* Romanians had to be studied, understood, and protected for they were the ethnic reservoir of the Romanian nation and its future depended on them.

Ethnic Diversity and National Homogeneity

After World War I, the territory of Romania was almost doubled, taking in such diverse regions, from the point of view of ethnicity, culture, and religion, as Bessarabia, the Banat, Bukovina, Maramureș, and Transylvania.

26 Nicolae Lahovary, 'Istoria şi o nouă metodă de determinare a rasselor', *Arhiva pentru Ştiinţa şi Reforma Socială* 7, nos. 1–2 (1927): 123.

In the new political and territorial context, the expectations of the majority population were very high, and in response, the Romanian state tried to impose its authority through an unprecedented process of nationalization and centralization. Transylvania was the object of particular attention. Not only was it well-known for its multi-ethnic structures, but it was also traditionally regarded by Romanian nationalists as the 'cradle' of the Romanian nation. Here, according to the conservative politician Nicolae Filipescu, was the 'Acropolis of Romanianism'.[27] The geographer Nicolae Al. Rădulescu claimed, in a memorandum sent in 1941 to the Main Office for Race and Resettlement (Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt, RuSHA) of the SS, that 'from an anthropological point of view, Transylvania constitutes the centre, not the periphery of the Romanian nation',[28] while philosopher Vasile Băncilă went as far as to say that 'we cannot understand ourselves [as Romanians], if we do not understand Transylvania'.[29] It should not be assumed, however, that other regions of Romania did not enjoy similar attention from anthropologists, both Romanian and foreign.[30]

This growing interest in anthropology must, of course, be set in its historical context. On the one hand, it indicates a new scholarly curiosity, with the intention of making known the traditional rural communities of Europe, little or not at all touched by modernity, such as were many Romanian villages in the early twentieth century. On the other hand, however, it may be seen as an expression of the simultaneous processes of biologization of collective identity and nationalization of the population; in other words, the transformation of *peasants* into *perfect* Romanians. The Romanian biopolitics of the interwar period had as its foundation the ideal of Greater Romania, that is the nationalist vision of a territory occupied by

27 Nicolae Filipescu, *Pentru România–Mare. Cuvântări din război, 1914–1916*, preface by Matei B. Cantacuzino (Bucharest: Biblioteca 'Epopeea Neamului', 1925), 39.

28 Nicolae Al. Rădulescu, 'Anthropologische Beweise für das Alter und die Ureinwohnerschaft der Rumänen in Siebenbürgen' (1941), Reichsprotektor in Boehmen und Maehren, no. 114, RuSHA Office, Box 1, 12, Národní Archiv, Prague.

29 Vasile Băncilă, *Semnificaţia Ardealului* (Bucharest: Colecţia 'Gând şi faptă', 1944), 21.

30 See, for example, Eugène Pittard, *Anthropologie de la Roumanie. Les Peuple sporadiques de la Dobrudja* (Bucharest: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1913); Eugène Pittard, 'Anthropologie de la Roumanie: documents somatologiques pour l'étude des tsiganes', *Bulletin de la Société Roumaine des Sciences* 24, nos. 3–4 (1915): 144–213; Viktor Lebzelter, 'Über die Verbreitung des Kopfindex bei den Rumänen', *Bulletin de la Section Scientifique de l'Académie Roumaine* 16, nos. 8-9 (1934): 167-70; Viktor Lebzelter, 'La Répartition des types raciaux romano-méditerranéens en Roumanie', *L'Anthropologie* 45, nos. 1–2 (1935): 65–69; Ioan Botez, *Contribuțiuni la studiul taliei și al indicelui cephalic în Moldova de nord și Bucovina* (Iași: Institutul de Arte Grafice 'Brawo', 1938); and Olga C. Necrasov, *Etude anthropologique de la Moldavie et de la Bessarabie septentrionales* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1941).

all Romanians (and only by them). It presupposed the unity of language and territory, the glorification of the past, Christianity, the sacred character of the nation, a common racial affiliation, etc. The idealization of Greater Romania was the result of the doctrine of the ethnically homogenous state, which explains the ideological importance given to eugenic, anthropological, and serological arguments about national specificity.

The racial terminology of the interwar period was, as before World War I, fluid. Different interpretations and definitions coexisted. For Herman Fischgold, a race was 'a population that perpetuates itself through successive generations, displaying certain physical and psychological traits in relation to the constitution of the hereditary complex'.[31] Iordache Făcăoaru completed this definition as follows: a race for him was 'a totality of individuals whose physical and psychological genotypic and phenotypic traits are so characteristic that the resemblances between individuals of the group and the characteristics that distinguish them from other groups can be metrically established'.[32] A simpler definition was offered by his colleague, the hygienist Petru Râmneanțu, for whom race was 'a biological and hereditary notion defined by anthropometric characteristics'.[33] To identify these characteristics and the relations between them, anthropologists used the following criteria: stature, cranial (or cephalic) indices, facial and nasal indices, skin colour, eye colour, hair colour, and, finally, after 1920, the composition of blood group. Taken together or separately, these criteria appeared in all the anthropological studies of race. Victor Papilian and Constantin C. Velluda applied them in their research on the Moți population in the region between the great and small Arieș rivers.[34] And Făcăoaru used them to identify in Romania the existence of four principal races – Alpine, Dinaric, Mediterranean, and Nordic – and five secondary races – Dalic[35] (later called 'Carpathian'), East European, Oriental, West Asiatic, and Indic.[36]

31 Herman Fischgold, *Degenerare și eugenică cu o încercare de aplicare în România* (Bucharest: Tipografia Brănișteanu, 1925), 8.

32 Iordache Făcăoaru, *Curs de eugenie* (Cluj: Institutul de Igienă şi Igienă Socială, 1935), 3.

33 Petru Râmneanţu, *Elemente de biometrie medicală şi statistică vitală* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, 1939), 164.

34 Victor Papilian and Constantin C. Velluda, 'Cercetări asupra grupelor sanghine la moţi', *Academia Română. Memoriile Secţiunii Ştiinţifice*, series 3, 14 (1939): 209–219; Victor Papilian and Constantin C. Velluda, 'Cercetări antropologice asupra moţilor dintre Arieşe', *Academia Română. Memoriile Secţiunii Ştiinţifice*, series 3, 15 (1940): 531–639.

35 A subdivision of the Nordic race, named from the Dalarna region of Sweden.

36 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Criteriile pentru diagnoză rasială', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 6, nos. 10–12 (1935): 341–368.

Georgescu had declared that no 'Romanian race' existed as such, but this did not stop other authors from discussing the race of the Romanians, whether in a biological sense, i.e., based on connections of blood, family, and common origin, or in a cultural, linguistic, and religious sense, i.e., a community speaking the same language and sharing the same culture and Christian confession, namely Orthodoxy. Frequently, the term 'race' was used as a synonym for 'people', 'nation', or 'ethnic group'. As Făcăoaru also wrote, 'the term race can be easily replaced by ethnic body, the body of the nation, or in short, the nation'.[37] Things were not quite so simple, however. In his review of the French anthropologist George Montandon's study *L'Ethnie française*,[38] the ethnologist Ion Chelcea mentioned the terminological difficulties connected to the use of the terms 'race', used by German anthropologists, and 'ethnie', a new term proposed by Montandon to describe the 'French ethnic-racial phenomenon'.[39] There was no international consensus on racial terminology and classification, although a Committee for Standardization of the Techniques of Physical Anthropology had been created in London in 1932, functioning under the auspices of the International Federation of Eugenics Societies.[40] For Chelcea, these 'problems of race' existed not only for the French, but also for the Romanians:

> for, however close the resemblance between the ethnic formation of the French and Romanian people[s] may seem to us, we cannot find an original formulation because 'l'ethnie française', translated into Romanian does not have the same liveliness; we do not assemble in one place either the racial unity of the German people, in whose wake a variety of terms have been created, or French ethnic unity.[41]

Nor could the anthropologists agree on the number of races that populated Europe.[42] There were three competing models. The first was that proposed

37 Făcăoaru, *Curs de eugenie*, 3. See also Sabin Manuilă, 'Les influences des mesures ayant un caractère général sur l'eugénétique', *Archives de Neurologie* 3, no. 3 (1938): 219–223.

38 George Montandon, *L'Ethnie française* (Paris: Payot et Cie., 1935).

39 Ion Chelcea, 'Etnic şi rasial', *Gând Românesc* 3, nos. 11–12 (1935): 607.

40 'The International Committee for Standardization of the Techniques of Physical Anthropology. A General Statement of Aims and Methods', *Man* 34, no. 109 (1934): 83–86. See also Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Unificarea clasificărilor în antropologie', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 10, nos. 1–2 (1939), 40–53.

41 Chelcea, 'Etnic şi rasial', 609.

42 Gheorghe Preda, *Rasele din Europa şi rasa română. Consideraţii generale asupra raselor din Europa şi, în special, asupra rasei noastre româneşti* (Sibiu: Tiparul Institutului de Arte Grafice 'Dacia Traiană', 1924).

by Jospeh Deniker, who had identified six primary races: Nordic, East European, Iberian, Western, Mediterranean, and Dinaric.[43] Another model was sketched by William Z. Ripley, an American economist with a passion for anthropology, who insisted that there were only three European races: Teutonic, Alpine, and Mediterranean.[44] Finally, the German anthropologist Hans F. K. Günther suggested that there were five European races: Nordic, Western, Dinaric, Eastern, and Baltic.[45]

These writers, and not only they, considered that the cephalic indices established in 1842 by the Swedish anatomist Anders Retzius to measure the maximum length and width of the skull or of the human head were the most efficient way of classifying races and sub-races.[46] In short, explained Constantin Rădulescu-Motru,

> according to the cephalic index, the rounder human heads are, i.e., the more equal the two cranial diameters, the closer they are to unity, i.e., to index 100; the longer they are, i.e., the more the longitudinal diameter exceeds the transverse diameter, they further they are from unity and consequently they have a cephalic index under 100.[47]

Craniometric analysis could also enable the testing of racial purity: the arithmetic mean could reveal whether the racial type was 'pure' or 'cross-bred'. Craniologists considered that a certain racial type might be understood as 'pure' to the extent that the measurements and indices of the racial type approached the arithmetic mean value; at the opposite extreme, the more the racial type departed from this ideal mean, the more 'cross-bred' the race was.[48]

One of the founders of French anthropology, Paul Broca, adopted the concept of cranial index and used it in his craniometric studies, thus laying

43 Joseph Deniker, *The Races of Man: An Outline of Anthropology and Ethnography* (London: Walter Scott, 1900), 325–335.

44 William Z. Ripley, *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (New York: D. Appleton, 1899). See also Dumitru Drăghicescu, 'Rasa şi clima ca factori determinanți ai psichologiei popoarelor', *Viața Românească* 1, no. 6 (1906): 373–381.

45 Hans F. K. Günther, *Rassenkunde Europas* (Munich, J. F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1925) and Octav G. Lecca, *L'homme. Les origines les races* (Bruxelles: Société Royale Belge d'Antropologie et de Préhistoire, 1931), esp. 37–48.

46 Anders Retzius, 'Mémoire sur les formes du crâne des habitans du Nord (1842)', *Annales des Sciences Naturelles* 3, 6 (Zoologie) (1846): 133–171. See also Felix, 'Antropologia', 715–716.

47 Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, 'Tipul rasial românesc după indicele cefalic', *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* 8, no. 4 (1941): 21.

48 Geoffrey M. Morant, 'A Preliminary Classification of European Races based on Cranial Measurements', *Biometrika* 20, nos. 3–4 (1928): 301–375.

the foundations for the comparative craniological study of races in the late 1860s. The Swiss anthropologist Rudolf Martin did the same thing in his popular and much quoted manual of anthropology.[49] The principal idea was that the races were differentiated according to their cranial capacity. Some, termed 'dolichocephalic', such as the Mediterranean race, had an elongated skull and a cephalic index under 76. Others, such as the Dinaric and Alpine races, had a round skull and a cephalic index between 81 and 86. These were termed 'brachycephalic' (and if the index was over 86, then they were 'hyper brachycephalic'). In the middle, with a cephalic index between 76 and 80, were the races termed 'mesocephalic', including the Nordic race. These anthropological terms were not, however, scientifically neutral. They formed the basis for the construction of racial hierarchies and pretentions to cultural superiority.[50]

The physician Mihail G. Obedenaru launched one of the first anthropological and craniological studies of the Romanians, and in 1874 he presented the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris with three skulls, one of which, he maintained, was 'Dacian', as it 'resembled the Dacian faces represented on Trajan's Column'.[51] Obedenaru continued his craniological research, as we can see from his book of 1876, in which he posited that the Romanians were brachycephalic.[52] The suggestion was one that would put down deep roots. It was discussed by Alexandru Borcescu in a study published in 1919 under the title *Noțiuni de craniologie antropologică* (*Notions of Anthropological Craniology*)[53] and in 1941, Rădulescu-Motru described the 'Romanian racial type' in similar terms on the basis of craniological studies carried out by himself and by a team of students led by Iacob-Marius Nestor in 362 villages and towns across Romania. Using a representative sample of 143,856 men, women, and children of Romanian ethnicity, Rădulescu-Motru suggested that the average cephalic index 'for the whole country' was 84.1, in other words, brachycephalic.[54]

49 Rudolf Martin, *Lehrbuch der Anthropologie in systematischer Darstellung* (Jena: G. Fischer, 1914).

50 Carlos C. Closson, 'The Hierarchy of European Races', *American Journal of Sociology* 3, no. 3 (1897): 314–327.

51 Dr. Obédénare, 'Présentation de quelques crânes roumains', *Bulletins de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris* 9, 2nd series (1874): 725–726.

52 Mihail G. Obédénare, *La Roumanie économique d'après les données les plus récentes* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1876), 374–376.

53 Alexandru Borcescu, *Noțiuni de craniologie antropologică* (Bucharest: Tip. Dim. C. Ionescu, 1919).

54 Rădulescu–Motru, 'Tipul rasial românesc după indicele cefalic', 26.

Using the racial classification mentioned above, Rădulescu-Motru established that the men and women of Muntenia, Transylvania, Oltenia, and the Banat, both from the countryside and from the towns, were of the Alpine race. Moldavia was different from the racial point of view: here, the men from the countryside were of the Nordic race, while those from the towns were of the Alpine race. The women, however, were all of the Dinaric race. In Bukovina, on the other hand, only the women from the countryside were of the Dinaric race, while the rest of the Romanians, regardless of gender, were of the Alpine race. And in Bessarabia and Dobrogea, only women from the towns were of the Dinaric race, with the other Romanians being of the Nordic race.[55] Romania was proving to be a veritable ethnic mosaic, which included all the European racial types. The anatomist and biologist Victor Preda perhaps put it better: 'In terms of its anthropological features, Romanian ethnicity presents itself as a point of intersection between the anthropological formations of Northeastern Europe, Central Europe, and the Balkan Peninsula'.[56]

Rădulescu-Motru's view that brachycephaly was predominant among the Romanians was shared by other experts, some interested in craniology, others not. The genealogist Octav G. Lecca, for example, accepted it, with some modifications, such as the suggestion that 'the ancient stock of the Romanians of Dacia belonged to the European Nordic race' and an argument regarding the 'first brachycephalic infiltration' into the present-day territory of Romania, which, he considered, had occurred towards the end of the Palaeolithic and was due to the Alpine race.[57] In the high school sociology textbook that he wrote together with the philologist Vasile Harea, the sociologist Petre Andrei likewise wrote that 'our Romanian race' was 'mostly brachycephalic',[58] while the physician Gheorghe Preda had already suggested in 1924 that 'the brachycephaly of our mountain-dwellers [...] permits us to deduce that this mountain population constitutes the primitive root of our people, our autochthonous race'.[59] But scientific knowledge meant political power. The fundamental idea was, as one author put it, that anthropological research 'may become at some point a force and a historical

55 Rădulescu–Motru, 'Tipul rasial românesc după indicele cefalic', 31.

56 Victor Preda, 'Peisajul antropologic al Țării Românești', *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* 9, no. 8 (1942): 332.

57 Octav G. Lecca, 'Elementele rasiale ale poporului român și sinteza lui de formație', *Revista Ştiinţifică 'V. Adamachi'* 7, no. 3 (1931): 127 and 132.

58 Petre Andrei and Vasile Harea, *Manual de sociologie* (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 1938), 51.

59 Gheorghe Preda, 'Câteva însemnări din studiul geografiei medicale a Ardealului', *Transilvania* 55, nos. 1–2 (1924): 27.

argument that we can wield with useful results. The study of anthropology, especially through craniometry, can show us Romanian [racial] homogeneity in time and space'.[60]

Nevertheless, it is important to mention that in other European countries, the use of craniological studies for racial purpose was regarded with increasing suspicion. This distrust was also a symptom of a growing uneasiness regarding the political abuse of the concept of race in general.[61] However, as craniology lost its privileged position among the anthropological methods for the study of race, other strategies became popular. Serology was one of them. The innovative work of physiologists, immunologists, and pathologists, such as the Austrian Karl Landsteiner – who discovered the human blood groups (A, B, and O) around 1900 – and the Pole Ludwik Hirszfeld – who suggested that the structure of blood groups in a population could explain its ethnic origin – not only contributed to the development of serology as a discipline seeking to decipher the chemical properties of blood groups in the interests of medical assistance (for example, blood transfusions and the discovery of new vaccines), but also turned a fascination with blood into a priority on the agenda of anthropological researchers.[62]

'Biochemical races', as Hirszfeld termed them, immediately attracted the attention of anthropologists, especially as serology seemed to offer new methods of classifying races, using much more precise means. Equally, serology demonstrated that blood groups were inherited according to the Mendelian laws of heredity, which gave race a distinctive character, immune to environmental influences.[63] As the Italian haematologist Leone Lattes also wrote in his book *Individuality of the Blood*, 'The fact of belonging to a definite blood group is a fixed character of every human being'.[64] The writer Alexandru Mironescu remarked, poetically, that 'blood is comparable to a

60 Z. B., 'Pe marginea unui istoric al antropologiei', *Țara* 2, no. 364 (1942): 2.

61 Alexandru Claudian, 'Rasă și cultură', in Alexandru Claudian, *Cercetări filosofice și sociologice* (Iași: Tip. Alexandru Terek, 1935), 159–183.

62 Paul Steffan, *Handbuch der Blutgruppenkunde* (Munich: J. F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1932) and Arthur E. Mourant, *The ABO Blood Groups: Comprehensive Tables and Maps of World Distribution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958).

63 Ludwik and Hanna Hirschfeld, 'Serological Differences between the Blood of Different Races', *The Lancet* 197, no. 2 (1919), 675–679. See also Constantin Velluda, 'Încercări de aplicațiune a metodelor serologice în problema raselor', *Clujul Medical*, vol. 3, no. 12 (1922): 367–368; Mihai Kernbach, 'Grupuri sanguine', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 1, no. 4 (1927): 102–106; and Dumitru I. Suchianu, 'Indicele sanguin și problema rasselor', *Universul literar și artistic* 8, no. 363 (1927): 7.

64 Leone Lattes, *Individuality of the Blood in Biology and in Clinical and Forensic Medicine* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 43 [original Italian ed. 1923].

compressed treatise of history, just as it may be comparable to a mirror in which the individual is reflected, wholly and intimately'.[65] Such opinions were frequently expressed, and not only among anthropologists. For Liviu Stan, an Orthodox theologian and professor at the Andreiana Theological Academy in Sibiu, blood was not just '*the essential* (*biological*) *characteristic of race*', but the very 'bearer of *race*'. Blood, he wrote, was 'the element that maintains it; the most important cause of the persistence of a race'.[66]

Considering that cranial measurements could not offer definitive answers to their questions about race, anthropologists hoped that serology would provide them with these answers, together with the necessary scientific evidence to explain the nature of national specificity. Gradually, the concept of race and the physical reality of blood began to function in a nationalist register, like two symbols of national belonging, making the connection between the body and the spirit of the nation. Embracing this synthesis, Romanian anthropological and serological research in the interwar period aimed to offer detailed examinations of the physical features of the nation.

Romanian Racial Anthropology

The Swiss anthropologist Eugène Pittard carried out the first systematized craniological research on Romanians in the early twentieth century. In 1911, he published his study of 426 skulls of men and women, found mainly in monasteries in Moldavia and Dobrogea and presumed to be those of Romanians. These skulls, he considered, had an average cephalic index of 82.34; in other words, they were sub-brachycephalic.[67] In subsequent years, Pittard extended his anthropological investigations to the other Romanian provinces. In an article of 1919, entitled 'Anthropological Research on the Romanians of Transylvania', and then in his volume *Etude sur l'indice céphalique en Roumanie* (*A Study of the Cephalic Index in Romania*), written together with his Romanian student Alexandru Donici and published in 1927, Pittard argued that the Romanians from the Kingdom of Romania were dolichocephalic, while those of from the regions of Bukovina and

65 Alexandru Mironescu, 'Homo sapiens', *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* 4, no. 10 (1937): 147.

66 Liviu Stan, *Rasă și religiune* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1942), 18 (emphasis in original).

67 Eugène Pittard, 'Le crâne roumain (résumé de nos connaissances actuelles)', *Bulletin de la Société d'anthropologie de Lyon* 30, no. 1 (1911): 97–113.

Transylvania were brachycephalic, letting it be understood that overall the Romanian people was made up of different racial types.[68]

A similar argument was formulated by Victor Papilian, the director of the Institute of Anatomy in Cluj. In a series of articles published in the early 1920s, Papilian sought to prove the existence of 'special cephalometric characteristics' among the Romanians of Transylvania. To this end, he had first studied 100 soldiers convalescing at the military hospital in Cluj, and then 230 soldiers from the garrison of the same city. His conclusion was that the Romanians of Transylvania had different cranial characteristics both from the Romanians of the Old Kingdom and from the Hungarians of Transylvania. In comparison with these two groups, they were hyperbrachycephalic and mesocephalic and thus belonged to a different racial substratum.[69]

Marioara Perția, a collaborator of Papilian, also suggested the existence of differences in the form of the head between the Romanians of Transylvania and those of the Old Kingdom. In 1930, Perția had been on a research placement at the Biometric Laboratory of the University of London conducted by the statistician and eugenicist Karl Pearson. Under the guidance of the anthropologist Geoffrey M. Morant, Perția had become familiarized with the meticulous method of measuring the human cranium used by the British researchers, and on her return to Cluj, she applied this method to 100 students of 'pure' Romanian origin enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine. Half of them were from the Old Kingdom and the other half from Transylvania and the Banat. The ethnic purity of the students was conditioned by the Romanian origin of their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents and by the non-existence of 'any marriage with persons of Slav, Greek, etc. blood in the course of at least three generations'.[70]

68 Eugène Pittard and Émile Sergent, 'Recherches anthropologiques sur les Roumains de Transylvanie', *Revue anthropologique* 29, no. 3–4 (1919): 57–76; Eugène Pittard and Alexandru Donici, *Etude sur l'indice céphalique en Roumanie avec un essai de repartition géographique de ce caractère* (Bucharest: Ateliers Graphiques Socec, 1927). See also Eugène Pittard, 'Popoarele din Peninsula Balcanilor. Schiță antropologică', *Buletinul Societății Regale Române de Geografie* 37 (1916–1918): 241–268 (about the Romanians, 252–254); Eugène Pittard, *La Roumanie: Valachie, Moldavie, Dobroudja* (Paris: Editions Bossard, 1917); N. R. [Nicolae Rădulescu] 'Prof. Eugène Pittard despre români. Caracterizarea rasei noastre', *Curentul* 10, no. 3450 (1937): 2.

69 Victor Papilian, 'Studiul indicelui cranian vertical și transverse–vertical pe craniile de români și maghiari', *Clujul Medical* 1, no. 9 (1920): 763–777; Victor Papilian, 'Cercetări antropologice asupra românilor ardeleni', *Clujul Medical* 2, no. 11 (1921): 335–339; and Victor Papilian, 'Nouvelles recherches anthropologiques sur la tête des Roumains de Transylvanie', *Revue Anthropologique* 33, nos. 9–10 (1923): 337–341.

70 See Marioara Perţia, 'The Roumanian Silhouette', *Biometrika* 26, no. 4 (1934): 415.

At first sight, these anthropological writings about the ethnic groups in Transylvania – especially about the presumed racial difference between the Romanians of the Old Kingdom and those of the new provinces united to it, and also about that between Romanians and Hungarians – and the conclusions at which some craniological studies arrived seemed to undermine Romanian nationalism, centred as it was on the idea of ethnic homogeneity. In fact, however, the anthropological theories elaborated by Pittard and Papilian offered precious help to those who believed in the existence of a specifically Romanian racial type, or as the Aromanian poet Nuși Tulliu put it, in 'the primary [Romanian] racial stock'.[71]

One such researcher was Ion Chelcea, who, in 1934, analysed the collection of 64 'Romanian skulls' in the Natural History Museum in Vienna, assembled in the second half of the nineteenth century by the Austrian anthropologist Augustin Weisbach. In a study published in 1870, Weisbach had calculated a cephalic index of 82.8 for the 'Romanian skulls' from Transylvania, and thus considered them brachycephalic.[72] In terms of methodology, Chelcea followed the craniological principles outlined by Rudolf Martin in his manual of anthropology, especially the nomenclature of individual cranial measurements (length, width, diameter, etc.). On the basis of these principles, and after making laborious calculations of cephalic, facial, and nasal indices, Chelcea described the following six racial subtypes [figure 6a-b] that could be found in Transylvania:

1) *Roman-Mediterranean*, 'characterized by tall stature, matching length of the skull; black hair, black eyes'.
2) *Nordic*, 'with longish head; elongated and narrow in the face; light colour of hair and eyes. The race to which it belongs is regarded by Nordic racists as the most evolved race of all'.
3) *Kurgan*, characterized by an 'average skull length; however rather by a short face'.
4) *Dinaric*, 'of tall stature, often hyperbrachycephalic, with the face brown in colour and long'.
5) *Dacian*, 'easy to recognize by the exceptional width of the skull – with an almost square face; short – or in any case average, ending in a sharp chin' and, finally,
6) *Avaro-Turanic*, 'characterized by a small head; and short face'.[73]

71 Nuși Tulliu, 'Cugetări', *Ţara Noastră* 17, no. 9 (1938): 286.

72 Augustin Weisbach, 'Die Schädelform der Rumänen', *Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 30, no. 2 (1870): 107–136.

73 Ion Chelcea, 'Tipuri de cranii românești din Ardeal (Cercetare antropologică)', *Academia Română: Memoriile Secțiunii Științifice* 10, no. 3 (1934/1935): 360–362.

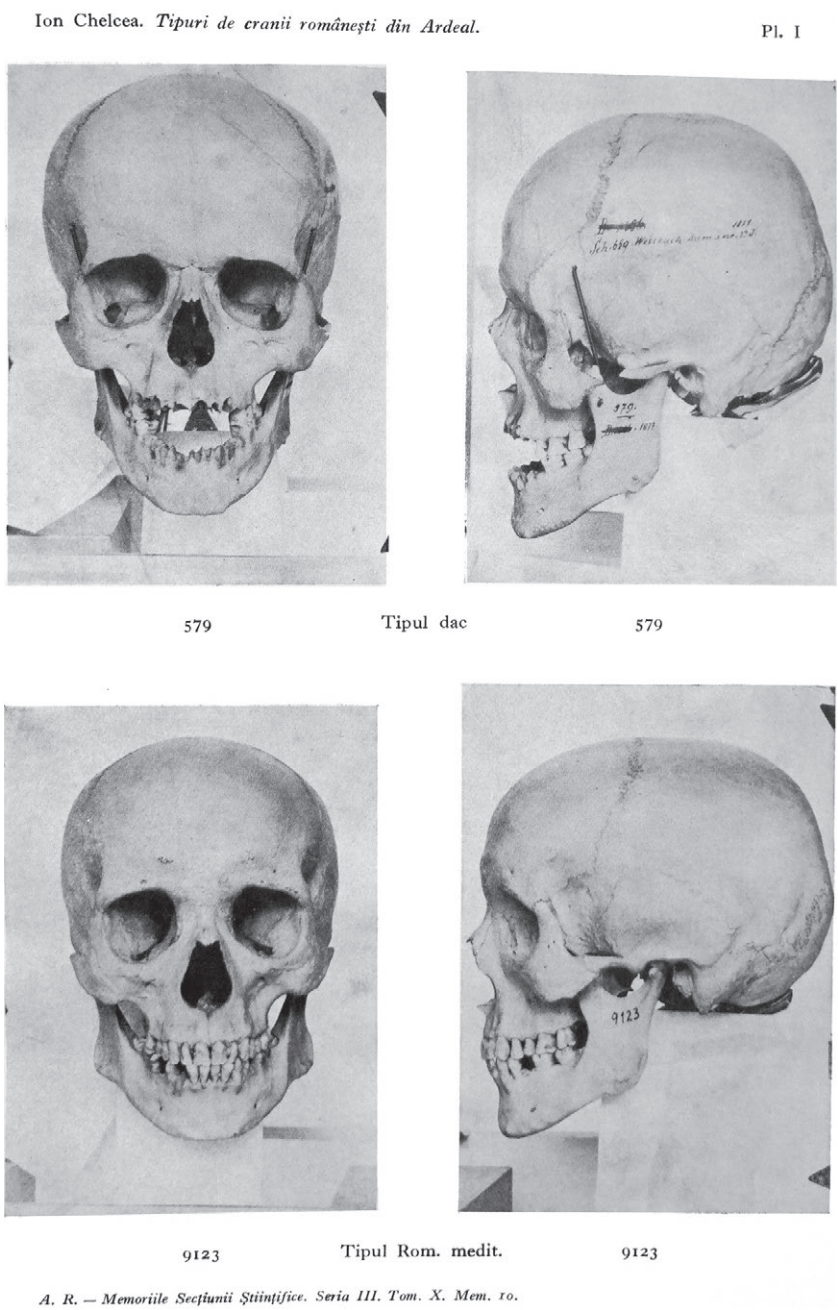


Fig. 6a. Ion Chelcea 'Tipuri de cranii românești din Ardeal'. From 'Tipuri de cranii românești din Ardeal (Cercetare antropologică)'. In *Academia Română: Memoriile Secțiunii Științifice*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1934/1935 (Courtesy of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest)

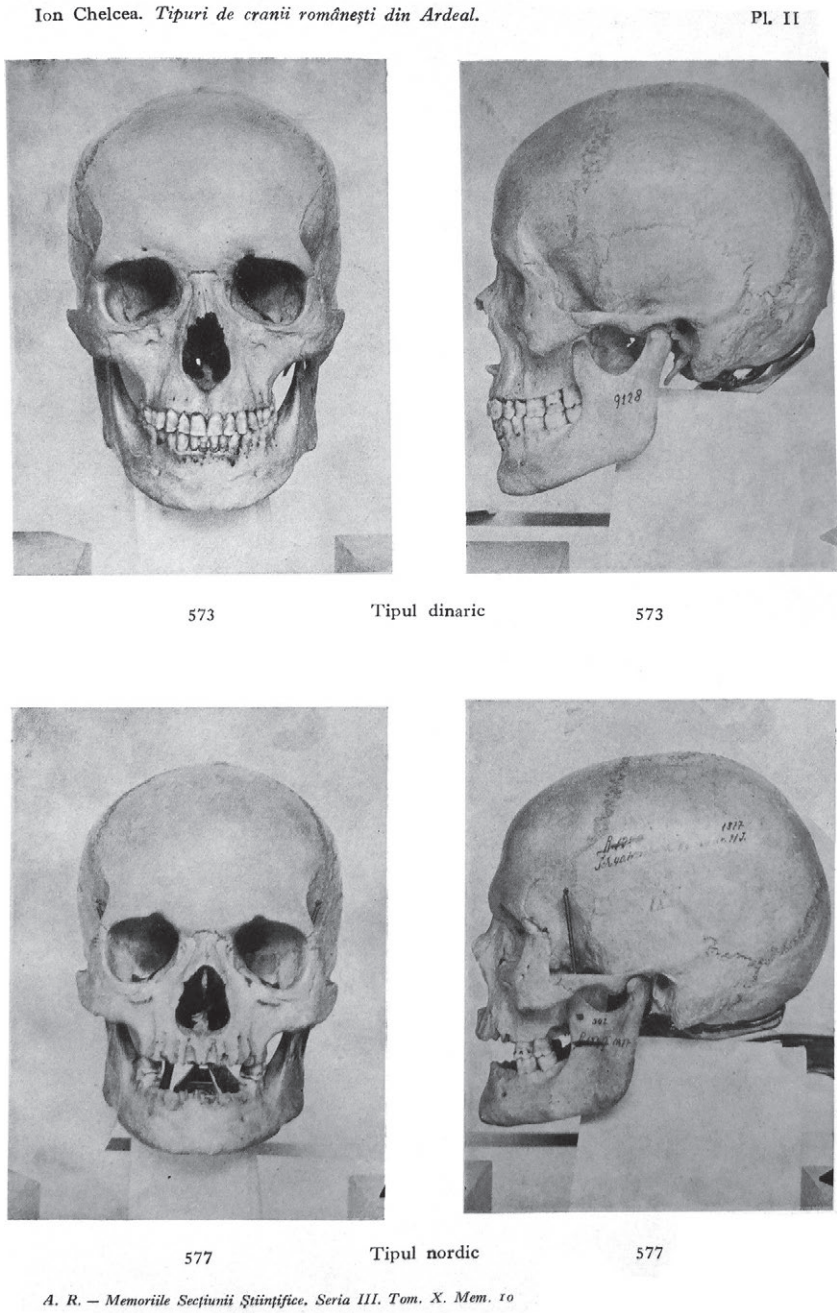


Fig. 6b. Ion Chelcea 'Tipuri de cranii românești din Ardeal'. From 'Tipuri de cranii românești din Ardeal (Cercetare antropologică)'. In *Academia Română: Memoriile Secțiunii Științifice*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1934/1935 (Courtesy of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest)

But were there really cranial differences among these racial types? According to Chelcea's measurements, there were. The Dacian racial type, for example, had a facial index of 86.63, the Nordic, 92.94, and the Turanic, 81.04. The cranial capacity of the Dacian racial type, however, was 1,465 cm^3, greater than that of the Nordic racial type, which was 1,430 cm^3, or the Turanic, which was 1,436 cm^3.[74]

Chelcea's anthropological reflections illustrate the ways in which anthropology in Romania at the time became more and more obsessed with ethnic specificity. Chelcea's claim that there was a distinct Romanian racial type relied on the idea of the ethnic continuity of the Romanians in Transylvania – an idea that served as a vehicle for various cultural constructions of national specificity in the interwar period. For example, an image often invoked by the nationalist tradition referred to the fact that territories inhabited by the Romanians had frequently been 'invaded', by the Romans in Antiquity, by the Hungarians in the Middle Ages, and by the Jews in modern times. The idea was neither new nor specifically Romanian: all the countries of Central and Southeastern Europe are ethnically very mixed. Nevertheless, such a difficult past could be used by the eugenicists, who maintained that only a people with superior racial qualities could have survived centuries of foreign domination. According to Gheorghe Banu, 'the native racial type, [that] of the Romanians, is characterized by *vitality* and by a degree of moral and intellectual superiority'. It was, he believed, very important 'that the primary constitutional stock was subjected, in the course of the vicissitudes of history, to a *selection* that intensified the native racial qualities'.[75] What exactly had contributed to the make-up of this so-called 'native race' was a subject open to debate. Some writers insisted on the preponderance of the Roman element, others on that of the Dacian, while still others spoke of a Daco-Roman or even Daco-Romano-Slav synthesis.[76] An 'anthropological portrait' of the Romanian, said Octav G. Leca in 1931, could barely be sketched on the basis of the existing research.[77] A decade

74 Chelcea, 'Tipuri de cranii românești din Ardeal', 368.

75 Gheorghe Banu, 'Eugenia poporului românesc', *Revista de Igienă Socială* 11, nos. 11–12 (1941): 346 (emphasis in original).

76 Nicolae Densușianu, *Dacia prehistorică* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice 'Carol Göbl'), 1913; Vasile Pârvan, *Dacia: An Outline of the Early Civilizations of the Carpatho-Danubian Countries* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1928); and Alexandru Donici, 'Crania Scythica: Contribution a l'étude anthropologique du crâne scythe et essai relatif à l'origine géographique des scythes', *Academia Română: Memoriile Secțiunii Științifice* 10, no. 3 (1934/1935): 289–329.

77 Octav G. Lecca, 'Cercetarea caracterelor rasiale la români prin analiză antropologică', *Academia Română: Memoriile Secțiunii Științifice* 8, no. 3 (1931): 159–167. See also 'Problema raselor în România', *Patria* 16, no. 285 (1934): 1.

later, Ion F. Buricescu, a philosophy teacher at the Gheorghe Lazăr High School in Bucharest, reached the same conclusion.[78]

The nationalist-culturalist approach to the past was a challenge to the scientific objectivity to which anthropology aspired. At the same time, it could be seen as an attempt to define Romanian national specificity.[79] We may observe this process in the work of very different writers who made direct use of the idea of a Romanian racial type and sought obsessively to integrate it into the debate about the nation. The concept of race was gradually adopted by the nationalist rhetoric of inclusion and exclusion, becoming a criterion for defining who was and who was not Romanian.

There were, of course, also contrary opinions and authors who stated that the aim of anthropological research on the race of the Romanians was quite different. In its issue of 8 July 1934, the popular magazine *Realitatea Ilustrată* (*Reality Illustrated*) offered a succinct presentation of the history of races but drew attention to the intention of cultivating 'a single anthropological type, with the aim of identifying race with nation'. This method of biological selection in fact presupposed the removal of those 'co-nationals who belong to [different] anthropological types'. This was, the article suggested, impossible to carry out in practice, as 'these co-nationals have belonged for many generations to the homeland and, alongside the fact that we have no right to exclude them from the bosom of the nation, we have no precise and convenient means of distinguishing them from the rest of the population'. The conclusion was clear: 'No procedure will ever succeed in purifying the race, in the anthropological sense of the word'.[80]

These objections were legitimate, but what the anthropologists were trying to prove was that by means of anthropometric measurements, somatoscopic observations, and blood analysis, they could distinguish a Romanian racial type. This was the principal objective. At the end of the day, these debates about national specificity may have lacked scientific coherence, but by drawing attention to the Romanian population, they ultimately facilitated the emergence of a local anthropological tradition. By the late 1920s the possibility of organized anthropological research combined with belief in the existence of a racial synthesis specific to the

78 Ion F. Buricescu, 'Rasa şi sufletul românesc', *Revista de Filozofie* 26, nos. 1–2 (1941): 56–84.

79 Romulus S. Molin, *Românii din Banat*, 2nd ed. (Timişoara: Editura Autorilog, 1932); Petru Râmneanţu, 'Le type biologique de la population du Banat', *Bulletin de l'Académie de Médicine de Roumanie* 2, no. 6 (1937): 716-736; and Tiberiu Morariu, *Die Maramureş. Ein Rumänisches Kerngebiet* (Bucharest: Ed. Dacia, 1942).

80 I. S. [Ion Simionescu], 'Rasele în lumina antropologiei', *Realitatea Ilustrată* 8, no. 389 (1934): 11.

Romanians was attracting considerable attention from a new generation of experts, most of whom had benefitted from specialized training abroad.

Iordache Făcăoaru was one of the Romanian anthropologists who made a significant contribution to the crystallization of this local tradition. He had defended his doctoral thesis at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Munich in 1931. There he had studied pedagogy with Aloys Fisher, anthropology with Theodor Mollison, craniology with Wilhelm Gieseler, and racial hygiene with Fritz Lenz.[81] On his return to Romania, Făcăoaru became an assistant at the Institute of Hygiene and Social Hygiene in Cluj, where he published his doctoral thesis in 1933 under the title *Soziale Auslese: Ihre biologischen und psychologischen Grundlagen* (*Social Selection: Its Biological and Psychological Bases*).[82] In the same year, together with Victor Papilian and the ethnographer Romulus Vuia, Făcăoaru founded the Romanian Society of Anthropology, the first organization of its kind in Romania, and he served as its secretary until 1940.[83] In 1934, at the request of the society, he published a textbook of anthropology, with the declared intention of popularizing the discipline.[84]

Făcăoaru enjoyed a good international reputation, especially in Germany[85] and Italy[86] and published extensively on matters of anthropology and eugenics. He was convinced that anthropology had not only an educational role, but also a 'biopolitical-normative' one,[87] with 'the task of clarifying at least a few of the most significant questions regarding our political rights over the territory that we hold and over other territories, which we do not

81 See Studenten-Kartei: Făcăoaru Jordache, no. 31, Universitätsarchiv der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, and Făcăoaru Iordache, personal file, no. 10489. Direcția Personalului și Secretariatului, Arhiva Ministerului Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale, Bucharest.

82 Iordache Făcăoaru, *Soziale Auslese: Ihre biologischen und psychologischen Grundlagen* (Cluj: Huber Verlag, 1933).

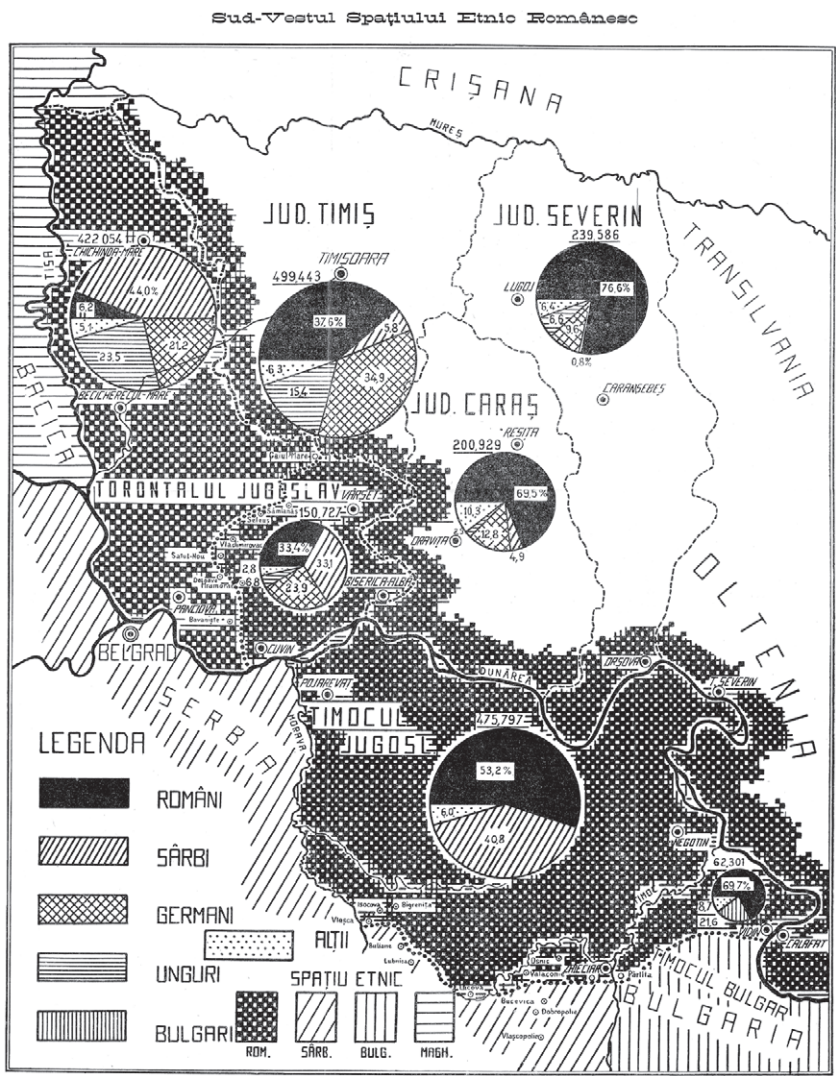
83 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Înfiinţarea şi activitatea "Societăţii române de antropologie" din Cluj', in *Din istoria preocupărilor despre om* (Bucharest: Centrul de Cercetări Antropologice, 1973), 93–164. See also Caius V. Antonescu, 'Considerațiuni istorice asupra antropologiei în România', in *Darea de seamă asupra ședințelor Societății Române de Anthropologie din Cluj pe anul 1933–34* (Cluj: Tip. Transilvania, 1934), 50–55.

84 Iordache Făcăoaru, *Elemente de antropologie. Somatometrie, somatoscopie, cefalometrie*, (Cluj: Tipografia Transilvania, 1934).

85 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Die "Ganzheitsanthropologie" und das Studium des Menschen in Rumänien', *Zeitschrift für Rassenkunde* 6, no. 2 (1937): 248–250 and Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Beitrag zum Studium der wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Bewährung der Rassen', *Zeitschrift für Rassenkunde* 9, no. 1 (1939): 26–39.

86 Guido Landra, 'Razza e nazionalità in Romania', *Difesa della Razza* 2, no. 21 (1939): 10-13.

87 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Amestecul rasial şi etnic în România', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 9, nos. 9–10 (1938): 276.



Map 2. 'Sud-vestul spațiului etnic românesc'. In Petru Râmneanțu, 'Românii dintre Morava și Timoc și continuitatea spațiului lor etnic cu al românilor din Banat și din Timocul bulgar', in *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic*, vol. 12, nos. 1–4 (1941).

hold'.[88] While Papilian and Chelcea displayed a moderate interest in the relation between anthropology, nationalism, and biopolitics, Făcăoaru showed no such restraint. 'The object of anthropology', he emphasized, 'is

88 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Socialantropologia ca știință pragmatistă', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 9, nos. 11–12 (1938): 358.

not the individual but the ethnic body'.[89] Consequently, it was important, as other researchers, such as Petru Râmneanțu and Emil Petrovici, had shown, for the somatic features specific to the Romanians to be identified, especially in regions outside Romania, but where Romanian-speaking communities had lived for centuries.[90] [map 2]

Făcăoaru, following the example of his mentor, Iuliu Moldovan, was dedicated to the Romanian biopolitical programme, which, he believed, included not only the application of biopolitical commandments, but also an 'individual, ethnic, and racial differentiation' on the basis of which those considered 'superior' from a eugenic point of view should be put in positions of leadership of the country. In Făcăoaru's view, 'the biopolitical significance of racial differentiation'[91] was expressed considering the biological value of each individual race. Thus, for him, the Nordic race was at the top of the hierarchy, and the Mongoloid race at its bottom. Făcăoaru developed this theory of 'ethnic hierarchy' in a study published in 1943 under the title 'The Bio-Racial Value of the European Nations and of the Romanian Provinces'.[92] It was based on the anthropological research that he had carried out, starting in 1932, at the Institute of Hygiene and Social Hygiene in Cluj, the Institute of Social Research, and the Bioanthropology Section of the Institute of Statistics in Bucharest, of which he was director at the time.

In Făcăoaru's view, European people were a mixture of races and sub-races. Some, like the Nordic race, he considered to be 'over-gifted' and others, like the Dinaric race had 'medium giftedness', while in last place were races with 'sub-average giftedness', like the Mongoloid and Negroid races. There was, Făcăoaru believed, a racial hierarchy in the ethnic structure of each people. For example, among the Bulgarians, the Mediterranean (41%) and Dinaric-Alpine (24%) races predominated, while the Nordic race was found only in the proportion of 8%. Among the Germans, on the other hand, the Nordic race accounted for 50% and the Alpine 20%. The English were 60% Nordic and the Swedes 80%. The East European race was predominant among the Magyars (35%), along with the Dinaric and Mongoloid races (20% each). Among the sedentary Roma in Transylvanian villages whom Făcăoaru had studied, the

89 Făcăoaru, 'Socialantropologia ca știință pragmatistă', 364.

90 See Petru Râmneanțu, 'Românii dintre Morava și Timoc și continuitatea spațiului lor etnic cu al românilor din Banat și din Timocul bulgar', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 12, nos. 1–4 (1941): 40–62 and Emil Petrovici, 'Românii dintre Morava și Timoc', *Transilvania* 72, no. 3 (1941): 201–211.

91 Iordache Făcăoaru, *Structura rasială a populației rurale din Romania* (Bucharest: Tipografia Curţii Regale 'F. Göbl', 1940), 16.

92 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Valoarea biorasială a națiunilor europene și a provinciilor românești (O primă încercare de ierarhizare etnică)', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 14, nos. 9–10 (1943): 278–310.

Indic race predominated (88%). In the racial composition of the Romanians, the representative races were the Alpine (29%), the Mediterranean (19%), the Nordic (14%), the East European (12%), and the Dinaric (11%).[93]

Făcăoaru went on to analyse the 'biological value' of the European peoples – more precisely, 'the overall value, physical and psychological, genotypic and phenotypic of an individual or a people, of a race or an ethnicity'.[94] He used racial and serological measurements, establishing that the Swedes were at the top of the hierarchy and the Romanians in sixth place, while the Hungarians were in fifteenth place and the Roma came last. This analysis was supplemented by another, which also included intelligence ('mental level'). On the basis of these three criteria (racial, mental, and serological), Făcăoaru proposed a 'biological hierarchy of ethnicities either European or of European origin'. The English came in first place, and the Roma last. In Făcăoaru's view, the 'mental level of the Gypsies in our country reaches only 70–80% of the mental level of the Romanian villagers'.[95] The Romanians themselves occupied the fourteenth place.

Such hierarchies highlighted generalities, not particularities;[96] in other words, as Făcăoaru himself admitted, 'not all the individuals of a superiorly gifted people are superior' and 'not all individuals of an inferiorly gifted people are inferior. Any people, of course, contains minus and plus variants, of variable biological level.'[97] It was important to underline this fact, especially when attention was directed at the Romanians. Făcăoaru divided them according to the historical regions of Romania: Bukovina, Banat, Transylvania, Crișana, and Maramureș (the 'western provinces'); Moldavia, Bessarabia, and Transnistria (the 'eastern provinces'); and Oltenia, Muntenia, and Dobrogea (the 'southern provinces'). His analysis included men and women from both the rural and the urban population, and for his estimate of their 'bio-racial level', he resorted to four criteria: economic efficiency, social mobility, completion of military service, and 'the psychological value of the races (mental level)'.[98]

As was to be expected, the biological value decreased from the west to the east and from the north to the south. Thus, on the basis of the male sample,

93 Făcăoaru, 'Valoarea biorasială', 280–281.

94 Făcăoaru, 'Valoarea biorasială', 282

95 Făcăoaru, 'Valoarea biorasială', 287.

96 See, for example, the study by Maria Săndulescu titled *Contribuții la problema corelației dintre indicele cefalic și inteligență* (Bucharest: Societatea Română de Cercetări Psihologice, 1939).

97 Făcăoaru, 'Valoarea biorasială', 289.

98 Făcăoaru, 'Valoarea biorasială', 292.

the only one that contained anthropological material from all the regions of Romania, Făcăoaru established that Transylvania was 'the province richest in superiorly endowed racial elements', while Moldavia was the poorest.[99] For the female sample, he said that the situation was different, but we do not know exactly in what way, as, not having anthropological data from Moldavia and Bessarabia, he did not make a racial hierarchy for Romanian women.

Nevertheless, for the analysis to be as complete as possible, serological samples were also necessary. Using his own and others' research, Făcăoaru suggested that the frequency of Group A, so-called European, decreased from the north and west to the south and east. According to his calculations, 44,052 Romanians of both sexes and all ages, had already undergone a serological examination. These serological findings he emphasized, confirmed the other types of racial research performed in Romania. The trajectory was clear: anthropology, Făcăoaru claimed, brought history and politics together. Ironically, he never hesitated to invoke his pretention to objectivity, although his biases were obvious, as can be seen from the following extract:

> The researcher who has attentively turned his eyes from the lower extreme of the broad masses, from the miserable Gypsy colonies, from the inmates of the prisons, from the most inferior social and ethnic categories with the most faded evidence of humanity, to the other extreme, that of the inhabitants of the richest villages of the old country or the most advanced Transylvanian villages, has in his mind a precise hierarchization of the criteria on which he bases his value judgments in this field.[100]

The idea of *inferiority* here served above all to legitimize exclusionary practices. But these prejudices regarding the socially and ethnically stigmatized were not peculiar to Făcăoaru. They were formulated and promoted by other eugenicists during this period and have remained deep-rooted in political practices and state institutions, both at the level of Romanian society as a whole and at that of its elites, until the present day.

On the other hand, it was Făcăoaru who used this research, which had pretensions to be scientific, to construct a national characterology, idealizing the image of the peasant in general and that of the Transylvanian peasant in particular. The following description is worth quoting in full:

99 Făcăoaru, 'Valoarea biorasială', 295.
100 Făcăoaru, 'Valoarea biorasială', 304.

> Compared with the villager of the other provinces, the Transylvanian villager is more just, more disciplined, more prosperous, more balanced, more settled, more orderly, has a more appropriate judgement of people and things, is more serious in his work, of more goodwill and less vain. Excesses of speech, of gestures, of eating, and above all of drinking or sexual excesses occur everywhere, but in Transylvania these manifestations remain in the most muted forms, below the level of the other provinces. [...] Consequently, the Transylvanian is less impulsive, less violent, less passionate. Perhaps he loves and hates less violently, but in exchange his feelings are longer lasting. He is tardier to give expression to his emotions, but in exchange his feeling of these, once they are unleashed, is more decisive and deeper. His attitude is more reflexive, more reserved, more phlegmatic, and gives his personality an air perhaps less attractive and less naïve, but more mature and more controlled.[101]

Făcăoaru's regional preference was not dictated by his place of origin. He himself was not from Transylvania, but was born in the Moldavian village of Muncel, today in Vrancea County. His intention was to explain *objectively* – using racial, anthropological, and serological research – what other writers tried to express in *subjective* terms, or in poetic allegories and philosophical constructions. Romanian national specificity and the Romanian racial type could, he believed, be illustrated by anthropological studies. Racial purity was not a possible national project, considering that the Romanian population was mixed, originating from different European races and sub-races. Thus, anthropological research should be directed towards those regions imbued with Romanianness, in order to find the superior racial elements. And Făcăoaru identified these among the Romanians of Transylvania, just as Nicolae Filipescu had coveted after the outbreak of World War I.

Făcăoaru's theory of racial hierarchy clearly expressed the difficulties encountered by the interwar Romanian nationalists when they tried to define a homogeneous ethnic nation. Unable to choose between asserting the assimilability of the national project and proclaiming its exclusionary ambitions, they ended up promoting both. These difficulties were not insurmountable, however, as Romanian racism was never too rigid. Rather it was flexible and adaptable, and often inconsistent. Even when it was widely endorsed by the Romanian state, it functioned in contradictory ways.

101 Făcăoaru, 'Valoarea biorasială', 305.

Romanian Racial Serology

On the basis of the special properties of blood groups, anthropologists tried to identify the biological relations between individuals of the same ethnic group and those of different groups in order to demonstrate the continuity of hereditary biological and serological characteristics. Among the first Romanian scientists who popularized research based on the new serological theories were Sabin Manuilă and Gheorghe Popovici, the latter a professor of physiology in the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj.[102] In an article published in the periodical *Convorbiri Literare* (*Literary Conversations*) in 1924, Manuilă saluted the use in anthropology of a new method, provided by serology. This was isohaemagglutination, namely the process by which an individual's blood group – AB, A, B, or O – was determined.

Manuilă also offered a summary of Hirszfeld's theory of 'the biological indices of race', according to which individuals with an index greater than 2.0 were of 'European type', those with an index less than 1.0 were of 'Asiatic-African type', and those with an index between 1.0 and 2.0 were of 'intermediary type'. This was passed down from generation to generation according to the Mendelian laws of heredity. On the basis of his examination, independently or together with Popovici, of more than 3,000 Romanians from the Banat, Maramureș, and Transylvania, Manuilă suggested that their 'biological blood index' was 2.20; by comparison, that of the Serbs and Bulgarians was 2.29, and that of the Greeks, 2.25. Manuilă gathered these indices under one generic title as the 'Southeast European index', as his research demonstrated that, although it was possible that these peoples did not originate from the same race, they must be racially related.[103]

Manuilă's article gave rise to numerous debates about serology in Romania. Gheorghe Popovici was the first to react, in the Cluj periodical *Cultura* (*Culture*). From a methodological point of view, Popovici, too, was

102 See Sabin Manuilă and Gheorghe Popoviciu, 'Recherches sur les races roumaine et hongroise en Roumanie par l'isohémagglutination', *Comptes Rendus des Séances et Mémoires de la Société de Biologie* 90, no. 1 (1924), 542–543; Gheorghe Popovici, 'Différences dans la structure biologique en Roumanie d'après la situation géographique', *Comptes Rendus des Séances et Mémoires de la Société de Biologie et de ses Filiales* 76, tome 1 (1924): 1069-1071; Sabin Manuilă, 'Recherches séroanthropologiques sur les races en Roumanie par la méthode de l'isohémagglutination', *Comptes Rendus des Séances et Mémoires de la Société de Biologie et de ses Filiales* 76, tome 1 (1924): 1071–1073; and Sabin Manuilă, 'Seroanthropological Investigations among Some Races in Romania', *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Institut des Sciences de Roumanie* 4, no. 2 (1940): 161–165.

103 Sabin Manuilă, 'Cercetări biologice cu privire la rasse, prin aplicarea unei metode nouă', *Convorbiri Literare* 56, no. 9 (1924): 696.

an adept of the serological method advocated by Ludwik Hirszfeld. However, unlike Manuilă, he wanted to sketch more than a theoretical framework, and he approached the sensitive theme of differences and similarities 'in the biological structure of race of the peoples of Romania'. From the start, Popovici emphasized that 'in the Balkans, race cannot explain the differences between peoples and can come under consideration to this end only in the last place'.[104] The population was very mixed. However, with the appearance of serology, anthropology had acquired a new method, which he considered to be 'more objective, more precise, more subtle', a method that could identify 'differences in the blood structure, deeper, less subject to change, than those detected by research until now'.[105]

Serology served a number of purposes. On the one hand, it demonstrated that within one and the same nation there existed different 'serological races'. On the other, it confirmed that the properties of the blood were transmitted according to Mendelian laws of heredity. Corroborating the results obtained by Hirszfeld in Salonica with those of Oszkár Weszeczky and Frigyes Verzár in Hungary[106] and those of Manuilă in Romania, Popovici formulated his own contribution to the debate on 'the biological index of the Romanians'. He examined 12,000 individuals from different social environments (soldiers, hospital patients, school pupils, and peasants) and of different ethnic origins, including Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Roma, Jews, and Russians. Based on this research, Popovici arrived at a conclusion different from Manuilă's: the 'biological index of the Romanians' was 2.01, placing them 'between that of the peoples of the Balkans and that of those from Russia'. That of the Hungarians of Transylvania, for example, was 1.7, 'close to that of their brothers from the Great Plain (the puszta)'.[107] Popovici also established that the Roma were of Indian origin.

Regarding the differences of racial composition within the same country, both Manuilă and Popovici observed that the racial index varied according to the geographical distribution of the ethnic groups. Popovici built his

104 Gheorghe Popovici, 'Diferențe și asemănări în structura biologică de rasă a popoarelor României', *Cultura* 1, no. 3 (1924): 224.

105 Popovici, 'Diferențe și asemănări în structura biologică de rasă a popoarelor României', 224–225.

106 See Oszkár Weszeczky, 'Untersuchungen über die gruppenweise Hämagglutination beim Menschen', *Biochemische Zeitschrift* 107, nos. 4–6 (1920): 159–171 and Frigyes Verzár and Oszkár Weszeczky, 'Rassenbiologische Untersuchungen mittels Isohamagglutininen', *Biochemische Zeitschrift* 126, nos. 1–4 (1921): 33–39.

107 Popovici, 'Diferențe și asemănări în structura biologică de rasă a popoarelor României', 226.

argumentation around the following hypothesis: the blood of the Romanians in the mountainous regions of Transylvania, he maintained, had different properties from that of the Romanians of Muntenia or Dobrogea. As a general rule, the more a region had been exposed to the migrations of the early Middle Ages, the lower it was placed in European group A (and the higher in group B). This geographical variation within a specific ethnic group was further tested by studying the mixed subregions of Transylvania, where there were villages of Romanians, of Hungarians, and of Germans in close proximity to each other. The serological characteristics of each group reflected their ethnic affiliation, an affiliation that was not influenced by the fact that they had lived next to each other for centuries. Ultimately, Popovici insisted, serology could indicate whether the common racial elements identified in different ethnic groups could or could not be explained by their similar origin. Starting from this claim, he drew the conclusion that the plausible explanation for the approximately similar biological indices in the case of the Romanians and the Hungarians living in the same region was that the two peoples might have had a common ancestor, specifically an 'autochthonous race' whose existence had preceded the arrival of the Hungarians in the Carpathian basin in the late ninth century.

Despite Popovici's efforts to distance himself from nationalist interpretations of serology, in reality his argumentation served to support theories of Romanian historical continuity in Transylvania. 'The peoples of Romania', he wrote, 'are grouped around a Romanian nucleus, in the central mountains of Transylvania, who have preserved a race richer in European blood elements'.[108] It was a point of view that he had formulated before. In another article, in fact an improved version in French of his article in the journal *Cultura*, published a year later in *Revue Anthropologique* (*Anthropological Review*), Popovici managed to maintain scholarly appearances for his serological arguments without resorting to theories of racial origins that were becoming popular in Romanian nationalist circles.[109]

The impact of the serological research carried out by Manuilă and Popovici on anthropological and biopolitical theories in Romania was considerable. Both collaborated with Iuliu Moldovan, the director of the Institute of Hygiene and Social Hygiene in Cluj, who was himself the mentor of many eugenicists and anthropologists of the interwar period, including Aurel Voina, Sabin Manuilă, Iordache Făcăoaru, Petru Râmneanțu,

108 Popovici, 'Diferențe și asemănări în structura biologică de rasă a popoarelor României', 234.
109 Gheorghe Popoviciu, 'Recherches sérologiques sur les races en Roumanie', *Revue Anthropologique* 35, nos. 4–6 (1925): 152–164.

Ovidiu Comșia, Mihai Zălog, and Salvator Cupcea. Various perspectives on race and on the typology of ethnic groups were discussed and popularized in this circle of friends and colleagues.[110] Two of them, Făcăoaru and Râmneanțu, stood out for their contribution to the development of Romanian sero-anthropology.

It should be mentioned that serological research was not only carried out in Cluj. There was also a smaller, but very active group in the University of Iași, consisting of P. Ionescu and Ecaterina Ionescu, who worked with the biologist Constantin Ionescu-Mihăeşti in the pathology laboratory of the Faculty of Medicine,[111] and Olga Necrasov, a student of the palaeontologist Ioan G. Botez, in the Department of Palaeontology and Anthropology.[112] Another group of researchers, including Maria H. Dumitrescu, Alexandru Manuilă, Maria Veștemeanu, and Mircea Vlad, formed under the direction of Francisc Rainer at the Institute of Anatomy and Embryology of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Bucharest.[113] Alongside these, we should also recall such researchers as Alexandru Gr. Ionescu,[114] Cornelia V. Pătrăşcanu,[115] Victor Preda,[116] and Florica Ettinger.[117] In addition, some of them were

110 A good example is the collaboration between Făcăoaru and Râmneanțu at the International Congress of Anthropology held in Bucharest in September 1937. Their contributions covered a number of topics in sero-anthropology. See Petru Râmneanțu and Iordache Făcăoaru, 'The Blood Groups and the Pigmentation of the Iris in the Population from Transylvania', 'The Blood Groups and the Facial Index in the Population from Transylvania', 'Das Verhältnis zwischen Rassen und Blutgruppen bei der Siebenbürgischen Bevölkerung' and 'Der Längen-Breitenindex und die Blutgruppen bei der Siebenbürgischen Bevölkerung', in *XVIIe Congrès International d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie Préhistoriques* (Bucharest: Imprimerie Socec, 1939), 323–325, 333–337, 337–339 and 339–342.

111 Petre Ionescu and Ecaterina Ionescu, 'Beiträge zum Studium der Blutgruppen in Rumänien', *Folia Haematologica* 42, no. 1 (1930): 91–98.

112 Olga Necrasov, 'Grupurile sanguine și aplicarea lor în antropologie', *Revista Ştiinţifică 'V. Adamachi'* 20, no. 1–2 (1934): 39–43.

113 See Maria H. Dumitrescu, *Contribuţiuni la studiul grupelor sanguine în România* (Bucharest: Tipografia Cartea Medicală, 1927); Dem. Paulian and Maria Veștemeanu, 'L'importance du groupe sanguin dans l'anthropologie', *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Sciences de Roumanie* 4, nos. 5–6 (1940): 402–422; and Alexandru Manuilă and Maria Veștemeanu, 'Constatări cu privire la aplicarea metodei sero–antropologice pe teren', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 14, nos. 3–4 (1943): 121–125.

114 Alexandru Gr. Ionescu, *Contribuţiuni la studiul grupelor sanguine la alienaţi* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice 'Lucia', 1928).

115 Cornelia Pătrăşcanu, *Contribuţiuni la studiul grupelor sangvine* (Bucharest: Institutul Medico–Legal, 1936).

116 Victor Preda, 'Corelația dintre tipul constituțional și grupele sanghine', *Mișcarea Medicală Română* 13, no. 7–8 (1940): 427–429.

117 Florica Ettinger, *Contribuţiuni la studiul grupelor sanguine la psihopaţi: aglutinogenele M și N* (Bucharest: Tipografia 'Cultura', 1940).

also involved in anthropological projects hosted by the Institute of Social Research and the Romanian Social Institute, especially its Demography, Anthropology, and Eugenics Section, founded in March 1935.[118]

Although scattered geographically, Romanian anthropologists tackled common topics, including racial morphology, serology, and racial psychology, together with social hygiene and eugenics. It was important, as the mayor of Bucharest, Dem I. Dobrescu, put it, 'to know our race, and our people scientifically', so that, he continued, 'we might give a scientific basis to our politics, which today runs the country empirically and without having knowledge of it'.[119] His comments contained more than a grain of truth but efforts were, in fact made to demonstrate that anthropology was a national science in Romania, as could be clearly seen at the 17th International Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology, organized in Bucharest in early September 1937. However, disagreements remained regarding the application of serology in the study of races. For example, Rainer's position on the utility of serology for the study of race was presented in a text published in 1937. Rainer had examined the blood groups of 4,179 individuals in order to answer the following question: 'Is there any definite correlation between a determining blood group and the morphological and pigmentation characteristics that are important in anthropology?'[120] His answer was negative. Based on measurements taken in the village of Nereju, Vrancea County, a decade earlier,[121] Rainer had come to the conclusion that stature, the cephalic index, the nasal index, and the morphological index of the face varied so much from one individual to another, and between men and women, that it was very difficult, indeed perhaps impossible, to establish with certainty which of these somatic characteristics corresponded to some specific blood groups and not to others.

Meanwhile, Olga Necrasov suggested, on the basis of a sample of 6,500 individuals from North Bessarabia and Moldavia, that it was nevertheless possible to establish a connection between the East European racial type and blood group B, and perhaps also between the Dinaric racial type and blood group O. However, for these correlations to be conclusive there was a

118 Dumitru C. Georgescu, 'Secția de Demografie, Antropologie și Eugenie a Institutului Social Român', *Sociologie Românească* 1, no. 1 (1936): 56–57.

119 Dem I. Dobrescu, 'Societatea română de antropologie', *Adevărul* 51, no. 16450 (1937): 3.

120 Francisc Rainer, 'Există corelație între grupele sanguine umane și celelalte caractere antropologice?', in *Omagiu lui Constantin Kirițescu* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1937), 700.

121 See Francisc Rainer, *Enquêtes anthropologiques dans trois villages roumains des Carpathes* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Centrală, 1927).

need for a 'study of individuals with a pure racial structure – Alpine, Nordic, etc'.[122] Such individuals were hard to find in Romania.

The fact that anthropologists such as Rainer expressed reservations regarding the applicability of 'serological' or 'biochemical races' to specific national groups did not prevent other researchers from dedicating their energy and efforts to the construction of racial narratives about the Romanians and the ethnic minorities that corresponded to a biopolitical programme.[123] In the 1930s, Petru Râmneanțu, a hygienist, demographer, and anthropologist born in the Banat, played a central role in the development and application of serological research to the study of ethnic minorities. In 1935, Râmneanțu, at the time a research assistant at the Institute of Hygiene and Public Hygiene in Cluj, published an article in *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* in which he combined anthropological theories of race with serology and nationalism.[124] It was well written and conceived with the aim of attracting as wide a readership as possible, not only among specialists. In the first part, Râmneanțu discussed historical perspectives, including the arguments about Romanian continuity in Transylvania and a number of theories regarding the origin of the Szeklers, while the second part constituted a synthesis of serological theories, followed by their application in the case of the ethnic groups in Transylvania.

For Râmneanțu, Romanian continuity in Transylvania needed no further validation. He quickly proceeded to a discussion of the origin of the Szeklers, with a focus on two theories: the first presumed that the Szeklers were originally Huns, while the second considered that they were, in fact, Hungarian colonists who had arrived in Transylvania later. Râmneanțu had doubts regarding both theories, and he believed that serology could finally resolve the issue of the Szeklers' ethnic origin. Given that 'by somatometric methods it has not been possible to trace precise limits in the ethnic classification of peoples', another method was needed to 'elucidate the true ethnic origin of the Szeklers'.[125] This, he believed, was iso-haemagglutination. Blood groups were constant through time, permitting the establishment of the origins of individuals who had the same ethnic and geographical roots. The Roma,

122 Necrasov, *Etude anthropologique de la Moldavie et de la Bessarabie septentrionales*, 126–127.
123 For example, Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Forma capului (indicele cefalic) la români, săcui şi unguri', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 7, nos. 1–3 (1935): 66–72 and Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Indicile morfologic facial la români, săcui şi unguri', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 6, nos. 4–5 (1935): 120–127.
124 Petru Râmneanțu (with Petru David), 'Cercetări asupra originii etnice a populației din sud–estul Transilvaniei pe baza compoziției serologice a sângelui', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 6, nos. 1–3 (1935): 36–66. See also the French version: Petru Râmneanțu, 'Origine ethnique des Szeklers de Transylvanie', *Revue de Transylvanie* 2, no. 1 (1935): 45–59.
125 Râmneanțu, 'Cercetări asupra originii etnice', 40.

for example, had a similar blood group to that of the Indian populations to whom they were related, although centuries had passed since they migrated into Europe. Similarly, it was possible to establish a bond of racial kinship between a Swabian from the Banat and a German from Austria or Bavaria. On the other hand, it was possible by the same method to establish that a group of individuals sharing the same religion, language, and culture actually had different ethno-racial origins.

Râmneanțu's research was founded on two serological concepts: Hirszfeld's 'biochemical index of race' and the 'gene-frequency blood index' proposed by the Austrian mathematician Sigmund Wellisch. Applying these serological theories in the case of the ethnic groups in south-eastern Transylvania, Râmneanțu wanted to establish the racial biochemical index of the Romanians and then to identify those villages that were, in his view, only 'superficially Szeklerized' (in other words, where 'the biological index of race of the Romanians' could be easily detected). Serology was also used to determine the biological index specific to the Szeklers. The research was carried out in villages considered 'purely' Romanian and 'purely' Szekler in the counties of Ciuc (Csík), Odorhei (Udvarhely), and Trei-Scaune (Háromszék), and for a comparative analysis, two Saxon villages were also included. In total, 20,092 individuals were examined – men and women, young and old – of whom 5,086 were Romanian, 13,748 Szekler, 708 German, 443 Roma, and 107 Jewish,[126] making up a representative sample of the population.

Râmneanțu confirmed the results obtained by Manuilă, Popovici, and Rainer, more precisely, the fact that the racial index of the Romanians of south-eastern Transylvania varied between 1.76 and 2.60, with an average between 2.00 and 2.20, thus resembling that of the Romanians in other parts of Transylvania and Moldavia, though lower than that of those from the Apuseni Mountains. 'Consequently', he suggested,

> the ethnic origin of the Romanians of the south-eastern Transylvania is identical to that of the Romanian Moți, of the Romanians of Transylvania in general, and of the Romanians of the Old Kingdom. The small variations that we observe are due to the slight foreign influence that has been exerted upon the common Daco-Roman [racial] stem.[127]

So far, there were no surprises. However, when he carried out the same serological research in twenty-two Szekler villages, Râmneanțu discovered

126 Râmneanțu, 'Cercetări asupra originii etnice', 48–49.
127 Râmneanțu, 'Cercetări asupra originii etnice', 55.

that, in general, the racial index of the Szeklers in that region varied between 1.56 and 3.07. He hastened to explain that such a fluctuation was caused by the mixed ethnic origin of the groups he had studied, because – he continued – when he focused solely on villages inhabited exclusively by Szeklers, the racial index he obtained was 2.11, close to the average racial index of the Romanians. Thus, for him, 'this biological and mathematical measurement, resulting in a number of analyses without precedent in the whole literature, proves, with certitude and incontestably, that the ethnic origin of the inhabitants known today as Szeklers is identical with that of the Romanians'.[128]

To prove the validity of his serological research beyond any dispute, Râmneanțu briefly reflected upon the racial index of the Saxons and that of the Roma, observing the racial similarity between the former and their ethnic kin in Germany, while the racial index of the latter confirmed their origins in India. Yet he knew that the discussion of the ethnic origins of the Romanians, Hungarians, and Szeklers in Transylvania could not be solely based on the racial index. Consequently, 'to be fully documented', he decided to complete the serological results by implementing Wellisch's 'gene-frequency blood index', specifically by taking into consideration the distribution of the genes (p, q, and r) corresponding to the three 'biochemical races' (A, B, and O). This new serological configuration was then represented graphically, using the 'racial triangle' of the Finnish physician Oswald Streng, considered to be the latest scientific method in racial serology. [figure 7]

Furthermore, Râmneanțu maintained that the Saxons of that region had gone through a similar process of 'Szeklerization', their 'racial index' being the *real* indicator of their ethnic origins. According to him, these Szeklers had the same ethnic origin as the Romanians:

> as from our research, we could not establish a biological index specific to the Szeklers, since this does not exist, and nor did we obtain one intermediary between ourselves and the Hungarians or another Turanic people, as we would have expected, taking into consideration the historical information, we are firmly convinced that there did not take place here a mixing of peoples in equal proportions.[129]

Râmneanțu's conclusion was that the Szeklers in Ciuc, Odorhei, and Trei-Scaune counties 'in general have the same ethno-anthropological origin as

128 Râmneanțu, 'Cercetări asupra originii etnice', 56.
129 Râmneanțu, 'Cercetări asupra originii etnice', 64.

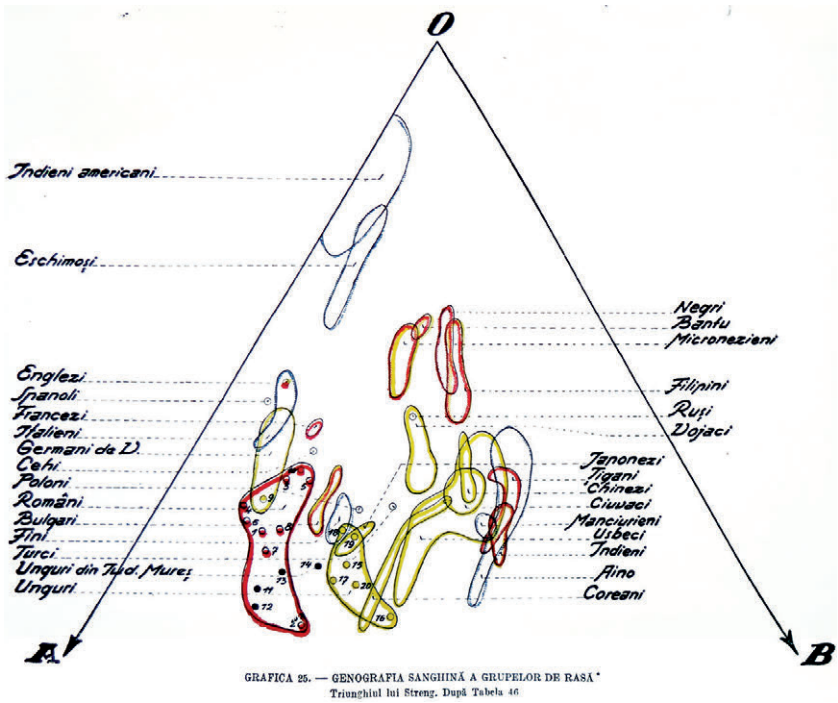


Fig. 7. 'The Streng Triangle'. Adapted by P. Râmneanțu, *Elemente de biometrie medicală şi statistică vitală*, Bucharest: Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, 1939 (author's personal collection)

the Romanians'.[130] An ethnic homogenization was possible in the south-east of Transylvania if all the inhabitants had common racial roots.

As was to be expected, these explanations pleased the Romanian public. Before publishing his article in *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic*, Râmneanțu gave a public lecture at the ASTRA premises in Cluj. Among those present were Iuliu Moldovan, the historian Silviu Dragomir, and the ethnographer Romulus Vuia. The Bucharest newspaper *Universul* (*The Universe*) described the event as 'sensational', and Râmneanțu's research as being carried out 'according to the most modern methods based on the analysis of blood'.[131] Sero-anthropology had become a subject of public interest, especially as it purported to offer more convincing 'evidence' regarding racial affinity and difference in Romania. As Râmneanțu himself underlined, by means of 'serological investigations' it was possible 'to determine to which people each nucleus of population belongs'. It was equally important that 'the

130 Râmneanțu, 'Cercetări asupra originii etnice', 65.

131 'Săcui sunt de origine românească', *Universul* 52, no. 60 (1935): 9.

distribution of blood groups' offered 'better indications than language, culture, and customs regarding the [geographical] spread of an ethnic group'.[132]

A similar explanation was proposed by Gheorghe Popovici, who returned to these topics in a series of articles published in the late 1930s, revising some of the interpretations that he had propounded in the 1920s. For example, he now considered that, in the light of the new serological research – including progress made by such specialists as the German mathematician Felix Bernstein, who had demonstrated in 1924 by statistical analysis how blood groups were inherited – the use of Hirszfeld's biological index of race was not entirely satisfactory. With regard to the serological characteristics of the populations in Romania, Popovici suggested that they were distinguished according more to region than to nationality. The Hungarians of Transylvania also had 'European value p' (or group A) in significant proportion, which could be explained by the fact that the Hungarians had mixed with the Romanians and Germans, who, as had been demonstrated, had high p levels.[133] Thus, Popovici concluded:

> The Romanians of the mountainous centre of Transylvania, like the Hungarians and Szeklers in this region, possess a purity of European race that can be found elsewhere only in a few mountainous regions of Europe. The relations between p and q are here at the same level as in the case of the Alpine and Nordic races.[134]

A more pronounced nationalist interpretation was offered by Popovici in an article published in 1938. The political context of the discussion of race was presented from the beginning:

> Lately, the problem of the racial origins of peoples has often been raised. The enemies of today's Romania are trying to prove that the Romanians do not rightfully possess their borders and that the new provinces are

132 Petru Râmneanțu, 'The Classical Blood Groups and the M, N and M, N Properties in the Nations from Transylvania', in *XVIIe Congrès International d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie Préhistoriques*, 325.

133 Gheorghe Popoviciu and Ioan Birău, 'Nouvelles contributions a l'étude des isohémagglutinines en Roumanie', *Revue Anthropologique* 46, no. 4–6 (1936): 182–183.

134 Gheorghe Popovici, 'Comparaison entre les groupes sanguins des Roumains et ceux des autres peuples de la Roumanie', *Revue Anthropologique* 46, nos. 4–6 (1936): 188–189. See also Gheorghe Popovici, 'Les races sanguines en Roumanie', in *XVIIe Congrès International d'Anthropologie et d'Archeologie Prehistoriques*, 309–316.

> inhabited by populations who are either not Romanian or have been [only] recently Romanianized. This erroneous argument is used especially with regard to Transylvania.[135]

Next, Popovici returned to one of his first serological interpretations and rejected the importance of race in the definition of nationality, explaining that 'the pure Magyar race' had gradually disappeared as a result of the numerous wars of the Middle Ages. There were, indeed, still a few enclaves of the Mongoloid 'pure Magyar race', scattered over the Hungarian plain, but today's Hungarians, living both in Hungary and in Transylvania, were mixed with populations of Slav and Germanic origin. The nationality, religion, and language of a specific racial group had changed over the centuries. According to serological research, and especially if the q (or B, Asiatic) value was taken into consideration, the Szeklers were, Popovici stated, 'intermediary between the Romanians of Transylvania and those of Moldavia', while 'the Hungarians of Romania are, as a general rule, Magyarized Romanians'.[136] In other words, a Hungarian-speaking Roman Catholic from Transylvania might have very few racial elements in common with another Hungarian-speaking Roman Catholic from, for example, Sopron.

The attempt to change the prevalent opinion about the Szeklers' ethnic origin was based on a fluid interpretation, however, because it depended on the racial criteria chosen by each individual researcher to define an individual as Hungarian or Romanian. The question raised by Romanian anthropologists was the following: had the ethnic groups in Transylvania, most notably the Szeklers, kept 'their racial specificity', or had racial mixing resulted in their 'morphological structure' becoming 'identical or at least similar"[137] to that of the Romanians? Both Râmneanțu and Popovici favoured a positive answer.

Iordache Făcăoaru had also done research in the Szeklerland and had published studies about the nasal and cephalic indices of Romanians, Szeklers, and Hungarians.[138] On the basis of research carried out in 1934 on 1,636 individuals in Cluj, Ciuc, and Mureș counties, of whom 648 were

135 Gheorghe Popovici, 'Le problème des populations de la Roumanie vu à la lumière des recherches sur les races d'après le sang', *Revue de Transylvanie* 4, nos. 1–2 (1938): 14.

136 Popovici, 'Le problème des populations de la Roumanie', 24.

137 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Compoziția rasială la români, săcui și unguri', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 8, nos. 4–5 (1937): 124.

138 See Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Indicele nasal la români, săcui și unguri', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 7, nos. 4–6 (1936): 101–108 and Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Perimetrul orizontal cefalic la români, săcui și unguri', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 8, nos. 1–3 (1937): 43–53.

Romanian, 472 Szekler, and 416 Hungarian, Făcăoaru established that 70% of the Romanian men and 84% of the Romanian women belonged to 'a single race' (were 'uni-racial'), while the remainder, 30% and 16% respectively, were 'bi-racial', in other words, they showed 'a mixture of two races'. For the Szeklers, the situation was different: 59% of men and 51% of women belonged to the first, uni-racial category, while the remainder, 41% and 49% respectively, were in the second, bi-racial category. And among the Hungarians, 45% of men and 50% of women were bi-racial.[139] Făcăoaru only used two colours – brown and blond –, to describe the human races. The 'brown' included Alpine, Dinaric, Mediterranean, Oriental, and Mongoloid, while the 'blond' included Nordic, East European, and Dalic.[140]

Făcăoaru's conclusions did not differ much from those of Râmneanțu and Popovici. 'From the point of view of racial structure', he suggested, 'the Szeklers keep an intermediary place between Romanians and Hungarians'. And he further speculated that it was very probable that these three ethnic groups shared 'a common ethnic basis', most likely made up of the East Europoid race.[141] Race and the obsession with historical continuity were inextricably intertwined.

In many respects, this nationalization of serology reflected the political climate of the 1930s. Some writers even speak of a Romanian 'militant anthropology',[142] whose aims were no longer merely scientific, but above all political. Just as the polemics about national specificity generated the publication of numerous writings on the subject, so anthropological and serological research led to the formulation of a racial biopolitics that redefined not only the content of Romanian nationalism, but also the Romanian state's relation to its ethnic minorities. As happened in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, the various suggestions of radical politics that appeared in Romania in the early 1940s argued for a totalitarian biopolitical state, seen as the epitome of Romanian ethnic supremacy. And, as in other countries, Romanian eugenicists and anthropologists in their turn adopted principles of ethnic and social engineering. However, this was not merely a matter of imitating racisms that had appeared elsewhere; local traditions regarding race, which had grown steadily since the 1870s, played a decisive role.

In order to understand interwar debates on Romanian national specificity, we need to look at anthropological research and how it informed biopolitical

139 Făcăoaru, 'Compoziția rasială la români, săcui și unguri', 124–125.
140 Făcăoaru, 'Compoziția rasială la români, săcui și unguri', 135.
141 Făcăoaru, 'Compoziția rasială la români, săcui și unguri', 137.
142 Z. B., 'Pe marginea unui istoric al antropologiei', 2.

and eugenic nationalism. Not only was Greater Romania a country with a significant number of ethnic minorities, but in 1940, it lost Northern Bukovina, Bessarabia, Northern Transylvania, and Southern Dobrogea to the advantage of the Soviet Union, Hungary, and Bulgaria. It is thus no wonder that Romania's entry into the war the following year was described as a 'holy war' against enemies, both external and internal. Through struggle and sacrifice, Romania not only aspired to regain its territories, but equally importantly, it hoped to create a 'Romanian racial consciousness', seen as 'the primordial condition for the international affirmation of Romanianism'.[143] In this historical context, 'the protection of the blood' was not simply nationalist rhetoric, but state policy, as the call went out for 'a return to origins, a sounding of the interior self, and a hierarchy of ethnic values'.[144]

In the face of these political realities, racial anthropology and serology made significant contributions to attempts to rewrite the history and racial origins of Romania's ethnic minorities. Such racial interpretations became popular in 1940s Europe, especially in Nazi research carried out in central and southeastern Europe. During the Second World War, the reorganization of the ethnic borders of the nation coincided with the changing of the frontiers of the state: the northern parts of Transylvania and Bukovina were taken away from the body of the country, but Romania also expanded eastwards through the annexation of Transnistria. In a report published after conducting research in Transnistria in January and February 1942, Iordache Făcăoaru highlighted this problem with reference to the 'racial structure of the Romanians' in the region: 'Racial research on our co-nationals outside the country's borders is not only of scientific, but also of biopolitical importance'.[145]

Another example of the politicization of anthropology and serology is provided by Petru Râmneanțu who in 1941 spoke about the 'sero-races of Transylvania'.[146] His nationalist narrative had not changed: the Romanians

143 Alexandru Randa, *Rasism românesc* (Bucharest: Bucovina, 1941), 1.

144 Mircea Smântânescu, 'Protecția sângelui', *Pandectele Românizării* 1, no. 8 (1941): 232.

145 Iordache Făcăoaru, *Contribuție la studiul compoziției morfologice a românilor din Republica Moldovenească* (Bucharest: Institutul Central de Statistică, 1944), 3. See also Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Cercetări antropologice în patru sate din Transnistria' (1943), microfilm, f. 2242, op. 1, RG–31.004, Holocaust Memorial Museum Institute, Washington. Făcăoaru and his wife, Tilly, belonged to a group of research teams appointed by the Romanian Social Institute and the Central Institute of Statistics to prepare a social, economic, cultural, and racial survey of the Romanian population living in Transnistria. See Anton Galopenția, *Românii de la est de Bug*, 2 vols (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2006).

146 Petru Râmneanțu, 'Distribuția grupelor de sânge la populația din Transilvania', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 12, nos. 9–12 (1941): 137–159.

were considered to be the oldest population in Transylvania, the result of Roman conquest and Dacian resistance; the Hungarians had come into Europe from Asia in the ninth century and had conquered Transylvania in the eleventh; the Germans (Saxons in the centre of Transylvania, Swabians in the Banat and in Satu Mare County) had settled gradually, from the twelfth to the eighteenth century. Other 'peoples' like the Jews and the Roma were considered 'foreign and unstable elements'.[147] Racial indices were established as follows: that of the Romanians was between 1.16 and 1.31; that of the Hungarians was between 1.17 and 1.19; that of the Szeklers, who had 'blood properties equal to those of the Romanians', was between 1.22 and 1.35; and finally, that of the Germans (both Saxons and Swabians) was between 1.23 and 1.41.[148]

Râmneanțu was convinced that 'sero-racial study' was 'an important instrument of history and at the same time an admirable means of researching anthropo-social phenomena'.[149] At the time, he was arguably the most experienced Romanian serologist,[150] highly celebrated for his controversial theory of racial similarity between the Szeklers and the Romanians in Transylvania. But Râmneanțu did not stop here; he pushed anthropological considerations farther than any of his colleagues. Early in 1943, he published in *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* another article, provocatively titled 'The Blood Groups of the Csángós of Moldavia'.[151]

This article is another example that demonstrates the importance of racial research in the creation of the Romanian biopolitical programme. Regarding the origin of the Csángós (Ro. *ceangăi*),[152] two historiographical theories were dominant in the interwar period, especially in Hungarian historiography: either the Csángós were a group that had separated from the Magyar tribes on their way to the Pannonian plain, or they were Magyarized Cumans. Râmneanțu rejected both theories and constructed his own interpretation of Csángó origins, which was in perfect accordance with the racist principles of Romanian nationalism. Using data from the census

147 Râmneanțu, 'Distribuția grupelor de sânge', 151.

148 Râmneanțu, 'Distribuția grupelor de sânge', 152–156.

149 Râmneanțu, 'Distribuția grupelor de sânge', 158.

150 Petru Râmneanțu and Vasile Luștrea, 'Contribuții noi la studiul seroetnic al populației din România', *Ardealul Medical* 2, no. 12 (1942): 503–511.

151 Petru Râmneanțu, 'Grupele de sânge la Ciangăii din Moldova', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 14, nos. 1–2 (1943): 51–65.

152 The term *csángó* was, according to Râmneanțu, offensive, used by others, and not by individuals of the ethnic group in question. They preferred to refer to themselves as 'Hungarians, Szeklers, or Catholic Romanians'. See Râmneanțu, 'Grupele de sânge la Ciangăii din Moldova', 52.

of April 1941 (which used ethnic origin as a category of identification), he claimed that in Moldavia there were only 8,253 Csángós. They were both Roman Catholic and Romanian speaking. Importantly, he rejected the central argument used by the Csángós in their self-identification as Romanian-speaking Hungarians, arguing that they could not be at the same time Roman Catholics and Romanians. 'A priori', he declared, 'I have rejected the equivalence of the notion of Csángó and that of Catholic.'[153]

Subsequently, Râmneanțu divided the Csángós into four categories: the first was that of 'Romanian-speaking Orthodox'. The 'frequencies of blood groups and of the corresponding genes' of this group were, he posited, 'equal to those of Romanians from the same region or even from other regions'. The second category was that of 'Catholic Romanians who spoke Romanian', and the third that of 'Catholic Romanians who spoke Hungarian'. Râmneanțu, of course, found no difference 'between their blood group frequency and blood indices and those of the Orthodox Romanians'. Finally, the fourth category was that of 'Hungarian-speaking Catholics'. The conclusion of the study comes as no surprise: 'On the basis of the iso-haemagglutination properties of the blood', he inferred that 'both the Romanian Catholics and the Csángós have the same Romanian ethnic origin'.[154]

A year later, Râmneanțu published an extended version of this article in the form of a book, written in German, under the title 'The Origin of the Csángós' –beyond doubt, the most radical reconstruction of the national past of a minority ethnic group that had so far been produced in Romania. The first part of the book was dedicated to historical research on the Csángós. Inventorying the works of missionaries, linguists, and historians, Râmneanțu sought to give credibility to his interpretations by presenting as realistic as possible a description of the Csángós. To this end, he presented extensive investigations regarding their geographic distribution and demographic structure, and on the basis of archival documents, he identified the Csángó villages in Moldavia and offered plausible explanations for their ethnonym. Râmneanțu was a meticulous researcher in many respects: historical and linguistic arguments were accompanied by evidence from medieval chronicles, and his speculations by confirmations from contemporary historiography.[155]

153 Râmneanțu, 'Grupele de sânge la Ciangăii din Moldova', 54. The same nationalist appropriation of the historical reality was also applied in the case of the Catholic Romanians in Moldavia, whom Râmneanțu declared to be 'Orthodox Romanians Catholicised'.

154 Râmneanțu, 'Grupele de sânge la Ciangăii din Moldova', 60–65.

155 Petru Râmneanțu, *Die Abstammung der Tschangos* (Sibiu: Centrul de Studii şi Cercetări privitoare la Transilvania, 1944), 7–29.

Regarding religion, for example, no previous researcher had questioned the fact that the Csángós were Catholic. Râmneanțu, as we have seen, did away with the synonymy of 'Catholic' and 'Csángó'. His decision not to consider Catholicism an aspect of Csángó identity was particularly significant, and his motive is not hard to guess. In this delicate matter, the boundary traditionally drawn between native Orthodoxy and foreign Catholicism was treated as a fundamental distinction between Romanians and non-Romanians, as other apostles of Orthodoxy had so often proclaimed it to be.[156]

The second part of Râmneanțu's book focused on the importance of serological research for ethnic identification. After first discussing the 'individuality' of blood and synthesizing the principal arguments regarding its hereditary properties, Râmneanțu underlined 'the ethnic significance of blood groups'. To a large extent, he repeated the racial arguments that he had already presented in the early 1930s. Nevertheless, when he referred directly to the Csángós, he revised the racial typology that he had presented a year earlier: the Csángós were now divided into those he termed 'of Romanian blood' and those 'of Hungarian blood'.[157] The study concluded with a section on racial morphology, in which he catalogued such physical characteristics as height, hair colour, and nasal index. In his view, the ambiguity surrounding the ethnic origin of the Csángós was finally resolved: from a racial point of view, they were Romanian!

Some Csángó priests – for example Iosif Petru M. Pál of the parish of Luizi-Călugăra – adopted Râmneanțu's ethno-racial interpretation.[158] Their parishioners also made use of it, as can be seen from the report they sent to Marshal Ion Antonescu, in which they asked to be recognized as 'Romanians and not Hungarians' and to be given certificates 'of Romanian ethnic origin'.[159] Finally, it was confirmed at the highest political level by Mihai Antonescu, vice-president of the Council of Ministers. In a letter sent on 13 July 1943, Mihai Robu, bishop of the Roman Catholic diocese of Iași, drew Antonescu's attention to the fact that in some Catholic villages in Bacău County, the local administration was issuing 'certificates of Csángó ethnic

156 See Nichifor Crainic, *Ortodoxie și etnocrație. Cu o anexă: Programul statului etnocratic* (Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1938).

157 Râmneanțu, *Die Abstammung der Tschangos*, 43–48.

158 See Iosif Petru Pál, *Originea catolicilor din Moldova și franciscanii lor, păstorii lor de veacuri* (Săbăoani-Roman: Tipografia 'Serafica', 1942).

159 'Plângerea locuitorilor din comuna Luizi–Călugăra către domnul Mareșal Ion Antonescu, Conducătorul Statului Român'. Presidency of the Council of Ministers, no. 407057, 10 March 1943, 65–67. Comisia pentru constatarea naționalității române (hereafter CCNR), Folder 32, Direcția Generală a Arhivelor Statului (hereafter DGAS), Bucharest.

origin' rather than certificates of Romanian ethnic origin, which, in Robu's view, created the false impression that the Csángós were not 'Romanian'.[160] On 28 July, Antonescu forwarded the bishop's letter to the minister of justice, Ion C. Marinescu, together with a number of clarifications. Referring to the anthropo-sociological research carried out by Petru Râmneanțu, Sabin Manuilă, and Iosif Petru M. Pál, Antonescu informed Marinescu that the official position of the government on this matter was that the Csángós were 'originally Romanians from Transylvania, who had been denationalized'. Such a description was both 'an attitude of objective principle towards historical reality', and 'a political measure, in as much as the Romanian Government [had] no interest in increasing the number of minorities on its territory'. Likewise, Antonescu underlined, it was important that there should not be any contempt shown for 'the historical truth and the blood realities of this ethnic group, denying that it is of Romanian ethnic origin, [albeit] denationalized, when the historical facts and the demographic and anthropo-sociological realities prove that it is'.[161]

Râmneanțu's racial research thus offered a new model of belonging to the Romanian national community. Once it was established which blood groups defined the 'Romanian race', the only possible explanation for their appearance in other ethnic groups was that these groups were, in origin, 'Romanian'. From this perspective, the Szeklers and Csángós were Romanian 'by race', even if not by language and religion, like the other Romanians. The racial reinterpretation offered by Râmneanțu was indeed radical. However, it reflected the biopolitical and eugenic theory of national specificity, which had already been imposed in Romania since 1940. Râmneanțu could thus propose a new programme of national regeneration invoking arguments both international (Hungarian revisionism, for example) and national ('the holy war' against the Soviet Union to regain lost territories). In a lecture delivered at King Ferdinand I University of Cluj-Sibiu on 5 April 1943, Râmneanțu underlined this central argument yet again: Romania's most important biopolitical problem was its minority 'ethnic groups'.[162]

This statement was no longer just a eugenic slogan; it had become an integral part of the policy of the Romanian state, affecting each person who belonged to an ethnic minority, as is proven by the case of the architect Andrei A. Benedek from Ploiești. In March 1942, Benedek made an

160 Episcopia Catolică de Iași, no. 431, 13 July 1943, 10. CCNR.

161 Vicepreședintele Consiliului de Miniștri, no. 2592, 28 July 1943, 11–12. CCNR.

162 Petru Râmneanțu, 'Probleme etno–biopolitice ale Transilvaniei', *Transilvania*, vol. 74, no. 5 (1943): 346.

approach to Ion Antonescu to demonstrate that, although a Szekler whose parents had converted to the Mosaic faith, he was, in fact, a Romanian 'of Aryan race and Christian religion'.[163] Among those who supported Benedek's request was Ștefan Medveșan, the Greek-Catholic parish priest of Ploiești. On 17 October 1942, Medveșan sent a memorandum to Eugen Zwiedineck, undersecretary of state in the Department of Romanianization, Colonization, and Inventory, in which he presented 'historical and scientific' arguments to prove that Benedek was 'a Christian of Aryan race', who 'has managed to preserve unadulterated the biochemical index of the Aryan race corresponding to the Szeklerized Romanians', and as such he should be exempt 'from all the rigours of the laws applicable to Jews of Jewish blood'. A section of the memorandum was suggestively titled 'Some scientific considerations regarding Mr Benedek's situation from the racial point of view'. Medveșan was familiar with the specialized literature on race. First, however, he mentioned Gobineau's theory about the variety of races, then the idea of the superiority of the modern Germans, who 'have managed to keep the white race pure', and through a reference to P. P. Negulescu's book *Geneza formelor culturii* (*The Genesis of Cultural Forms*), he underlined the determining role of race, not religion, in the construction of the ethnic identity of the individual. 'One's race', Medveșan pointed out, was 'irrevocable and inalienable, and is not in a causal relation to the exterior manifestation of religious belief'. The racial character of the individual is not lost, regardless of the family, social, and cultural environment in which he or she has lived. All these arguments, Medveșan considered, were 'scientific principles valid *erga omnes*',[164] which applied also in the case of the parishioner Benedek.[165] Zwiedineck's answer has not been preserved, but from the documentary sources that survive, we learn that it had not arrived by April 1943, when Medveșan sent him another memorandum.

What happened to Benedek in the end is unknown, but we can safely say that he was by no means the only minority citizen who had to demonstrate his ethnic affiliation to the racialized definition of Romanianness in order to protect his family from the antisemitic measures introduced in Romania from 1938 onwards. For him, as for the Csángós of Luizi-Călugăra, to be 'Romanian by blood' was a better option than deportation to Transnistria

163 Andrei A. Benedek's letter to Ion Antonescu, 6 March 1942. Preşedinţia Consiliului de Miniştri (hereafter PCM), file no. 424, 1942–1943, 1–2, DGAS, Bucharest.

164 *Erga omnes*: Latin expression meaning 'applying to all'.

165 Memorandum, Romanian Uniate (Greek-Catholic) Ploiești Parish, PCM, File no. 424, 31–35.

or inclusion in the exchanges of population with Hungary. The condition of being an ethnic minority in early 1940s Romania was thus influenced not only by the political discourse about the nation, but also by the eugenic discourse about race and its protection.

This biologization of national belonging was accepted both at the individual level and at the more generalized level of society and of political elites. However, its effects extended far beyond the immediate realm of anthropological and serological research, affecting more widely relations with Romania's neighbour to the west. How, then, were these biopolitical attempts to transform the ethnic history of the Hungarian minorities in Romania, rewriting it in a manner favourable to the political conjuncture of the moment, perceived in Hungary? I shall try to answer this question in the following section.

The Hungarian Response

As was to be expected, the serological arguments of Romanian anthropologists regarding the Hungarians and Szeklers of Transylvania did not go without a response. In September 1940, Mihály Malán, recently appointed head of the Department of Anthropology of the re-founded Franz Joseph I University in Kolozsvár (Ro. Cluj), published an article in the journal *Magyar Szemle* (*Hungarian Review*), edited by the historian Gyula Szekfű. Under the title 'Hungarian blood – Romanian blood', the article attempted to refute the statements made by Gheorghe Popovici in his 1938 article mentioned above.[166] Malán first presented the way in which blood groups are transmitted, using the research of Felix Bernstein and Oswald Streng, and then explained that:

> from the point of view of the determination of race, only the inherited genes of the blood groups should be considered. Regardless of the degree to which certain blood groups are present, only such determinations can make the difference between certain races based on the frequency or the quality of the inherited genes, namely the gene characteristic of Group A, which is named p, that for Group B, which is named q, and that for Group O, which is named r. The sum of these, after an analysis carried out correctly, calculated as a percentage, must be 100%.[167]

166 Mihály Malán, 'Magyar vér – oláh vér', *Magyar Szemle* 39, no. 3 (1940): 187–192.
167 Malán, 'Magyar vér – oláh vér', 188.

Up to this point, there is no disagreement with Popovici, even if for Malán the frequency of blood groups was only one of the hereditary criteria by which the races resembled or differed from one another.

What disturbed Malán, however, was in the first place Popovici's comments regarding the view that the 'pure' Hungarians, the descendants of those who came with Árpád, had disappeared and that the Hungarian state and language had been maintained through the merit of the Romanians, Slavs, and Germans whom the Hungarians had assimilated. Engaging with this view, Malán next discussed Popovici's arguments regarding the similarity of 'race' – based on the p and q characteristics, i.e., European and Asiatic – between Hungarians, Szeklers, and Romanians. Popovici's claim that 'the Hungarians of Romania were, in fact, Magyarized Romanians' he considered to be wildly exaggerated. Let us imagine, Malán remarked sarcastically, an important writer such as Dezső Szabó, who was born in Kolozsvár, 'longing to return to the Romanian environment' or the poet Endre Ady, a native of northern Transylvania, who is probably 'turning in his grave' on hearing Popovici's words. Such claims, Malán continued, had to do not with serology and anthropology, but rather with the assertion that, as Popovici put it, 'from the point of view of race, the Hungarians have no right over Transylvania'.[168]

Malán further examined Râmneanțu's research, saying that the villages which the latter describes as 'purely' Romanian were, in fact, home to numerous Hungarians, at least according to the census of 1910.[169] It was clear, Malán argued, that the Romanian anthropologists were not motivated by the search for the 'scientific truth'. He reminded Popovici that in the article he had published in 1925, he had stated the opposite of what he declared in 1938, namely that there were serological differences between the Hungarians and the Romanians and similarities between these Hungarians and 'their brothers in Hungary'. Consequently, Malán concluded that 'what Popovici has said – on the basis of specialized literature from abroad, on the basis of his own convictions, or in relation to the work of other Romanian writers – about Hungarian blood, the identity of blood groups among Hungarians, Szeklers, and Transylvanian Romanians, alongside his own blood group research, none of it corresponds to the realities of science'.[170] These were serious accusations, even if they came from an anthropologist who had himself contributed considerably to the development of scientific racism in Hungary.

168 Malán, 'Magyar vér – oláh vér', 189–190.
169 Malán, 'Magyar vér – oláh vér', 190–191.
170 Malán, 'Magyar vér – oláh vér', 192.

Malán was right about one thing, however. Szeklerland, he pointed out, was the region where serological research was most intensely instrumentalized by the Romanian biopolitical programme. The historian Zoltán I. Tóth made the same observation in a well-documented study, published in 1942, in which he explained in detail ASTRA's eugenic and biopolitical activities, especially in the Szeklerland.[171] Iuliu Moldovan was, of course, known to Hungarian eugenicists in Transylvania. For instance, in an article published in the journal *Korunk* (*Our Age*), László Dénes, a physician in Baia Mare, presented Moldovan's version of eugenics in favourable terms, considering that it fitted Romanian realities better than that of Francis Galton.[172]

But Toth also took into consideration other aspects of Moldovan's activity, quoting the latter's opening speech at the ASTRA general meeting in Târgu-Mureș on 8 September 1934. On this occasion, Moldovan had declared, 'We are on the edge of the Szeklerland, the grave of so much Romanian consciousnesses, where in a conscious act of denationalization, our enemies have increased their numerical force with Romanian blood and have created a fortress to attack our rights over this soil'. This right, he continued, was demonstrated not only on the basis of 'the historical and ethnographic studies of the past', but also by Petru Râmneanţu's serological research, which had:

> proved that the so-called biological index of race of the population of the Romanian villages, of the Szekler villages in particular, and also of the villages which, on the basis of observations of a different nature, we must consider to be composed of Szeklerized Romanians, is the same as that of the Romanians in general and quite different from that of the Hungarian population in the same areas and of the Hungarians in general.

Consequently, Moldovan declared, 'the majority of the population in the Szeklerland is of Romanian ethnic origin, regardless of whether or not they speak our language, whether or not they belong to our faith, whether they have or have not kept the memory of their natural bond with the Romanian people'.[173]

171 Zoltán I. Tóth, 'Az "Astra" románosító tevékenysége a Székelyföldön', in *Az Erdélyi Tudományos Intézet Évkönyve 1940–41* (Kolozsvár: Minerva, 1942), 251–308.

172 László Dénes, 'Fajbiológia és sterilizálás', *Korunk* 8, no. 12, (1933): 917–920.

173 Tóth, 'Az "Astra" románosító tevékenysége a Székelyföldön', 287. The quotations are from Iuliu Moldovan, 'Cuvânt la deschiderea Adunării generale din Tg.–Mureş', *Transilvania* 65, no. 5 (1934): 310–311.

A careful observer, Tóth had understood the essential role played by Moldovan, as president of ASTRA, in the promotion of a biological nationalism, animated by a precise biopolitical purpose and by the institutional support received by the sero-anthropological research carried out by Râmneanţu, Manuilă, and Popovici, which he amply described.[174] Tóth was right. Under Moldovan's presidency, eugenic and biopolitical ideas became deeply imprinted in ASTRA's cultural agenda. The practical application of eugenics and the nationalist ideology on which it was based were interconnected and supported one another. With the help of the presidents of local branches – enthusiasts like the physicians Vasile Ilea, prefect of Maramureș County in 1932–1933, and Eugen Virgil Nicoară, director of the hospital in Reghin and prefect of Mureș County in 1938 – Moldovan managed to promote his own version of national improvement in every village and district of Transylvania and the Banat. For example, in June 1931, ASTRA opened a 'peasant school' in Sighetu Marmației, the first of its kind in Romania, where, over the course of two weeks, fifteen Romanian peasants, 'leaders' of villages on the Iza and Mara valleys, were taught various subjects, including history, geography, hygiene, and physical education.[175]

The reaction of the Hungarians to the rewriting of the history of the Szeklers from a Romanian ethno-national perspective was not, however, merely theoretical, but also practical. After Northern Transylvania was incorporated in Hungary, in August 1940, one of the first sociological and anthropological research projects organized under the aegis of the Transylvanian Scientific Institute (Erdélyi Tudományos Intézet) had as its aim the investigation of the ethnic impact that the 'Romanian occupation' had had on the Hungarian communities of Transylvania since 1918.[176] It was known, however, that the predominantly Hungarian villages had continued to protect themselves from any Romanian ethnic influence.

A telling example of this form of ethnic protectionism is that of the village of Börvely (Ro. Berveni) in Satu Mare County. On 3 March 1941,

174 Tóth, 'Az "Astra" románosító tevékenysége a Székelyföldön', 289–294.

175 The second such 'school' was held in February–March 1933, with twenty-four peasants enrolled. See Vasile Ilea, 'Prima şcoală ţărănească din România Mare', *Transilvania* 73, no. 11 (1942): 851–863.

176 See 'Az Erdély–kutatás főpróbája', *Magyar Nemzet* 4, no. 252 (1941): 5. In November 1941, the Romanian consulate in Cluj translated the article for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest. The Institute of Biology of Race is also mentioned in the diplomatic report. See Fond Transilvania, 1941, vol. 77, regarding 'Propaganda revizionistă ungară după dictatul dela Viena', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ANR, Bucharest.

the Calvinist pastor of the village, Sándor Peleskey, sent a letter to Pál Teleki, the prime minister of Hungary, asking him to permit families of Szeklers transferred from Bukovina to Hungary to settle in Börvely. After the Treaty of Trianon, Peleskey explained, this Hungarian village had been separated from 'the maternal Hungarian race'. It had been the preservation of Hungarian traditions that kept it alive, but as they were surrounded by villages of Swabians and Romanians, the Hungarians of Börvely had been obliged to resort to endogamy, considering it the most efficient strategy of ethnic survival. Twenty years later, however, this isolationist marriage practice had seriously affected their constitution, both physical and mental; in other words, they had become 'degenerate'. The transfer of populations between Hungary and Romania offered the pastor the necessary solution to stop the biological decline of his village. The relocation of 100 families of Szeklers to Börvely, he believed, would strengthen the exhausted racial vitality of the Hungarians in the village, providing the eugenic renewal that the community so much needed.[177] Teleki committed suicide a month later. It is unlikely that he had had time to read Peleskey's letter.

Another example is Kalotaszeg (Ro. Ținutul Călatei), near Cluj, considered to be an ethnically homogenous region where the Hungarian traditions of Transylvania had survived unchanged.[178] In 1942, again with the support of the Transylvanian Scientific Institute, the geneticist Lajos Csík, director of the recently founded Institute of Biology of Race and Genetics (Fajbiológiai és Örökléstani Intézet) in Cluj, published, together with his assistant, Ernő Kállay, a study titled 'The Analysis of Blood Groups in the Villages of Kalotaszeg'.[179]

The conceptual basis and plan of their research had been outlined by the anthropologist Lajos Bartucz in a paper published in 1940. For Bartucz, the task of Hungarian anthropology was to uncover

> the modifications of the racial structure of the national organism caused by the disappearance of certain racial elements or by a change in the balance between the existing racial components or due to the immigration

177 Sándor Peleskey to Pál Teleki, 3 March 1941, in 'Bukovinai magyarok támogatási és Magyarországra történő áttelepítésének ügyei', K28, 163/271, 1941–44, Fond 1, 5–6. Hungarian National Archives, Budapest.

178 See János Jankó, *Kalotaszeg magyar népe. Néprajzi tanulmány* (Budapest: Az 'Atheneum' Kiadása, 1892) and Károly Kós, *Kalotaszeg* (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Muzeum, 1932).

179 Lajos Csík and Ernő Kállay, *Vércsoport vizsgálatok Kalotaszegi községekben* (Kolozsvár: Minerva, 1942).

> and assimilation of new, foreign racial elements [which] threaten to change the Hungarian national character.[180]

To offer a satisfactory answer to this problem, Csík and Kállay concentrated on the following two aspects: 'the extent to which certain ethnic groups [the Magyars] have preserved their original racial features' and whether 'their features are identical or differ from the other ethnic groups that live in other parts of the country'. Initially, Csík and Kállay took a moderate attitude to the use of serology in the study of an individual's ethnic origin: 'analyses of blood groups [...] cannot tell us whether an individual is, from an ethnic point of view, Hungarian, German, or Romanian'.[181] Such a cautious approach did not, however, seek to diminish the importance of this serological study of the Hungarians of Kalotaszeg. It was, they stated 'beyond discussion that the result obtained following the analysis carried out within a larger community may illustrate the racial composition and, consequently, the origin of that community'. As the environment had no influence on the inheritance of the blood groups, Csík and Kállay considered serological research to be the best anthropological method used in order to determine the racial structure of the ethnic group being researched.

Corroborated with 'anthropological, ethnographic, and historical' research, 'the analysis of blood groups could validate or invalidate contradictory opinions'[182] regarding certain ethnic groups in particular. It was, they underlined, the methodology proposed by the German Society of Blood Group Research (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Blutgruppenforschung) 'for situations in which detailed anthropological measurements had not been carried out'. As was to be expected, the serological results from nine villages in Kalotaszeg confirmed that the 'race index' of the Hungarians there varied between 1.2 and 2.0, with an average value of 1.6, making them racially similar to Hungarians from other regions of Hungary. Equally important was the conclusion that 'the Romanians differ from the Hungarians in terms of the frequency of blood groups and other racial features'.[183]

The debate about the ethnic groups in Transylvania was intensely politicized. Hungarian and Romanian anthropologists might have been working on the same living subjects, but they had different political motivations. The

180 Lajos Bartucz, *Fajkérdés, fajkutatás* (Budapest: A Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1940), 318.

181 Csík and Kállay, *Vércsoport vizsgálatok Kalotaszegi községekben*, 3.

182 Csík and Kállay, *Vércsoport vizsgálatok Kalotaszegi községekben*, 3–4.

183 Csík and Kállay, *Vércsoport vizsgálatok Kalotaszegi községekben*, 20–21.

conceptual dilemma and scientific impasse that Hungarian and Romanian anthropological research had reached was described by Mihály Malán in his 1943 study titled 'Hungarians and Romanians of Transylvania in the Mirror of Anthropology'.[184]

Malán accepted that all existing anthropological and serological theories were marked by a high degree of nationalism. Like other researchers who had entered the dangerous terrain of racial research in Transylvania, Malán constructed a set of diverse arguments, from cultural determinism to serology. Transylvania was, he believed, a region that permitted numerous proposals of racial utopias. For all that, he was critical of earlier anthropological research, both Hungarian and Romanian, pointing out that 'the problem of the racial structure of the Hungarians and the Romanians of Transylvania, however important it is for us, has not yet found its solution: the studies at our disposal are very few and, to a large extent, out of date'. Additionally, it was difficult to find reliable serological research. Such as there was, he considered, either it 'represents only a small percentage of the anthropology of the Hungarians, of the Szeklers, and of the Romanians of Transylvania' or it 'deals only with a small number of individuals, and so could be relevant only in small measure to the understanding of the group's racial structure'.[185] In his view, what the Romanian anthropologists considered a well-documented theme was still an unclear field, marked by one-sided methodologies. Some researchers focused only cranial measurements, while others were obsessed with serology.

In this context, Malán attempted an exhaustive survey of the anthropological literature on the ethnic groups of Transylvania published since 1900, both foreign and Romanian or Hungarian, including such authors as Augustin Weisbach, Viktor Lebzelter, Eugène Pittard, Aurél Török, Lajos Bartucz, Jenő Davida, Lajos Csík, Victor Papilian, Gheorghe Popovici, Sabin Manuilă, Iordache Făcăoaru, and Petru Râmneanțu. Then he analysed the most important anthropological characteristics of the two ethnic groups: stature, cephalic index, facial index, blood group, and finally, racial composition. He formulated his findings as follows: 'From a racial point of view, the Hungarians of Transylvania cannot be separated from the Hungarians in other parts of the country [i.e., Hungary]', even if, in Transylvania, some of them were brachycephalic. According to Malán, 45.5% of the Hungarians of Transylvania were brachycephalic, 27% mesocephalic,

184 Mihály Malán, 'Erdélyi magyarok és románok az embertan tükrében', in József Deér and László Gáldi, eds, *Magyarok és románok*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Athenaeum Irodalmi, 1943), 599–667.
185 Malán, 'Erdélyi magyarok és románok az embertan tükrében', 599.

24.5% sub-brachycephalic, and 2.9% dolichocephalic. As far as serology was concerned, they had the following composition: 11.02% type AB, 45.78% type A (so-called 'European'), 18.52% type B (so-called 'Asiatic'), and 24.68% type O. For the Romanians of Transylvania, he established the following: 7.20% type AB, 44.25% type A, 14.30% type B, and 34.25% type O.[186]

Concerning the craniological similarities or differences between the two ethnic groups, Malán wrote that 'the average cranial index of the Romanians is higher than that of the Hungarians, so they have a shorter and more rounded skull, which explains why many Romanians are brachycephalic. The form of the skull is relatively short for Hungarians and very short for Romanians'. Although his results confirmed some of those offered by Romanian researchers, his conclusion was categorical in refuting the claim that there was a racial complementarity between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania:

> The Romanians have blood group A [in a proportion] close to that of the Hungarians, but fewer of groups B and AB, and they have more of group O. Consequently, the Romanians have few p genes and even significantly fewer q genes, while the recessive r genes are numerous. Thus, there is an enormous difference between the two nations, both from the point of view of the frequency the blood groups and with regard to the quantity of blood genes.[187]

It should come as no surprise that Malán's arguments were in contradiction to those made by Romanian anthropologists. Ultimately, as he pointed out, the 'Romanian racial type' ('Dacian' or 'Carpathian') localized in Transylvania served as an ideological argument for the theory of historical continuity promoted officially by Romanian political culture. Thus, any type of anthropological research brought into discussion the issue of national specificity; in other words, the biologization of national belonging was experienced through a two-pronged process: one internal (classification and differentiation) and the other external (marking out relations with other ethnic groups).

Romanian and Hungarian anthropologists agreed that their nations were mixed from a racial point of view. However, they also believed in the existence of a 'racial nucleus' and a corresponding 'racial type' that they considered specific to their respective nations. Surveying the history of Romanian anthropology at the Romanian Academy in 1941, Victor Papilian and Constantin Velluda did not hesitate to maintain that:

186 Malán, 'Erdélyi magyarok és románok az embertan tükrében', 666–667.
187 Malán, 'Erdélyi magyarok és románok az embertan tükrében', 667.

> The peoples of Romania are grouped, in terms of their blood, around a Romanian racial nucleus, which is rich in European elements and situated especially in the mountainous centre of Transylvania. Towards the periphery of Romania, the European elements are more mixed, especially with Asiatic properties of blood, though these are of Slavic, not Hungarian origin; however, the influence of these elements is minor.[188]

As the borders of Romania and Hungary were again changed during the early 1940s, the attention of anthropologists was particularly attracted by the racial essentialism of the nation, which they invoked in their scientific research. Such an idealization of race meant that the Romanian and Hungarian peoples were not understood solely in terms of language, religion, and culture, but also biologically. As long as Hungarian and Romanian anthropological research during the 1930s and early 1940 fed two mutually exclusive nationalist narratives, each claiming priority in Transylvania for its respective ethnic group, there could be no way forward.

'Racial Commandments'

In a study published in 1941, Nicolae Al. Rădulescu lamented the fact that the greater part of anthropological research in Romania was dominated by morphological measurements that were numerous and complex but did not achieve their purpose, namely the racial diagnosis of the population. The description of the race, Rădulescu considered, had to be the 'end result' of anthropological research.[189] However, there was too much specialized discussion on the subject. What Rădulescu wanted was a clear racial message, transmitted as widely as possible. Thus, to understand the relation between anthropology, serology, and biopolitics in the interwar period, we must analyse racial research in terms not only of its more technical formulations (maps, diagrams, tables, mathematical equations, etc.), but also of its large-scale dissemination in the public space by way of newspapers, radio lectures, and various public events.

In the final part of this chapter, I shall offer some examples taken from the daily press of the time, which reveal the close connections between

188 Victor C. Papilian and Constantin C. Velluda, *Istoricul antropologiei în România* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1942), 21.

189 Nicolae Al. Rădulescu, 'Antropologie rasială și antropogeografia', *Buletinul Societăţii Regale Române de Geografie* 59 (1940): 246.

anthropology, serology, and biopolitics. The authors discussed here are representative of the interwar Romanian intellectual and political tradition. Unfortunately, we have a truncated image of this tradition, and thus new interpretations need to be created, because it is important that we appreciate the entanglement of eugenics and biopolitics. In a broader sense, which includes nationalism and antisemitism, biopolitics was neither a rudimentary simplification of racism nor a pseudoscientific distortion of eugenics. Rather it was a concerted reaction to the perceived collective and individual fragmentation resulting from Romania's cultural, political, social, and economic transformations during the interwar period.

If ideas of national rebirth provided the framework for the biologization of national belonging as it evolved during and between the wars, racial theories also proved to be source of inspiration for those who desired the ethnic transformation of Romania. In an interview for the magazine *Realitatea Ilustrată* in July 1934, Sabin Manuilă, already a nationally and internationally recognized statistician, stated that Romania did not yet have a 'policy of racial biology', but rather 'a sentimental policy' of race.[190] By the early 1940s, however, the situation was different. The same Manuilă summed up his own version of racial biopolitics as follows: 'The aim of population policy should be the gathering in one place of all the Romanians and the elimination from our body of those minority members who display centrifugal tendencies'. How, then, could the minorities be eliminated in order to obtain the country's racial purification?

Manuilă proposed the following biopolitical programme based on what he termed 'racial commandments', including 'the programmatic solution of the Jewish problem'. Likewise in the case of the Roma, Manuilă wanted 'the seeking of efficient remedies to combat the danger of the racial influence of the Gypsies'. 'We are', he said, 'the country with the most Gypsies in the world', and further on: 'Gypsy racial promiscuity constitutes a national danger, because they come close to the most inferior classes of the Romanians, who are the most prolific and who produce evils with delayed consequences'. Finally, Manuilă called for the introduction of 'practical measures of eugenics, which would not only give us the power to improve the quality of our population, but would seriously influence public opinion and raise our prestige abroad'. The application of such eugenic measures, he continued, would be proof 'of a programmatic and long-term action, displaying our interest in the racist doctrine of government'. Noting resentfully

190 'Problema raselor pusă la punct de d. dr. Sabin Manuilă', *Realitatea Ilustrată* 8, no. 389 (1934): 13.

that the country that had given the world the term 'biopolitics', courtesy of Iuliu Moldovan – 'the first to suggest a scientific racist policy' – had no corresponding institution dedicated to the matter, Manuilă called for the creation of a 'Higher Council for the Defence of the Race', which would approach racial problems from a scientific perspective and in accord with the political orientation of the new regime. It was a decisive time to intervene. 'We should not waste a single minute', Manuilă warned, 'Every moment is the right one to achieve a point on our racial programme'.[191]

Support for racism was openly declared, and Liviu Stan found the right words to describe it. 'Each people', he declared, 'persists, affirms itself, and realizes itself in history, to the extent that it is racist'. It was now the turn of the Romanians to assume their racial destiny. 'To the extent that you are racist, you are and you remain Romanian; and when you are no longer racist, when you have ceased to be racist, you have started to disappear as a Romanian, as a people'.[192] A clear and simple explanation.

In a series of articles dedicated to totalitarian biopolitics, the sociologist Traian Herseni also dealt with the relation between eugenics and racial nationalism. In 'Mitul sângelui' ('The Myth of Blood'), for example, an article published in the newspaper *Cuvântul* (*The Word*) in November 1940, Herseni glorified both the Nazi revolution and racism in general. To those who criticized racism as 'race hatred, and on the scientific level a heresy', Herseni responded that: 'Racism has a strong scientific basis and signifies one of the most well-grounded political ideals'. And now, it would seem, it was embraced by the Romanians. 'The anthropological sciences', he argued further on, 'have reached some rigorously proven conclusions', for example, 'the inequality of the races of humankind and the possibility of their improvement by way of heredity'. The race, he observed, could be 'purified, multiplied, and improved by way of heredity, whence the possibility and need for a racial, eugenic policy'. In Herseni's view, Nazi Germany was the ideal racial state, whose racial and eugenic policies – such as 'the elimination of the Jews because they belong to an inferior race' and 'the exclusion from procreation of those with hereditary flaws (imbeciles, lunatics, criminals, alcoholics, syphilitics, etc.)' – enhanced further the traditional aura of cultural and biological superiority that characterized the German nation. For Herseni, Nazi eugenic racism was the model that should be followed by

191 Sabin Manuilă, 'Comandamentele rassiale și politica de populație', *România Nouă* 7, no. 17 (1940): 3. Many of these aspects were also discussed in Sabin Manuilă, 'Acțiunea eugenică ca factor de politică de populație', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 12, nos. 1–4 (1941): 1–4.
192 Stan, *Rasă și religiune*, 122.

Romania too. 'With the help of eugenics', he argued, 'a people has its fate in its own hands. It can systematically improve its qualities and can reach the highest step of human fulfilment and creation: the brilliance of Adolf Hitler consists also in his clear vision of this possibility.'[193]

Given that he nourished such views, it is no wonder that Herseni adopted openly racist language when he reflected on potentially discriminatory measures with regard to the minorities in Romania (Jews and Roma). By 1941, his ideas in favour of the introduction of biopolitical laws in Romania, including social segregation and deportation, as a basis for national regeneration had reached a new impetus: 'The racial purification of the Romanian nation is a matter of life and death. It cannot be neglected, or postponed, or resolved by half measures.' The scientific language spread by eugenics was identified with a racist vocabulary, which, in its turn, was linked to antisemitism.

Here is what Herseni states in an influential article under the title 'Race and national destiny', published in *Cuvântul* in January 1941: 'Beyond doubt, the decline of the Romanian people is due to the infiltration into our ethnic group of elements of inferior race, the crossing of our ancient, Geto-Roman blood with Phanariot and Gypsy blood, and now with Jewish blood'. Inspired by Eminescu, Aurel C. Popovici, and A. C. Cuza, he further lamented that: 'the elite of the country, who should have included the purest examples of the race, have turned into an imposed layer, without any blood connection with the [Romanian] ethnic community and without any attachment to national traditions and ideals'. Like Manuilă, Herseni wanted the immediate adoption of a eugenic and biopolitical programme. 'The slogans of the physical and moral healing of our nation', he declared, must be 'de-Judaification, de-Phanariotification, de-Gypsification!' For Herseni, 'the racial purification of the Romanian people' was 'a matter of life and death'.[194]

The biologization of national belonging advocated by eugenicists thus became a form of political identity clearly associated with the form of national revolution desired by supporters of the Iron Guard and then by the Antonescu regime.[195] On the basis of the examples offered by Germany and Italy, some authors, such as Manuilă and Râmneanțu, highlighted the need for a Romanian 'totalitarian demography'. According to Râmneanțu,

193 Traian Herseni, 'Mitul sângelui', *Cuvântul* 17, no. 41 (1940): 1–2.

194 Traian Herseni, 'Rasă și destin național', *Cuvântul* 18, no. 91 (1941): 1. See also Constantin Papanace, 'Desiudaizare, desfanariotizare, desțiganizare', *Cuvântul* 17, no. 77 (1940): 1.

195 See, for example, Nicolae Porsenna, *Regenerarea neamului românesc* (Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1937).

the 'political and spiritual revolutions' initiated by Nazism and Fascism had enabled both states to achieve 'the creation of a totalitarian mentality' and 'the restoration of spiritual values', together with 'the citizens' belief in a future of the nation' and in 'the institution of marriage'.[196] Thus, in the early 1940s, the context was favourable for racial obsessions to play an ever-greater role in Romania's quest for national rebirth.[197] As the historian Petre P. Panaitescu declared:

> not only are we the sons of the earth, but we are also part of a great race, which is perpetuated in us, the Dacian race. The Legionary Movement, which has awakened the deepest echoes of our national being, has also raised to [a place of] honour 'Dacian blood'. Only today do we recognize ourselves as Dacians and understand what this means.[198]

While Făcăoaru and Râmneanțu linked totalitarian biopolitics to the eugenic transformation of the nation, the family, and the individual, Panaitescu was of the opinion that it should also be a historical 'summoning' of Romania's Dacian past. At the same time, eugenics should facilitate both the introduction of sanitary and medical reform programmes and pronatalist campaigns aimed at educating the Romanian population about the importance of numerous and healthy families.

Conclusions

During the Second World War, the biopolitical message of the political and scientific elites did not fundamentally change. It continued to be based on the same eugenic ideology promoted since the 1920s, the aim of which was to prepare the Romanians for the achievement of a racial utopia: the homogenous ethnic Romanian state. In his inaugural lecture as Professor of Hygiene and Preventative Medicine in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Cluj-Sibiu in November 1943, Râmneanțu underlined the influence that the works of Iuliu Moldovan had had on him and on others like him, who lived 'only for problems of hygiene and biopolitics'.[199] Under

196 Petru Râmneanțu, 'Măsuri de politică demografică și politica demografică totalitară', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 11, nos. 1–2 (1940): 44–45. See also Gheorghe Stroescu, 'Selecția rasială și politica populației în noul stat legionar', *Buna Vestire* 4, no. 87 (1940): 2.

197 Nicolae Minovici, 'Razza e nazione. Fascismo creatore', *Difessa della Razza* 3, no. 1 (1939): 52-55.

198 Petre P. Panaitescu, 'Noi suntem de aici', *Cuvântul* 17, no. 38 (1940): 1.

199 Petru Râmneanțu, 'Sânge și glie', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 14, nos. 11–12 (1943): 371.

the title 'Blood and Soil', his lecture insisted on these two concepts, showing that it was the connection between them that was the source of 'the great vitality of the Romanian people [and] the conservation of its ethnic being in the first millennium of its existence'.[200] The peasantry was seen, as it had hitherto been seen, as the only long-term foundation of the Romanian biopolitical state.

Equally important for this biopolitical programme was the contribution brought by anthropology to the definition of the ethnic specificity of the Romanians. Almost two centuries after the appeal launched by Nicolae Lahovary, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, an answer came from the anthropologist Alexandru Manuilă, the son of Sabin Manuilă. Sero-anthropology, he claimed, provided the much-desired 'proof of the Dacian origin of the Romanian people'. This autochthonous, Dacian racial nucleus was:

> [a] permanent reality transposed into the blood constitution of the Romanian people, acquired according to the laws of heredity discovered by Mendel and governed exclusively by these laws. Thus, we may read in the blood of the Romanians of today the nature and constitution of their ancestral blood.[201]

In interwar Romania, many intellectuals emphasized the racial features of the nation and the connection to specific mechanisms of national identification and classification.[202] Likewise, these features were associated with all the other processes intrinsically linked to discussions about national specificity, historical destiny, the ethnic assimilation of minorities, and the ethnic supremacy of the Romanians. More than that, to take part in the discussions of nation and racial character in the interwar period meant to concentrate on biological descriptions, and thus on the nation as a physical entity – as an object of study – which existed through exchanges with other peoples, ethnic groups, and races.

Serology, craniometry, and other anthropometric experiments were validated by anthropologists and then applied to the field of national identification. As Rădulescu-Motru noted in 1941:

200 Râmneanțu, 'Sânge și glie', 375

201 Alexandru Manuilă, *Originea neamului românesc în interpretarea sa biologică* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Institutului Statistic, 1943), 6.

202 See Petru Râmneanțu, 'Înrudirea de sânge', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 14, no. 7–8 (1943): 220–237 and Gheorghe Vornica, 'Originea etnică sau de sânge', *Transilvania* 72, no. 8 (1941): 589–591.

> the entire orientation of our state policy, with regard to the improvement of the sanitary condition of the population, public assistance, eugenic measures, and all that is law-making of a more general character, will be done in conformity with *the fundamental tendencies of the race*, the only ones that can ensure its continuity over long historical periods.[203]

Through association with nationalist values, but also under the pressure of the political climate of the period, anthropology crossed paths with racism and antisemitism. This is also the reason why, toward the end of the 1930s, the directions of research in Romanian anthropology looked more like a political programme than a scientific one. In the dialogue between science and politics, the 'nationalization' of anthropology deepened, as its universalist paradigm of studying the human race in general was gradually replaced by a preoccupation with one nation in particular. Thus, serology, craniometry, and other anthropometric methods became useful not only for anthropology, but also in the debate about Romanian national specificity.

These debates can never be adequately treated if only literary or philosophical arguments are taken into account. Of course, the anthropological and serological definitions of national belonging do not make the other cultural debates any less important. But they are an indicator that the eugenic and biopolitical programmes of the interwar and wartime periods must be sought in the attempt to protect the future of the nation against a background of presumed internal racial decline caused by unwanted ethnic minorities and unfavourable international conditions leading to territorial and population losses. But when we approach the interwar debates about national specificity and character, we must give attention both to anthropology and to eugenic and biopolitical arguments. We can thus see how cultural interpretations of the nation frequently intersected with racial understandings of ethnic specificity. History and biology, culture and nature coexisted in a symbiosis that sometimes went as far as complete reciprocal identification. Indeed, the ethnic community's need for rejuvenation, a concern shared by the majority of Romanian intellectuals at the time, was based on the palingenetic myth of national renewal, containing both the idea of spiritual metamorphosis and its materialization in a new ethnic ontology.

Biopolitics and eugenics received official political recognition on 8 October 1943, with the foundation in Bucharest of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Biological Capital of the Nation, under the authority of the President of the Council of Ministers. The Commission

203 Rădulescu-Motru, 'Tipul rasial românesc după indicele cefalic', 32 (emphasis in original).

was headed by Iuliu Moldovan, and – alongside his old collaborators Sabin Manuilă, Petre Râmneanțu, and Iordache Făcăoaru – it included Ion C. Petrescu, undersecretary of state in the Ministry of National Culture, Iosif Stoichiția, general secretary of the Ministry of Health, and Gheorghe Zamfirescu, head of Section I (Intelligence) of the General Staff of the Romanian Army. At its second meeting, three weeks later, Făcăoaru suggested the creation of an Institute of Ethno-Racial Biology, and Manuilă proposed the compilation of a 'biopolitical catechism of the Romanian people, a sort of memento, to include all the rights of every Romanian. This to show us our ethnic ideal in the form of a slogan.'[204]

It seems that Moldovan's objective, the creation of a biopolitical and eugenic institute in Romania, had at last been achieved. This institute was to be made up of five sections: human genetics, bioanthropology, eugenics, biopolitics, and, finally, an office devoted to ethnic talents. These five sections were, in turn, divided into over twenty subsections, including heredopathology, raceology, serology, biotypology, demography, negative eugenics, migration, etc.[205] In the light of the current political realities, the commission also proposed that the institute should bear the name of Marshal Ion Antonescu.

The process of Romania's transformation into a eugenic and biopolitical state continued. To this end, in January 1944, the commission proposed a Law for the Protection of the Family, thus normalizing the principal eugenic creed of the interwar period: the family was 'the foundation of the life of the Romanian People and National State'.[206] The law made a prenuptial medical certificate obligatory and imposed additional eugenic measures for the protection of the family, including the introduction of obligatory sterilization of persons with hereditary mental or physical illnesses, a subject to which we shall return in the next chapter. However, with the end of the Second World War and the political transformations that followed the royal coup d'état of 23 August 1944, neither the proposed Institute of Ethno-Racial Biology nor the Law for the Protection of the Family were implemented.

The change of political regime did not, however, impede the flow of ideas regarding national specificity that Romanian anthropologists had been putting forward since the 1920s. In the communist period, eugenic and biopolitical ideas about the nation reappeared, and finally materialized

204 PCM, Consiliul de Patronaj al Operelor Sociale, Fond Nicolae Caranfil, no. 765, fila 8, ANR, Bucharest.

205 Fond Nicolae Caranfil, no. 765, fila 19.

206 Fond Nicolae Caranfil, no. 765, fila 35.

into a specific form of nationalism, the origins of which we are now in a position to understand better. The importance that anthropology acquired in the public culture of the interwar period led to its transformation from a scientific discipline into a set of arguments appropriated by political strategies. In a way, the gradual fusion of science and ethnicity that I have identified in the anthropological research of the 1920s and especially the 1930s finally led to the adoption of biopolitics as national policy in the 1940s. At that point, debates about the survival of the nation were closely linked to ideas of racial protectionism, conceived as solutions to the social, national, and demographic problems characterizing Romania at the time.

5. Stigma and Eugenic Sterilization

Abstract: This chapter offers an overview of those Romanian eugenicists who discussed the need for the state's interventionist role in controlling the reproduction of certain categories of individuals deemed 'inferior'. Favoured by an international context dominated by Nazi Germany, it was suggested that only negative eugenic methods such as permanent institutionalization and sterilization could prevent the further decline of the biological quality of the Romanian population.

Keywords: dehumanization, disability, mental illness, Nazi eugenics, racial protection

After World War I, the idea of introducing restrictive eugenic measures became more and more popular. The legalization of eugenic sterilization and the introduction of the prenuptial medical certificate were measures adopted in this direction. The eugenicists had long supported the idea of obligatory prenuptial medical certificates, together with rational choice of marriage partners.[1] In Romania, many eugenicists believed that such certificates were an efficient method of preventing certain social and medical problems, particularly the spread of venereal diseases and above all the interbreeding of 'the weak, infirm, etc'.[2] 'Marriages between individuals both of whom present stigmata of *dégénérescence*' – suggested the anatomist Constantin C. Velluda in a text with the expressive title 'Încotro merge umanitatea?' ('Which Way is Humanity Going?') – 'are a disaster; they have contributed most of all to the degeneration of races and thus of humanity; for this reason,

1 See Francis Galton, 'Eugenics: Restrictions of Marriage', *Sociological Papers* 2, no. 2 (1906): 3–13; Mihai Kernbach, 'Probleme eugenice', *Darul Vremii* 1, no. 2 (1930): 52–54; and Ernest Sermet, *Un problème d'eugénisme. L'examen ou le certificate pré-nuptial* (Montauban: Georges Forestié, 1933).

2 Constantin C. Velluda, 'Încotro merge umanitatea?', *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* 6, no. 2 (1939): 351.

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measures for the prevention of these causes of degeneration need to be taken with as little delay as possible and as radically as possible'.[3]

To a certain extent, the eugenicists' campaign for eugenic sterilization and for the introduction of prenuptial medical certificates reflected their attempt to reconcile the theory of racial improvement, based on the laws of heredity, with programmes of preventive and social medicine and of public health. In other respects, their plea reflects the cultural, religious, and economic conditions in interwar Romania, seen as a country with a majority population that was fertile from a racial point of view, but where living conditions were difficult, systems of social assistance and maternity protection were barely in their infancy, and the level of sanitary education among the population was low. Romania was also a country with notable regional differences and a large number of ethnic minorities. The application of any eugenic measure was conditioned by these factors.

However, as in other countries, the idea of introducing racial hygiene and eugenics through state intervention was becoming increasingly popular. According to the Cluj newspaper *Patria* (*The Homeland*), 'the work of regeneration and strengthening the vigour of the race' needed to be 'started with assiduity'.[4] Against the background of economic crisis and political stability that characterized the late 1920s, eugenic sterilization also enjoyed increased attention, both from doctors and from politicians interested in protecting the nation from presumed biological degeneration and social decline caused by alcoholism and the spread of venereal diseases.

In a short presentation of eugenics in the literary supplement of the newspaper *Adevărul* of 2 May 1926, individuals unwanted from a social and biological point of view were described as having out-of-control fertility, reproducing '"rabbit-like", with surprising rapidity'. Furthermore, they were 'touched by mental illnesses, lacking will and foresight'; they were 'semi-mad, imbeciles, idiots, degenerates, infirm'; finally, it was they who filled 'the prisons, hospices, homes for imbeciles, for the abnormal, for the blind, hospitals'; in short, these individuals were considered a major eugenic threat and 'a permanent burden'.[5]

The promotors of eugenic sterilization maintained that the method offered a service of great importance for state and society: the guarantee of healthy future generations. Some of the eugenicists thought in preventative terms, wanting to reduce the number of individuals suffering from hereditary

3 Velluda, 'Încotro merge umanitatea?', 351.

4 Gheorghe Stoica, 'Vigoarea rasei', *Patria* 6, no. 89 (1924): 5.

5 'Maltusianism și eugenism', *Adevărul Literar și Artistic* 7, no. 282 (1926): 7.

mental illnesses; others, more radical, proposed that the nation be protected by the removal of individuals considered inferior from a racial point of view. There was a consensus regarding the need to introduce eugenic practices to prevent both the multiplying of the 'race of the poor'[6] – as the anarchist eugenicist Eugen Relgis termed them, using the expression of the Italian criminologist Alfredo Niceforo[7] – and 'the reproduction of the weakly endowed or degenerate (such as the feeble-minded, epileptics, the demented, etc.) either through sterilization, or through their isolation in the period of reproduction'.[8] Support for the implementation of eugenic practices came not only from physicians but also from other categories of professionals. For example, the authors of *The Manifesto of National Revolution* – among them the economist and future philosopher Petre Țuțea – wanted 'the population policy of the Romanian state' to promote 'the quality of [Romanian] biological capital'. For this to become reality, 'a number of drastic measures regarding the physically and morally abnormal' were required. According to Țuțea and the other co-authors, 'criminals and degenerates must be sterilized, for society is not a vast asylum'.[9] Thus it was suggested that these individuals were not wanted. Moreover, society had 'the strict right (and even duty) to stop the course of a vitiated and vicious descent, if not through sterilization, then at least through an absolute interdiction on marriage'.[10]

There was no need for a medical qualification to bring arguments in support of eugenic sterilization; it was sufficient to believe that the future of the nation might be in danger because of the degeneration of the race. The case of Dem I. Nicolaescu, lawyer in Ploiești and liberal member for Prahova County in the Chamber of Deputies, is illustrative in this respect. At the meeting of the chamber on 13 December 1932, Nicolaescu raised the question of the necessity of introducing certain eugenic measures, such as the prenuptial medical certificate. In his view, such measures could stop 'the invasion of society by a multitude of inadaptable, unbalanced, demented, and degenerate [people]'.[11] The enactment of eugenic laws, Nicolaescu

6 Eugen Relgis, 'Rasa săracilor', *Adevărul Literar și Artistic* 8, no. 349 (1927): 7.

7 See Alfredo Niceforo, *Les classes pauvres. Recherches anthropologiques et sociales* (Paris: V. Giard & E. Brière, 1905).

8 Alexandru Roșca, 'Îmbunătățirea rasei umane', *'Utopia': Revistă de Cultură Generală* 1, no. 2 (1929): 57–59.

9 Sorin Pavel, Petre Țuțea, Ioan Crăciunel, Gh. Tite, Nicolae Tatu, and Petre Ercuță, *Manifestul revoluției naționale* (Sighișoara: Tipografia Miron Neagu, 1935), 69.

10 Pavel Mureșanu, 'Știința în sprijinul selecționării', *Dreptatea* 7, no. 1755 (1933): 1.

11 Doctorul Ygrec, 'Eugenetica înaintea Camerei şi în trecutul legiurilor româneşti', *Adevărul* 46, no. 15018 (1932): 1.

considered, had to be included in the political programme of all the parties. Otherwise, he asked his parliamentary colleagues, 'What does the future hold for us?' And his questions continued:

> For what sort of successors was Romania unified and why did so many of the flower of our youth sacrifice themselves fifteen years ago? For whom do we now strive to create an economic condition better than our own, an easier life – if we do not take measures to have capable successors? For the degenerates and moral monsters who tomorrow will overwhelm the number of the capable, and the day after tomorrow will replace them.[12]

Nicolaescu had launched a challenge to the political elites. Consistent to his own principles and to the idea that the debate about eugenics should be understood in both medical and political terms, he continued to promote the eugenic agenda in the Chamber of Deputies. Thus, in the meeting of 4 December 1934, he reflected on the notorious case of a widowed mother called Zina Pascal, who had ended her own life, in a Bucharest hotel, after first killing her twenty-year-old son, who suffered from 'cretinism'.

Here, in short, is the story. After a long and painful experience, Pascal had decided that her life and the life of her son could no longer continue 'in a world where defects are not empathized with, but constitute a pretext for mockery – the object of the mean-spirited comments of passers-by'.[13] In one of the letters found in the room that the two had shared, Pascal attributed to her husband, who had had syphilis, the responsibility for infecting her with this contagious disease, which had then led to the birth of a child with mental disabilities. In the same letter, she noted: 'Perhaps my tormented life and my sad end will serve as an example to others. Perhaps a law will be voted to stop sick people from starting a family. I hope that means will be found to stop the birth of children destined from the cradle for misfortune.'[14] Another important detail in this drama is Zina Pascal's appeal for the obligatory introduction of the prenuptial medical certificate.

Such a message served perfectly the cause of eugenicists like Nicolaescu, for whom this tragic case demonstrated, if it was still necessary, that 'the number of degenerates, of the demented, and of criminals is constantly growing'. Likewise, it was an occasion to reiterate his older wish: the adoption

12 'Problema eugeneticii trebui să devină punct din programul partidelor. Declaraţiile d–lui deputat Dem. I. Nicolaescu', *Adevărul* 46, no. 15021 (1932): 3.

13 'Impresionanta dramă de la Hotel Royal din Capitală', *Dimineaţa* 30, no. 9879 (1934): 1.

14 'Alte amănunte asupra dramei dela Royal–Palace', *Dimineaţa* 30, no. 9887 (1934): 3.

of laws 'for the improvement of the sanitary state of the population and for the selection of the race'.[15] This was also seen during the debates in the senate of the joint parliamentary committee on abortion occasioned by the adoption of the Carol II Penal Code in 1936, which provided for the regulation of abortion on social and eugenic grounds. Again, Nicolaescu used biological arguments that would permit the practice of eugenic abortion in order to avoid the transmission of 'mental and corporal defects'.[16]

To his support came one of the members of the committee, the gynaecologist Marius Georgescu. In his report, Georgescu highlighted the fact that while in Hitler's Germany, the sterilization programme was driven by 'racist eugenic reasons', it was very different in Romania. If introduced, a sterilization law would be motivated solely by medical and eugenic considerations, given Romania's 'large numbers of syphilitics, alcoholics and mentally ill'. The future was bleak, Georgescu continued, if the state did not invest more in the nation's eugenic protection. 'I cannot help thinking', he said:

> that if we continue on the current path and do not prevent the reproduction of lower-quality individuals, in a thousand years we will be a nation of degenerates, mental retards, and cretins. This is a vital problem, which our politicians should be familiar with, so that they can take the appropriate measures, including the sterilization of dangerous individuals, the legalization of contraception methods, and the adoption of eugenic abortion, which is the easiest and quickest way to help with the selection of our race.[17]

Gheorghe Banu agreed with this assessment. According to him, the first measure that should be introduced in Romania was a 'eugenic census', defined as the totality of 'biological documents on the individual members of a collectivity'. Through this census, Banu hoped to obtain a 'survey of the categories of biological values' in a society. Not only 'the standard type, of the normal person', but especially 'the deficient, dysgenic element, the individual who deviates from the line of normality, and who in his turn will produce an abnormal progeny'. The eugenic measures to be introduced for these categories were, of course, different. 'Normal' individuals were 'those

15 'Dezbaterile Parlamentare. Camera. Şedinţa dela 4 decembrie', *Epoca* (new series) no. 1763 (1934): 3.

16 *Codul Penal Carol al II–lea adnotat*, vol. 3 (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Socec), 138.

17 'Contribuția medicală la noul cod penal. Expunerea d–lui dr. conf. Marius Georgescu', *Viitorul* 27, no. 8139 (1935): 5–6. See also Marius Georgescu, *Protecția medico–socială a maternității* (Bucharest: Institutul Grafic 'Luceafărul', 1937), 236–244.

hopes of the nation, who will direct its normal progress'; they were 'the elements that advance the racial and biological perfection of the people'.[18] It was they who should be protected and helped to prosper, not the individuals with hereditary 'deficiencies'.

We can see how, in the interwar period, degeneration had become a eugenic label by which those members of society who were considered 'dysgenic', physically and mentally, were stigmatized and dehumanized, just as in the case of those 'unwanted' because of their ethnic origin. For example, the 'race of poor people' mentioned by Relgis was described as:

> inferior in all respects to normal people: not only regarding body size, cranial capacity, physical strength, resistance to tiredness but also regarding the delayed growth of children and physiological anomalies. The race of the poor has a reduced sensitivity and psychological characteristics that bring it close to the mentality of children and primitives.

Any eugenic measure, therefore, was permitted from the moral point of view if it was 'in the service of the purification and recovery of the human race'.[19] Morality itself was transformed, as the Greek-Catholic theologian Augustin Popa noted, into a '*mere social hygiene*, with the sole aim of serving the purity of the blood and the beauty of the race'.[20]

The Romanian case offers an edifying understanding of the complicated relation between eugenic sterilization as a medical practice and eugenic sterilization as a mechanism of social selection, aimed at the political engineering of a biologically defined community. This relation appeared as the result of various internal and international circumstances, including the widespread success and popularity of racist and eugenic ideas in the majority of European countries and in the United States. The debates about sterilization in interwar Romania indicate, as in other countries, an intense concern about the social and biological decline of the population, and about the stigmatization of certain social categories such as criminals, alcoholics, and prostitutes,[21] of certain ethnic groups such as the Roma, and of certain groups of people suffering from various physical and mental disabilities.

18 *Codul Penal Carol al II–lea adnotat*, 142.

19 Relgis, 'Rasa săracilor', 7.

20 Augustin Popa, 'Religia sângelui. Puncte de orientare în problema rasistă, III', *Cultura Creştină* 18, no. 12 (1938): 793 (emphasis in original).

21 See, for exemple, Iordache Făcăoaru's study of 1,000 detainees in police custody in Cluj entitled 'Ereditatea dispoziţiilor disgenice', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 5, nos. 8–10 (1934): 206–214.

Eugenic debates about the control of reproduction were intense, even if no law to legalize sterilization, voluntary or obligatory, was introduced during the interwar period. For many adepts of sterilization, a certain purification of Romanian society on eugenic and racial criteria was necessary in order to accelerate social progress, economic productivity, and the protection of the majority ethnic element. Eugenicists recommended a social selection and a biological one, 'a perfecting', according to Nicolae Roșu, 'of the representative biological type, of the human being, by election and selection, by rational and consecutive crossings, by the isolation of the sick, of idiots and criminals'.[22] Without taking into account these debates about sterilization, not only the history of Romanian eugenics in the interwar period, but also our understanding of the relation between science, nationalism, and biopolitics, is incomplete.

The Medical Perspective

Among the first to discuss the problem of sterilization in Romania was the physician and sexologist Eraclie Sterian. In an article published in March 1910 in *Medicul Poporului* (*The People's Physician*), the Bucharest weekly popularizing magazine of hygiene and medicine, Sterian was critical of the incipient sterilization programmes in the United States and of their supporters in Britain. Referring to the British doctor Robert R. Rentoul's book *Race Culture or Race Suicide*[23] – a well-known eugenic text in favour of the sterilization of the mentally ill – Sterian wondered whether such methods should not also be introduced in Romania. In the case of 'idiots and imbeciles who lack from birth portions of the brain and, whatever you do, their nature cannot be changed, and their children will similarly turn out to be idiots', Sterian considered, 'we can sterilize them without prejudice to society'.[24] He refused, however, to accept that the same eugenic method should be applied to 'mad' people and criminals. Madness and criminality were not hereditary, he emphasized, at the same time criticizing Cesare Lombroso's theory of the born criminal. By sterilizing the mad, he concluded, 'the greatest and most criminal attack would be committed on the evolutive, progressive element of humanity'.[25]

22 Nicolae Roșu, 'Eugenia rasei', *Curentul* 8, no. 2497 (1935): 1.

23 See Robert Reid Rentoul, *Race Culture or Race Suicide* (*a Plea for the Unborn*) (New York: Walter Scott, 1906).

24 Eraclie Sterian, 'Sterilizarea nebunilor și criminalilor', *Medicul Poporului* 1, no. 8 (1910): 114.

25 Sterian, 'Sterilizarea nebunilor și criminalilor', 114.

Others, however, were of a different opinion. In a text published in November 1912 in the Bucharest journal *Higiena* (*Hygiene*), the gynaecologist Constantin Andronescu complained that Romania did not have 'a course of action to exclude tuberculosis sufferers, cretins, mad people, degenerates, etc. from the propagation of the species'. Reflecting on the marriage of two 'infirm blind people' in Bucharest, an event hosted by high society and presented 'as a charitable act', he did not hide his displeasure. 'Is this what we need?' he protested. 'To support the multiplication of the infirm? Because we do not have enough of them?'[26] Eugenic sterilization, Andronescu claimed, could be an immediate solution to forestall the degeneration of the race. The psychiatrist Aurel Dobrescu agreed with this proposal. His study of mental illnesses, published in 1919 and awarded a prize by the Romanian Academy, was described as 'a small contribution to knowledge on the matter of the improvement of the race (eugenics)'.[27] Dobrescu, too, was familiar with the American laws that permitted the sterilization of 'degenerate elements', and he underlined 'the importance of racial hygiene'[28] for family and society.

Two years later, in 1921, the physician Ioan I. Manliu published *Crâmpeie de eugenie și igienă socială* (*Fragments of Eugenics and Social Hygiene*), a veritable plea for the restructuring of the Romanian state on eugenic principles. Manliu had studied medicine under the renowned German paediatrician Carl T. Noeggerath, obtaining his doctorate from the University of Freiburg in 1914. There he had become familiarized with eugenics and racial hygiene, as he himself stated in 1920 in an employment application letter addressed to the Romanian Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Convinced that the state should pass 'drastic social laws as soon as possible, for our people has slipped on the slope of degeneration',[29] Manliu proposed that Romania imitate the country where 'the bodily, moral, and intellectual protection of the people has come to be a veritable science, which culminates in racial hygiene or ennoblement: eugenics'.[30] This model eugenic country was 'the land of the free and the home of the brave'.

Manliu was an admirer of North American eugenics, a movement that he described in detail in his book. The ambitious programme of social and biological selection introduced by the American authorities included sterilization, 'regulation of immigration and emigration, through isolation

26 Constantin Andronescu, 'Eugenia', *Higiena* 1, no. 21 (1912): 4.

27 Aurel Dobrescu, *Boalele nervoase și mentale. Prevenirea și tratamentul lor*, 2nd ed. (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1921), 8.

28 Dobrescu, *Boalele nervoase și mentale*, 154.

29 Ioan I. Manliu, *Crâmpeie de eugenie și igienă socială* (Bucharest: Tip. 'Jockey-Club', 1921), 4.

30 Manliu, *Crâmpeie de eugenie și igienă socială*, 9.

(deportation of the bad elements), and schooling'. Of these, Manliu considered sterilization to be the most efficient method for stopping 'the birth of degenerates'.[31] He was familiar with the medical sterilization procedures for men and women, such as vasectomy and salpingectomy, and he knew the eugenic activities of Dr Harry Sharp, who, in the years 1899–1906 (before the legalization of sterilization in 1907), had carried out the vasectomy operation on 382 inmates of a prison in the state of Indiana.[32]

Manliu's own proposals were informed by these examples of successful eugenic policy. He recommended that:

1) Any degenerate individual should be sterilized and, if possible, returned to society.
2) Any degenerate and sterilized individual should remain isolated in asylums or colonies, until they can be returned to society as a useful element.
3) Isolation for life is to be used only for those individuals who, even after sterilization, remain dangerous to society, seeking to exploit their energy as far as possible for their maintenance and for society, in gardens, workshops, etc.[33]

Manliu hoped that this interventionist eugenic programme would also work in Romania. 'In this direction', he added, 'our tendencies should go too, for the protection of the superior elements and the exclusion without mercy of the inferior from paternity and from the great responsibility [of family]'. The only manner in which control could be obtained over the national organism, he considered, was mass sterilization of the 'degenerate'.[34] To the question 'What should Romania do about eugenics?' Manliu's reply was simple: the whole political and cultural structure of the country – army, school, church, art and literature – should be based on eugenic principles. He also offered practical proposals, including 'the sterilization of degenerate elements', the introduction of 'compulsory medical visits before marriage for both sexes', 'the founding of an office of eugenics' to 'gather eugenic material from all over Romania and spread knowledge of eugenics in the mass of the people', 'the organization of eugenic congresses every year', and 'the formation of a museum of eugenics' not only in Bucharest but in every large town in

31 Manliu, *Crâmpeie de eugenie și igienă socială*, 18.

32 See Harry C. Sharp, 'Vasectomy as a Means of Preventing Procreation in Defectives', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 53, no. 23 (1909): 1897–1902.

33 Manliu, *Crâmpeie de eugenie și igienă socială*, 21.

34 Manliu, *Crâmpeie de eugenie și igienă socială*, 21.

the country.[35] A good part of these proposals were feasible, though others were naïve, even fantasist. However, no government or political party in Romania would have accepted such a radical eugenic agenda in the 1920s. In fact, it did not exist anywhere in the world.

Manliu was not the only Romanian physician to be impressed by the efficiency of the Americans with regard to the adoption of eugenic laws. In a short informative note sent to the magazine *Societatea de Mâine* (*Tomorrow's Society*), Sabin Manuilă in turn explained the popularity enjoyed by sterilization in the United States and the fact that it could contribute to the prevention of the mental degeneration of the population. He noted that the majority of those sterilized up until 1921 were mental patients, considered to be 'procreators of hybrid, psychopathic, or criminal offspring'.[36] The educationalist Cecilia V. Grințescu, in her turn, using Manliu's book as a source of documentation, wrote in the journal *Educația* (*Education*), a short presentation of the methods of eugenic selection used by the American authorities with the aim of improving the racial quality of future generations.[37]

Other experts also intervened in the debate about state control of fertility and reproduction through eugenic methods. In 1923, the Bucharest newspaper *Adevărul* (*The Truth*) hosted a debate about abortion and birth control, in hope of clarifying some of the uncertainties surrounding sexual reproduction. As was to be expected, two opposing points of view stood out. Constantin Poenaru-Căplescu, head surgeon of the Brâncovenesc Hospital in Bucharest, was opposed to abortion, while Doctor Ygrec supported it.[38] Manliu took the side of those who rejected the legalization of abortion, considering it 'murder, especially among the intellectuals, but also for the person without much education'.[39] Convinced that unregulated abortion threatened the biological prosperity of the nation, Manliu called for the state to revise the medical and social assistance measures for 'illegitimate' children, and for public opinion to stop stigmatizing unmarried mothers. Like the German gynaecologist Max Hirsch – who referred to illegitimate children as *Staatskinder* (children of the state) – Manliu declared that every

35 Manliu, *Crâmpeie de eugenie și igienă socială*, 39–41.

36 Sabin Manuilă, 'Sterilizarea eugenică în Statele Unite', *Societatea de Mâine* 1, no. 24 (1924): 484.

37 Cecilia V. Grințescu, 'Igiena de rasă', *Educația* 6, nos. 5–6 (1923): 103–106.

38 See, for example, Doctorul Ygrec, 'O problemă importantă: Păreri din public în chestiunea provocatorilor și a provocărilor de avorturi', *Adevărul* 36, no. 12141 (1923): 1–2; Constantin Poenaru-Căplescu, 'Medicii avortori și făcătoarele de îngeri!', *Adevărul* 36, no. 12144 (1923): 1–2; and Doctorul Ygrec, 'Iarăși despre avorturi provocate și medicii avortori', *Adevărul* 36, no. 12152 (1923): 1–2.

39 Ioan Manliu, 'Un pericol social', *Adevărul* 36, no. 12135 (1923): 1.

child 'who is born is the asset of the whole nation; they may be a genius, a talent, a superior person'.[40] However, such a vision of eugenic protection did not apply in the case of the 'degenerate [child], who has inherited their abnormal body and brain from their parents'. Manliu considered this category 'a burden for society'. 'Their social value is almost null', he maintained, explaining that 'the nation does not need them'. What could be done with these individuals? Manliu wanted them not to procreate, the solution being sterilization. 'And we shall seek', he insisted, 'to introduce this operation as soon as possible in our country, both for the woman and for the degenerate man'.[41] One thing about Manliu remained constant: his unwavering convictions about the eugenic benefits of sterilization.



Fig. 8. Dr Ygrec, pseudonym of Iosif Glicsman. From *Medicul Nostru*, vol. 2, 1938 (author's personal collection)

The debate about abortion illustrates how perceptions of sterilization had evolved in the 1920s. While Manliu was primarily interested in the North American model of eugenics, other writers referred to similar debates in Germany and France.

Dr Ygrec [figure 8], for example, informed his readers regarding the campaign for sterilization in Zwickau in Saxony, referring to the report presented by the criminologist Erich Wulffen. Wulffen, in his turn, had based his report on the plea made by the physician Gustav Boeters, known as the 'apostle of sterilization', who had expressed his support for radical eugenic measures. According to Ygrec, Boeters had recommended 'legal measures for the sterilization of children born blind, deaf and dumb; then of cretins, epileptics, and the demented; of violators of good morals; of women who have given birth to two or more illegitimate children, whose paternity is doubtful; then of criminals, etc'.[42] It was quite

40 Manliu, 'Un pericol social', 2.

41 Manliu, 'Un pericol social', 2.

42 Doctorul Ygrec, 'Cum vor nemții să–și îmbunătățească rasa? Se cere sterilizarea celor anormali, a epilepticilor, surdo–muților, demenților etc.', *Adevărul* 36, no. 12143 (1923): 1.

a long list, proposed with the aim of marginalizing, institutionalizing, and then eliminating those stigmatized by eugenicists as 'waste humanity'.[43]

Equally important were the technical details regarding sterilization offered by Ygrec, most probably in an attempt to familiarize the Romanian public with this surgical procedure. 'By sterilization', he explained, 'we do not mean castration, but a small operation that does not destroy completely the sexual glands (testicles and ovaries), but cuts a small portion of the channel that takes the ovules and spermatozoids towards the genital organs'.[44] The distinction between sterilization and castration was important, especially as the first sterilizations documented in the United States had been carried out by castration, a practice with strong negative associations. Indeed, sterilization had become a normal procedure in American prisons only after the standardization of surgical procedures like vasectomy and salpingectomy.

Still referring to Boeters, Ygrec agreed that individuals of an 'inferior biological quality' (the so-called *Minderwertige*) or the 'abnormal' should not have progeny. 'It is our duty', he noted, 'to intervene to stop the further multiplying of these ill people! It is terrible to see how many times, a few weeks after the exit from the hospice of some "ameliorated" lunatic, his wife becomes pregnant![45] Preventing the reproduction of those 'burdened with morbid and hereditarily transmissible defects' was absolutely necessary, Ygrec believed, even if it was 'unfortunately one of the hardest things to resolve in a practical way'.[46]

Some of Ygrec's colleagues grasped that he was, in fact, advocating eugenic sterilization. A prompt reaction came from Dimitrie Bagdasar, a neurologist in the military hospital in Bucharest. Bagdasar resorted to the arguments used by the French psychiatrist Roger Mignot in his studies of morbid heredity and polygamy,[47] in order to suggest greater prudence on the part of those who promoted the legal sterilization of the 'abnormal'. Could the eugenicists guarantee, he asked, 'that once all those touched by mental illnesses were sterilized, there would not appear among the normal or pseudo-normal the same illnesses against which our fight is directed?' The science of heredity did not yet have a convincing answer to this question. Perhaps even more worrying was the fact that 'repeated sterilizations would have as their result a numerical decline of the race, without our being able

43 See Edward R. Johnstone, 'Waste Humanity', *The Public Health Journal* 5, no. 4 (1914): 209–211.

44 Doctorul Ygrec, 'Cum vor nemții să–și îmbunătățească rasa?', 1.

45 Doctorul Ygrec, 'Cum vor nemții să–și îmbunătățească rasa?', 1

46 Doctorul Ygrec, 'Eugenia și ereditatea patologică', *Sănătatea Publică* 1, no. 4 (1927): 5.

47 See Roger Mignot, 'Enquête sur la fréquence des troubles mentaux dans le personnel des asiles d'aliénés', *Annales médico-psychologiques* 2, no. 1 (1905): 22–28.

to be certain of even its relative improvement in the future'.[48] Bagdasar's doubts regarding negative eugenic practices, such as obligatory sterilization, were based on the argument that these were based on insufficient genetic research, while the research carried out to date did not provide convincing results regarding the hereditary nature of many degenerative mental illnesses. Eugenic sterilization, he maintained, was not the long-term medical solution to the much-discussed degeneration of the race.

It was not by chance that Bagdasar invoked Roger Mignot's work. Many Romanian doctors had studied in France and, consequently, they were influenced by French medical ideas and practices, including neo-Lamarckian interpretations of social and biological degeneration which emphasized the improvement of living conditions and environmental factors rather than a strict interpretation of the laws of heredity. Neo-Lamarckian proposals of social medicine and public health to improve the Romanian people had already circulated in the 1880s, as discussed in chapter 2, and they continued to attract the support of eugenicists in the interwar years. At the same time, it should be said that the medical debate about eugenic sterilization developed in the wider context of the national biopolitical projects of ethnic protectionism discussed in the previous chapter.

In 1925, Iuliu Moldovan published *Igiena națiunei: eugenia* (*The Hygiene of the Nation: Eugenics*), a programmatic eugenic text. In it, Moldovan defined the nation as 'biological reality, a human construction with its specific biology and pathology'.[49] Consequently, to ensure its optimal development, but also 'to avoid derailment and counterselection', there was sometimes a need for radical eugenic measures, including the elimination 'from procreation of defective individuals and giving all support to those with superior biological qualities'.[50] Moldovan placed the family at the centre of his theory of national eugenics and thought of measures to protect it from both social and biological degeneration. However, there was not, he maintained, a prophylactic method that would be efficient unless the population – especially those affected by hereditarily transmissible diseases – acquired a 'consciousness of race" and a 'feeling of biological responsibility'. Thus, 'the measures to prevent the propagation of those with hereditary mental defects, such as epileptics, imbeciles, psychopaths, the retarded, and criminals',[51] by means of sterilization could offer encouraging results.

48 Dumitru Bagdasar, 'Sterilizarea', *Adevărul*, vol. 36, no. 12170 (1923): 1.

49 Moldovan, *Igiena națiunei: eugenia* (Cluj, Institutul de Igienă și Igienă Socială, 1925), 12.

50 Moldovan, *Igiena națiunei*, 37.

51 Moldovan, *Igiena națiunei*, 4.

It was not long before *Buletinul Eugenic și Biopolitic* entered the debate. In 1927, an article appeared written specially for the journal by Harry H. Laughlin, managing director of the Eugenics Record Office in Cold Spring Harbor (New York), and one of the most enthusiastic American supporters of eugenic sterilization. On the basis of Laughlin's public success as a consultant on various committees for sterilization (including that which investigated the famous Carrie Buck case in Virginia), Iuliu Moldovan presented him as 'the most appropriate expert in matters of eugenics and especially regarding the practical application of this science'.[52] The article also contained a brief history of sterilization legislation in the United States, to which Laughlin added a 'Model Sterilization Law', the aim of which was 'to prevent the procreation of persons unsuitable from a social point of view owing to a defective heredity, authorizing and providing for the eugenic sterilization of certain potential parents with defective hereditary qualities'.[53]

Laughlin's text was followed by an analysis of the famous sterilization case of Alice Smith, a patient in the colony and state hospital for epileptics in Skillman, New Jersey, written by Mihai Zolog, associate professor at the Institute of Hygiene and Social Hygiene in Cluj. In keeping with his interest in social hygiene and social assistance, Zolog noted the 'penal, therapeutic, and eugenic' effects of sterilization, insisting that 'sexual sterilization must only be [performed] for eugenic purposes'. The only legitimate reason for carrying out such an operation was 'the improvement of the biological (physical, intellectual, and moral) qualities of future generations'.[54] It was important, Zolog considered, that real cases of the sterilization of persons considered to have severe mental disabilities be known to the general public in Romania. Eugenics, he thought, would become more popular if the public knew of certain individuals who had 'sacrificed' themselves on the altar of race and nation.

By the end of the 1920s, the debate about the medical, social, and racial benefits of sterilization had intensified. More than ever before, argued Eugen Relgis, there was a need for 'rational human selection'.[55] The state,

52 Harry H. Laughlin, 'O privire asupra sterilizării eugenice în America', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 1, nos. 9–10 (1927): 253.

53 Harry Laughlin, 'O privire asupra sterilizării eugenice în America', 255. See also Harry Laughlin, *Eugenical Sterilization in the United States* (Chicago: Psychopathic Laboratory of the Municipal Court of Chicago, 1922).

54 Mihai Zolog, 'Un caz indicat pentru sterilizare eugenică', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 1, nos. 11–12 (1927): 326.

55 Eugen Relgis, 'Eugenismul: ştiinţă a regenerării', *Adevărul Literar și Artistic* 8, no. 346 (1927): 7.

the geneticist Niculae Săulescu suggested, must take 'measures against the degeneration of society', the most efficient of these being 'the prevention of detestable elements from multiplying, not only [by] castration, but very easily by sterilization with the help of Röntgen rays'.[56] Ioan Manliu was in complete agreement, calling for 'the introduction of the sterilizing scalpel as an instrument of [eugenic] selection'.[57] In Manliu's view, the introduction of social and sanitary policies based on a new way of biopolitical thinking and on practical eugenics should take into account only the biological quality of the population. All the efforts of the state, he considered, should be directed towards, on the one hand, 'the cultivation by all means of the superior human, as an exponent of the wisdom of our race', and, on the other, 'the exclusion of the inferior human from public and private life, especially generative life (by sterilization)'. These two principles formed the basis of a new secular religion, which Manliu termed 'the religion of selection, the religion of biological aristocratization'.[58]

In 1930, a new sanitary law was introduced, giving expression to the ideas of social hygiene and public health conceived by Iuliu Moldovan, its initiator, at the time an undersecretary of state in the Ministry of Labour, Health, and Social Protection. Eugenic ideas also appear in this law, as may be observed from the way in which abortion was regulated. According to article 9, 'abortion may be carried out only for eugenic and social reasons, established by a commission of specialists and approved, in the case of social reasons, by the local authorities responsible'.[59] For the first time in Romania, a law passed by parliament contained eugenic provisions, although it did not mention the introduction of radical measures, such as sterilization. For some Romanian eugenicists, the law was a promising start; for others, it did not go far enough.[60]

Manliu was one of the dissatisfied eugenicists. In an article titled 'The Sterilization of Degenerates', published in 1931 in the recently launched *Revista de Igienă Socială* (*The Journal of Social Hygiene*), edited by Gheorghe Banu, Manliu discussed the latest eugenic ideas. The situation, he complained, had worsened since then, because of 'the excessive multiplication

56 Niculae Săulescu, 'Degenerarea popoarelor privită prin prisma noilor cercetări biologice', *Patria* 10, no. 32 (1928): 2.

57 Ioan I. Manliu, *Raţionalizare* (*Taylorism, Psychotechnie, Eugenie, Chirurgie moralizatoare*) (Bucharest: Tipografia 'Bucovina', 1930), 9.

58 Manliu, *Raţionalizare*, 20.

59 Sabin Manuilă, 'Principiile de bază de ocrotirii mamei și copilului. Art. 9. Reglementarea avortului. Represiuni și indicațiuni', Sabin Manuilă, personal file, no. 614. ANR, Bucharest.

60 Mihai Kernbach, 'Corecționalizare sau raționalizare?', *Curentul* 6, no. 1970 (1933): 1–2.

of inferior elements', whom he considered to be 'the biological plebs' of society.[61] How, then, was it possible to 'fight against the degeneration' of the race? To this question, Manliu's answer was again categorical: '*stopping the reproduction of degenerates and cultivating fertility in superior individuals*'. Manliu also suggested other measures to prevent the proliferation of so-called 'degenerate' individuals. One possibility, for example, was 'detention for life', but Manliu noted the high costs involved in such a measure. Other options – such as '*forbidding marriages between degenerates*', '*abortion* dictated by eugenic considerations', and '*the use of contraceptive means*'[62] – were either efficient only in the short term or they were difficult to implement in Romania. The simplest and most effective measure in the long term, Manliu argued, was eugenic sterilization.

Manliu proposed a veritable eugenic crusade against groups of individuals who, he believed, should be sterilized. These included not only 'psychopaths, idiots, epileptics, criminals, alcoholics, syphilitics, tuberculosis sufferers, lepers', but also those who suffered from haemophilia, cancer, or diabetes. And, he suggested, it should go further. Those with 'excessive ugliness' should also be sterilized. Manliu's radical eugenic message was unprecedented in the Romanian public space. What he wanted was the elimination of physical and mental disabilities from the whole population: 'From the sterilization of a few thousand individuals, hospitalized or free, we cannot expect a change in our hereditary constitution. To stop the degeneration of a nation, we must sterilize *en masse*'.[63]

Manliu used the spectre of the degeneration of the race to promote a eugenic vision for Romania, and to be more convincing, he used the arguments of other eugenicists as sources of inspiration. He quoted, for example, Harry H. Laughlin, who maintained that 100,000 Americans would have to be sterilized each year, over a period of fifty years, for the eugenic programme of racial improvement to have the desired effect. While Laughlin proposed the sterilization of 'approximately 15 million degenerates' in America, the hygienist Alfred Grotjahn and the geneticist Fritz Lenz spoke of 20 million 'inferior' persons who ought to be sterilized in Germany, in other words, a third of the total population.[64] In Romania, Manliu considered that almost six million people should be sterilized in order to ensure the eugenic future of the population. Indeed, the figures were impressive!

61 Ioan I. Manliu, 'Sterilizarea degeneraților', *Revista de Igienă Socială* 1, no. 5 (1931): 374.
62 Manliu, 'Sterilizarea degeneraților', 375 (emphasis in original).
63 Manliu, 'Sterilizarea degeneraților', 377–378 (emphasis in original).
64 Manliu, 'Sterilizarea degeneraților', 378–379.

Here, in detail, is how Manliu believed 'mass sterilization' should be put into practice in Romania:

> As a practical beginning, sterilization will have to be decreed in all of our prisons, madhouses, correction schools, schools for the retarded, colonies of vagabonds, of people without occupation, found during police raids, etc. For all the other free abnormal people (psychopaths, the feeble-minded, alcoholics, etc.), sterilization should be admitted at their request and practised from now on, without any special law. The consent of the person who wants to be operated on is sufficient. […]
> All those who have a criminal record (today there are almost a million records at the country's identification office), together with everyone who has been under medical treatment for a mental illness, should automatically be sterilized as soon as possible.[65]

Before the operation itself, there was another procedure to get through. It was the doctor who had the authority to decide who should be sterilized. Manliu laid this enormous responsibility on the shoulders of specialists both in internal diseases and in mental illness, who were called on to confirm that the person proposed for sterilization presented a 'probability of degenerate progeny'.[66]

Manliu advocated the use of eugenic sterilization in the name of scientific progress and saw it as a method of improving the race by which Romania could become a model to follow for other countries. 'If Romania did not contribute anything to the solution of the problems of human biology', he reflected, 'it should at least now take the first decisive step, operating on 10,000 degenerates in a year, to accumulate great experience, *which would contribute much to the generalization of this principle in the whole of Europe*'.[67] Degeneration was, for Manliu, synonymous with the whole range of hereditary illnesses and social problems that affected Romania during the early 1930s.

Manliu believed that a strong eugenic movement would contribute decisively to the 'biological renewal' of the nation. To this end, he hoped for a collaboration between school, church, justice, administration, and army. The fact that he mentioned the Orthodox Church among the institutions that could help in the dissemination of eugenic ideas is particularly

65 Manliu, 'Sterilizarea degeneraților', 381.
66 Manliu, 'Sterilizarea degeneraților', 381.
67 Manliu, 'Sterilizarea degeneraților', 382 (emphasis in original).

important. In a country where the majority of the population were Orthodox Christians, the Orthodox Church played an important role in all aspects of life, and the acceptance of Manliu's eugenic vision of a vast biological transformation of Romanian society ultimately depended on its support. It is thus no wonder that Manliu urged the Orthodox Church 'to make use of its overwhelming moral authority, to pronounce in favour of biological cleansing, and to pass into action'. Moreover, he believed, the Orthodox Church should guide the eugenic transformation of Romanian society, in order 'to ensure scientifically, biologically, in the first place the happiness of its believers'. Such support on the part of the Orthodox Church would indeed have been significant. As Manliu acknowledged, 'The Church can bring us priceless services in our struggle against the decay, the Asiaticization of our race, if it boldly propagates the ideas of eugenics and collaborates fanatically in their realization.'[68]

Manliu had understood what the essential precondition was for any social and biological engineering project to succeed in Romania: either its acceptance by the Orthodox Church or the existence of a state sufficiently strong to elude the authority of religious institutions, as was the case of Nazi Germany after 1933. The conclusions reiterated his apocalyptic visions of the biological degeneration of the race. For this to be avoided, he maintained, the solution needed to be momentous: 'The struggle against the inferior man must be pursued with determination. *Sterilization is one of the two decisive factors in the extermination of the sub-man and the biological aristocratization of mankind*'.[69]

The sterilization of so-called degenerate individuals was the principal objective of Manliu's eugenic theory.[70] He was perhaps the only Romanian eugenicist to advocate the introduction of a sterilization programme on a national scale. Other contributions show that, in the early 1930s, Manliu was more of an isolated enthusiast, whose extreme views on sterilization were not shared by other Romanian eugenicists, not even by Gheorghe Marinescu and Gheorghe Banu, with whom Manliu collaborated closely.

Two articles by Gheorghe Marinescu, both published in the newspaper *Universul* (*The Universe*), are revealing in this respect. In the first, which appeared in December 1934, Marinescu describes the general aims of eugenics. These were, in the first place, 'the amelioration of the body and mind, indicating favourable modifications of human nature and taking

68 Manliu, 'Sterilizarea degeneraților', 382–383.

69 Manliu, 'Sterilizarea degeneraților', 384 (emphasis in original).

70 See Ioan I. Manliu, 'Sterilizarea degeneraților', *Progres Social* 2, no. 12 (1933): 763–773.

into consideration also the environment in which not only individuals but also human societies live'. Then, eugenics should 'research heredity in general, that is, the problem from a biological point of view, thus studying the transmission of normal and pathological characteristics and specifying its mechanism'. It was then the task of eugenics to show 'what is due, in the evolution of the individual, to nature and what is contributed by education'. Another aim was to establish 'to what extent maternal and paternal characteristics intervene directly upon the child', followed by that of researching 'the favourable or unfavourable influences that cause the number of individuals in various groups, classes, or races to rise or fall'. Eugenics also dealt, according to Marinescu, with 'the causes of the progress or regress of special characteristics that we consider good or bad'. Finally, eugenics 'proclaims the need for rigorous social control, for the amelioration of the physical and mental characteristics of future generations'.[71] These were the basic principles upon which Marinescu wanted to establish the new society of eugenics in Bucharest.

In the second article, which appeared in February 1935, Marinescu offered additional explanations regarding the methods of eugenics, principally its educative methods, which he considered to be the most important. By means of eugenic education, it was possible to show 'young people the responsibility that they assume in getting married and the danger that threatens the offspring when marriage takes place with a degenerate partner'.[72] Eugenics, he continued, had to be explained for all to understand. This was how things were done in Germany, which he gave as an example, where eugenic education began at school. In Romania, the eugenic movement had made quite appreciable progress, and Marinescu mentioned the efforts of Iuliu Moldovan, Sabin Manuilă, Gheorghe Banu, and Titu Gane, the founding figure of Romanian paediatrics and puericulture in post-1918 Transylvania. However, what the eugenic movement lacked in Romania was constant political support. Marinescu thus concluded his article with an appeal for collaboration, for 'a holy union of all the responsible decision makers', in order to be able to bring to fulfilment this 'elevating programme' of improvement of the nation's health. The patriotic and moral duty of every Romanian was to play their part in the regeneration and prosperity of the nation: 'For

71 Gheorghe Marinescu, 'Necesitatea creerei de urgenţă a unei societăţi de ereditate şi eugenie', *Universul* 51, no. 344 (1934): 2.

72 Gheorghe Marinescu, 'Ce este eugenia', *Universul* 52, no. 46 (1935): 1. See also Gheorghe Marinescu, 'Eugenia', radio conference (13 February 1935), ASRR, Bucharest; and State Drăgănescu, *Idei călăuzitoare în realitatea vieţei tineretului. Eugenia şi datoria tineretului unui neam* (Bucharest: 'Bucovina', 1939).

the salvation of the Romanian people, each citizen has a supreme duty to support by word and action the Society of Eugenics, which pursues a noble aim, that of saving our people'.[73]

Among those who responded positively to Marinescu's message was the sculptor Vasile Dimitriu-Leorda, one of the leading activists for the rights of persons with hearing disabilities in the interwar period. In an article entitled 'Surdo-muții și eugenie' ('The Deaf-Mutes and Eugenics'), published in *Răsăritul Nostru* (*Our Dawn*), the periodical that he had founded and directed, Dimitriu-Leorda expressed support for the eugenic programme suggested by Marinescu. It was important, he noted, to have a 'country with citizens healthy in body and in mind'. Imperatives of national survival had to take precedence over certain individual rights, which eugenicists disregarded when proposing 'the sterilization of the incapable' with the aim of preventing the reproduction of 'abnormal and ill people'.[74]

Dimitriu-Leorda knew, of course, that 'deaf mutes' were among the persons with disabilities who were stigmatized by eugenicists. Two years earlier, *Răsăritul Nostru* had published an article which criticized the German sterilization law for the inclusion of blindness and deafness on the list of categories of hereditary illness that should be eliminated from future generations.[75] Whether in the pages of his publication or in the public space and in the world of sport (he was one of the founders of Romania's national deaf football team), Dimitriu-Leorda went out of his way to plead for the integration of persons with hearing disabilities. 'Deaf mutes' were not 'normal' in the usual sense of the word, he acknowledged, but nor were they 'abnormal'. Dimitriu-Leorda's conviction was that 'deaf mutes' could be, and indeed many were, productive citizens who carried out their civic duties. Unlike criminals or those affected by mental illnesses, who needed institutionalization and constant care, 'deaf mutes' were not dangerous and could live independently. Dimitriu-Leorda's strategy was to separate the 'deaf mutes' from other 'dysgenics' and to make them useful to the nation. It is from this perspective that we should also understand Dimitriu-Leorda's invitation to Marinescu to visit the Association of Deaf Mutes, to take them 'under his clerical attention' and to give them 'hygienic and medical [advice] in order to lower in the future the proportion of deaf mutes'.[76] Was

73 Marinescu, 'Ce este eugenia', 2.

74 Vasile Dimitriu-Leorda, 'Surdo–muții și Eugenia', *Răsăritul Nostru* 4, no. 38 (1935): 1.

75 G. C. Maicănescu, 'Sterilizarea', *Răsăritul Nostru* 2, no. 21 (1933): 2. See also Raimond de Fresquet, 'Noi, stricați?', *Răsăritul Nostru* 2, no. 22 (1933): 2.

76 Dimitriu-Leorda, 'Surdo–muții și Eugenia', 1.

this suggestion a response to that 'rigorous social control' in the name of eugenics of which Marinescu spoke? It is very possible.

In the article quoted by Dimitriu-Leorda, Marinescu had briefly described the German sterilization law without, at that point, recommending it. We may, however, suspect that he agreed with certain negative eugenic measures, such as voluntary sterilization. I shall return to Marinescu's opinion about sterilization. Let us first consider some views on the subject offered by other Romanian psychiatrists.

Alienated and Stigmatized

In 1921, a correspondent of the British medical journal *The Lancet* writing from Romania highlighted the growing problems associated with insanity in the Balkan states. It was remarked 'that the science of eugenics' played 'a very important role in the prophylaxis of insanity and should be carefully studied'. It was further suggested that 'when national eugenics becomes practical politics' in the countries in the region, 'the problem of the prevention of insanity will have been largely solved'.[77] The same idea was underlined, a decade later, by the German psychiatrist Ernst Rüdin, one of the architects of the Nazi sterilization law introduced in July 1933. At the first International Congress on Mental Hygiene, organized in Washington, DC, in May 1930. Rüdin discussed the importance of eugenics and genetics for the development of mental hygiene. In his view, the putting into practice of such eugenic measures as sterilization would lead to a reduction in the number of individuals affected by hereditary illnesses, and this effect, in its turn, would have a major impact on mental hygiene. Preventing the birth of mental 'degenerates' by means of eugenic intervention was, he said, more efficient and less costly than treating and looking after them.[78]

Leon Ballif, director of the 'Socola Hospital' in Iași, endorsed this last argument. In the presentation that he gave at the Congress, he noted that the conditions for caring for mentally ill people were difficult in Romania, principally because of the shortage of beds in hospitals, sanatoriums, and clinics. His own hospital, for example, was equipped with 600 beds, but 1,200 new patients had been admitted. In order to cope with the situation, the

77 'Roumania', *The Lancet* 197, no. 5080 (1921): 94.

78 Ernst Rüdin, 'The Significance of Eugenics and Genetics for Mental Hygiene', in *Proceedings of the First International Congress on Mental Hygiene*, vol. 2, ed. Frankwood E. Williams (New York: The International Committee for Mental Hygiene, 1932), 471–488.

hospital had been obliged to discharge half of them, specifically those who had become 'quiet', even if 'they continued to pose a danger to society, being, for example, epileptics, imbeciles, etc'. Unfortunately, Ballif emphasized, in Romania, 'the necessity of voluntary sterilization was not taken into consideration'.[79] A change was needed at the level of mentality, which would have an impact not only on the political elites, but also on the population.

Out of all the medical specializations in the interwar period, the most influenced by eugenic ideas about the prevention of the degeneration of the race was psychiatry. The direct experience that psychiatrists had with persons affected by mental illnesses obviously encouraged such a preoccupation.[80] And, according to Gheorghe Marinescu, 'the duty of today's university professor of psychiatry' was 'to deliver a eugenic doctrine'. As a specialist, Marinescu continued, the psychiatrist had to examine all cases 'from the eugenic point of view and highlight their role for the good of the race'. Thus 'the hereditarily ill must be convinced that it is a crime to carry their illness into a healthy family. If they do not want to listen, the psychiatrist should ally himself with the hereditarily healthy against the hereditarily ill'.[81] Gheorghe Preda, director of the Hospital for Nervous and Mental Diseases in Sibiu, also believed that an alliance was necessary between the 'alienist or neurologist' and those who 'deal with problems of hygiene and general prophylaxis [as well as] eugenics and the biopolitics of the nation'.[82]

To the strategies of eugenic identification of mentally ill persons was added the acceptance of theories of heredity as explanations for a variety of psychiatric ailments and psychopathic behaviour. The opinion of specialists, such as Alexandru Roșca, was that 'on the one hand, from among the mentally debilitated are recruited a very high percentage of antisocial elements, and on the other hand, that mental debility is hereditary in the great majority of cases'.[83] For Ion I. Cantacuzino 'through the loaded heredity

79 Leon Ballif, 'Mental Hygiene in Roumania', in *Proceedings of the First International Congress on Mental Hygiene*, vol. 2, 123.

80 Grigore I. Odobescu, 'Necesitatea extensiunii profilaxiei turburărilor mintale (I)', *Viața Românească* 17, no. 7 (1925): 119–125; Grigore I. Odobescu, 'Necesitatea extensiunii profilaxiei turburărilor mintale (II)', *Viața Românească* 19, no. 2 (1927): 225–223; and Grigore I. Odobescu, 'Necesitatea extensiunii profilaxiei turburărilor mintale (III)', *Viața Românească* 19, no. 3 (1927): 390–398.

81 Gheorghe Marinescu, 'Despre hereditatea normală și patologică și raporturile ei cu Eugenia', *Academia Română. Memoriile Secțiunii Științifice*, 3d series, 11 (1936): 310.

82 Gheorghe Preda, 'Importanța igienei și profilaxiei mintale', *Sănătatea Publică* 1, no. 4 (1927): 8.

83 Alexandru Roșca, *Debilitatea mintală. Aspectul psihologic, pedagogic și social al problemei copiilor debili mintali* (Cluj: Editura Institutului de Psihologie al Universității, 1931), 20.

that they transmit to their progeny', the mentally ill 'compromise, in every moment, the future of the race. It is thus a necessary work of *eugenics* that is undertaken by mental prophylaxis.'[84] And according to Alfred Dimolescu, an attempt should be made 'to stop from the beginning the procreation of alienated or degenerate individuals. In this sense, the sterilization of criminals, the alienated, vagabonds, and prostitutes' was, he considered, 'welcome as a means of prophylaxis or social therapy'.[85]

This was indeed codified by the Sanitary Law of 1930. Article 455 specifies that hospitals for mental and nervous diseases are to function 'also as centres of mental prophylaxis', and that 'the doctors in these institutions may be charged with making studies, enquiries, records and all [such] works regarding the problems of mental therapeutics, prophylaxis, and eugenics'.[86] A legal framework for the implementation of eugenic ideas in psychiatric activity thus existed, even if eugenic sterilization was not permitted. Even a psychiatrist like Grigore Odobescu, who was opposed to sterilization, considered that a strategy was needed for the problem of the mentally ill, considered to be '*definitively* lost to society'.[87]

In this context, the psychologist Alexandru Roșca proposed alternative eugenic measures, such as: '1. Forbidding the marriages of the mentally debilitated; 2. Advising normal persons not to contract marriages in those families in which there are manifest signs of tainted heredity'. It was, however, quite improbable that these measures would be turned into reality. For this reason, Roșca recommended 'either sterilization, or segregation in work colonies during the period of reproduction'.[88] This last proposal had many supporters in Romania, especially as it was easy to apply in the case of the mentally ill who were already institutionalized and in state care. The eugenicists' great problem was those persons with disabilities who had not yet been identified as such and, consequently, could marry and have children.

But how many declared mentally ill people were there officially in Romania? According to one statistical study, in 1924, there were 41,113 such

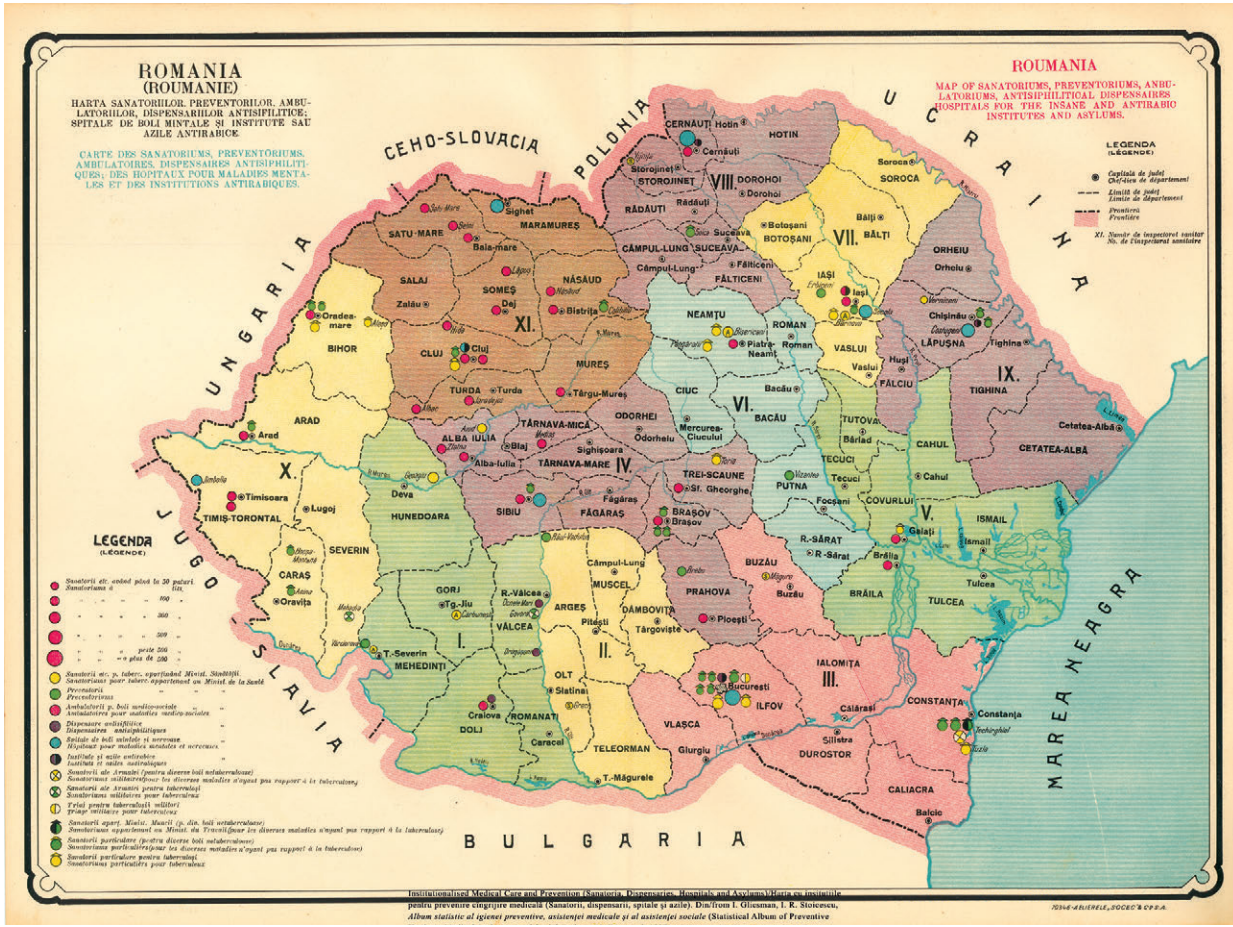
84 Cantacuzino, 'Higiena și profilaxia mintală în România', 104 (emphasis in original).

85 Alfred Dimolescu, *Constituție, caracter, temperament. Studiu psihopatologic* (Bucharest: Tipografia 'Arta', 1931), 143

86 Quoted in Cahane Mareș, 'Asupra sterilizării alienaților cronici. Necesitatea unei legiferări la noi', *Revista de Igienă Socială* 2, no. 3 (1932): 248. See also Dimitrie G. Maxim, *Legile alienaților și proectul fostului guvern* (Bucharest: Tipografia 'Libertatea', 1934).

87 Grigore I. Odobescu, *Asistență medicală sau … regim penitenciar? Situația bolnavilor mintali*, (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1933), 3 (emphasis in original).

88 Roșca, *Debilitatea mintală*, 23.



Institutionalized Medical Care and Prevention (Sanatoria, Dispensaries, Hospitals and Asylums)/Harta cu instituțiile pentru prevenire îngrijire medicală (Sanatorii, dispensarii, spitale și azile). Din/from I. Glicsman, I. R. Stoicescu, *Album statistic al igienei preventive, asistenței medicale și al asistenței sociale* (Statistical Album of Preventive

Map 3. 'Harta cu instituțiile pentru prevenire şi îngrijire medicală (Sanatorii, dispensarii, spitale şi azile)'. In I. Glicsman, I. R. Stoicescu, *Album statistic al igienei preventive, asistenței medicale şi al asistenței sociale*, Bucharest: Atelierele Grafice Socec & Co, 1927.

individuals, constituting 0.23% of a population of almost 18 million. [map 3] Three years later, according to the data offered by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, there were 144 'mad' people (a very vague term!) per 100,000 inhabitants in Bukovina, while in Transylvania, the number was 50; in the Old Kingdom (Wallachia and Moldavia), this dropped to 41, and in Bessarabia, to 39.[89]

The number of the 'hereditary ill', of 'dysgenics', and of 'degenerates' grew over the following two decades. In his 1937 study, Ludwig Erich cites several specialists and their various evaluations. For example, the psychologist Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă opined that in the whole of Romania there were approximately 32,000 'mentally debilitated' children, while Vasile Ilea believed that the number of 'the alienated, epileptics, idiots, and imbeciles' reached the figure of 35,000. He also established that in 1928 in the villages of Maramureș there were 208 'mentally abnormal' people, including 38 children.[90] Gheorghe Preda suggested that there were around 6,000 unhospitalized mentally ill people, in addition to 2,000 patients in the hospitals of Transylvania alone,[91] while gynaecologist Marius Georgescu admitted that 'it would be repeating a banal truth, noting that we have, in our country, a large number of *dysgenic women*, profoundly defective'. The number he suggested in 1937 was 'around 1½ million elements of reduced biological value and of such a nature as to perpetuate a defective progeny'.[92] And according to the statistics published by Gheorghe Banu in 1940, in the rural environment alone there were '27,000 slightly mentally debilitated, 27,301 goitrous cretins, 9,000 mentally debilitated to an advanced degree (imbeciles and idiots), 9,000 bearers of various psychical defects'.[93]

Some precise data on juvenile criminality was available. According to Eugen C. Decusară, the director of the Judiciary Statistics Section of the Central Institute of Statistics, the number of delinquent minors in 1924 was 17,124, but by 1933, it had risen to 33,460. Of these, 82% were boys and 18% girls.[94] These statistical figures seemed to confirm what the newspapers of the

89 Iosif Glicsman, *Boalele mintale în România* (*Statistica pe anul 1924*) (Bucharest: Atelierele Grafice Socec, 1926) and *Album statistic al igienei preventive, asistenței medicale și al asistenței sociale* (Bucharest: Atelierele Grafice Socec, 1927).

90 Vasile Ilea, 'Din necazurile Maramureșului', *Sănătatea Publică* 1, no. 4 (1927): 9.

91 Ludwig Erich, *Problema disgenicilor* (*referințe speciale asupra situației disgenicilor de la noi*) (Cluj: Tipografia 'Record', 1937), 45–46.

92 Georgescu, *Protecția medico–socială a maternității*, 150–151 (emphasis in original).

93 Gheorghe Banu, 'Eugenia poporului românesc', *Revista de Igienă Socială* 11, nos. 11–12 (1941): 357.

94 'Ce se întâmplă cu populațiile lumii? Dispar oamenii utili societății', *Realitatea Ilustrată* 8, no. 387 (1934): 9–10.

time described as a possible 'epidemic' of juvenile delinquency in Romania. In the May 1934 issue of *Realitatea Ilustrată*, one of its journalists, Alex F. Mihail, sought a solution, starting from the famous case of Eusebiu Popovici, a member of the Chamber of Deputies, who had been killed in his own home by three pupils of the prestigious 'Gheorghe Lazăr' High School in Bucharest.

It was Ioan Stănescu, psychiatrist at Văcărești Penitentiary, who reacted promptly as an expert to the journalist's request. His proposal was simple: sterilization of delinquents. 'At present', Stănescu believed, 'natural selection is appreciably reduced, due to the fact that the war left many of the 'vigorous young men' on the battlefield. The psychosis that this European cataclysm created has led fatally to the moral degeneration of the race. Insanity today is much more diverse, and the victims much more numerous than before [the war]'. Responsibility for the younger generation, Stănescu continued, 'must be our only social preoccupation. In the unanimous interest of the collectivity, we must remove the right to procreation of imbeciles of all categories and especially of criminals.' For Stănescu, 'sterilization, eradicating evil at the root, constitutes the 'ultima ratio' of social eugenics'.[95] Sterilization presupposed a small sacrifice on the part of society, but it was, he said, for a noble cause: the protection of the genetic inheritance of future generations.

The article rang an alarm bell regarding the increased criminality among the young.[96] The following month, *Realitatea Ilustrată* returned to the subject with a new contribution, this time on the generalized degeneration of humanity. In Romania, too, it noted, the situation was serious. 'Criminality', as the statistics cited above showed, was on the increase, as was 'the percentage of demented individuals'. Particular attention was given to those who suffered from mental illnesses. It is also interesting that the article explained to its readers '*what the mentally deficient are*':

> Science divides the mentally deficient into three classes: *idiots*, who have the mind of a child of two years; *imbeciles*, who have the mind of a child of between two and six years; and the *mentally debilitated*, who have the intelligence of a child of between six and eight years. 5% of the mentally deficient belong to the first category, 20% to the second, and 75% to the third. The specimens of the first two classes are almost all in asylums. But 90% of those who belong to the last category live in freedom.[97]

95 Alex. F. Mihail, 'Epidemia bandiților liceeni', *Realitatea Ilustrată* 8, no. 381 (1934): 31.

96 Alexandru Roşca, *Delicventul minor. Studiu psihofiziologic şi social* (Cluj: Editura Institutului de Psihologie, 1932).

97 'Ce se întâmplă cu populațiile lumii?', 10 (emphasis in original).

Bearing in mind the increasing number of the 'mentally deficient' who were free to have a family and considering that one could not 'expect a mentally deficient person to exercise self-control in the name of an abstract principle or a cause recognized as good; as we thus cannot expect these people to limit their fecundity on their own, it follows that in one way or another measures must be *taken* in this sense for them'. The way to control their reproduction, it was suggested in the article, was the most 'simple and absolute [method] of limiting the multiplication of sub-normal stock: the sterilization of the mentally deficient who have been classed as such by physicians'.[98]

There was, of course, also opposition to the legalizing of eugenic sterilization on the part of the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, but the article wanted to draw attention to the so-called 'democratic' opposition, which apparently denied 'the existence of a hereditary group of people who are an endless problem for society' and which maintained that 'they would behave like the others, if they were given the chance'. This point of view, it was emphasized, ignored 'two facts, namely: in the first place, [that] those who recommend sterilization have never proposed the use of eugenic measures as a substitute for social improvement but as a supplement to it'; and then, that the mentally ill originate largely from 'the group of people with social problems'. If the eugenic and biological arguments were not sufficiently convincing, it was argued, then humanitarian arguments should be used, such as: 'The mentally debilitated will never be capable of raising children. And the progeny of the imbecile is to be pitied. But it sometimes happens that from such a parent, there come normal children, and in this case, their destiny is even more deplorable'.[99]

We do not know the name of the author of this article, which was signed simply with the initial 'M'. It is quite possible that it was the same Mihail who has already been mentioned, especially as the only medical authority mentioned in both articles is the psychiatrist Gheorghe Preda. According to M., he had, at a recent medical congress, called for sterilization 'to be introduced into the law, [...] to be carried out only after a scrupulous investigation and a condemnation issued by a special tribunal, in which psychiatrists would also be included'.[100]

It is quite possible that Preda made this suggestion at the eleventh congress of the Romanian Society of Neurology, Psychiatry, Psychology, and Endocrinology, organized at Diciosânmărtin (today Târnăveni) in

98 'Ce se întâmplă cu populațiile lumii?', 10 (emphasis in original).

99 'Ce se întâmplă cu populațiile lumii?', 11.

100 Mihail, 'Epidemia bandiților liceeni', 30.

October 1931 under the chairmanship of Constantin I. Parhon, the founder of the Romanian School of Endocrinology. On the last day of the proceedings, the congress adopted a motion drafted by Leon Ballif and Cahane Mareș, senior doctor at the psychiatric hospital in Diciosânmărtin, in which the members of the congress requested the Ministry of Health 'to admit as a prophylactic measure the sterilization by Röntgen rays or vasectomy' of chronic psychiatric patients. 'This sterilization' it was specified, could be applied 'only on chronic patients who have stayed for at least 5 years in a psychiatric hospital and only after the approval of a committee of specialists and with the consent of the family'.[101] In the end, the motion was not sent to the Ministry of Health and nor was it further publicized, as it was considered that the issue of the sterilization of mentally ill patients was premature.

Mareș was among those participants at the congress who supported the idea of legislation on eugenic sterilization. A few months later, he published an article in *Revista de Igienă Socială* about the sterilization of 'the chronically mentally ill', in which he argued for the necessity of such legislation. Like Manliu, Mareș saw a model to be followed in the North American experience of sterilization, which he discussed in the introduction to his article. The information that he presented was taken from a study published in 1929 by the eugenicist Paul Popenoe and Ezra S. Gosney, the founder of the Human Betterment Foundation in Pasadena, California, one of the most active American eugenic organizations promoting obligatory sterilization.[102] There were, however, Mareș noted, also European states, such as Sweden, Britain, Switzerland, France, and Germany, which had either introduced or were about to implement eugenic sterilization legislation. The European and global tendency, he believed – rightly – was in this direction.

As a psychiatrist, Mareș interacted directly with patients in the colony for the mentally ill in Diciosânmărtin, which he proudly described as 'the Gheel colony of the East', after the famous institution for the mentally ill in the town of Gheel in Belgium. A specific feature of the Diciosânmărtin colony was its 'open doors' policy: the patients (129 of them in 1930) were allowed to leave the hospital and to stay in the neighbouring village with the peasants, whom they helped with their work, thus also benefitting the local economy. Nevertheless, Mareș maintained, this policy raised an important eugenic issue. The patients were 'cacogenic elements',[103] and

101 Quoted in Mareș, 'Asupra sterilizării alienaților cronici', 247.

102 Ezra S. Gosney and Paul Popenoe, *Sterilization for Human Betterment: A Summary of Results of 6000 Operations in California, 1909–1929* (New York: Macmillan, 1931).

103 Mareș, 'Asupra sterilizării alienaților cronici', 246.

consequently the risk of their having children needed to be avoided. For Mareș, sterilization was the most appropriate method of maintaining their economic contribution to society, while at the same time rendering them inoffensive from a biological point of view.

Mareș's view was that legislation on therapeutic sterilization must come first, to be followed by the introduction of eugenic sterilization. The former method was recommended in cases of repeated extrauterine pregnancy or deformations of the pelvis, but also for women who had periodic puerperal or lactation psychoses. There were, he considered, also other categories of patients who 'would benefit from this measure', among them 'the precociously demented, schizophrenics'.[104] For these, however, he suggested therapeutic sterilization by castration. In Romania, the practice was already used, and Mareș cited the example of Constantin I. Parhon, who had applied 'therapeutic sterilization to a patient with sexual impulsions and to 2 patients with epilepsy'.[105]

Mareș's final recommendations concerned voluntary sterilization, which, he believed, could be introduced 'when the cultural level of the public is raised. There are numerous cacogenic persons who should be convinced that, for the good of their family, they should not procreate'. Not only society should be involved, but also the management of mental hospitals throughout the country. The directors of these hospitals, Mareș noted, had a great responsibility. They should have convinced the 'cured patients' on discharge of 'the necessity of a sterilization, showing them the great disadvantages that would [otherwise] result for the descendants of parents with a troubled history'.[106] It was a simple and efficient plan, he believed, which had on its side the medical authority of psychiatry. We do not know how many psychiatrists followed this suggestion.

Four years later, Mareș returned to the subject in another article, also published in *Revista de Igienă Socială*. This time, his strategy was different, as he had realized that the heredity of mental illnesses and of the transmission of pathological characteristics needed first to be explained clearly and with convincing examples. His knowledge of genetics was solid, and the arguments that he presented were based not just on the specialized literature of eugenics and psychiatry, but also on his own research. Mareș studied the

104 Mareș, 'Asupra sterilizării alienaților cronici', 247–248.

105 Mareș, 'Asupra sterilizării alienaților cronici', 248. See also Constantin I. Parhon, 'Raporturile dintre psihiatrie, știința dreptului și criminalitate', *Revista de Drept Penal și Știință Penitenciară*, vol. 14, nos. 8–9 (1936): 289–304.

106 Mareș, 'Asupra sterilizării alienaților cronici', 248.

family records of 1,098 individuals suffering from various mental illnesses, such as imbecility, manic-depressive psychosis, or epilepsy, and established that for 499 of them, there were antecedents in the family, especially in the paternal line.[107] There was no doubt, he argued, that the majority of mental illnesses were hereditarily transmitted according to Mendelian laws. Some of them, however, escaped 'the laws of heredity' and there were still many unknowns connected either with 'real hereditary factors, both genotypic and exogenous', or with 'the possible oscillations of the genes, all the mutations, all the original modifications of the mutations'.[108] Mareș accepted that it was very difficult, perhaps impossible, to explain all hereditary defects genetically.

A possible strategy for detecting psychological problems in time was suggested by the above-mentioned Constantin I. Parhon, who proposed 'a study of the family environment, antecedents, [and] somatopsychic constitution of the children'. Then it would be the turn of teachers and school physicians, who could 'discover in time psychopathic predispositions to mania, melancholy, and schizophrenic or paranoid psychoses, in order then to intervene with a hygienic-dietetic and opotherapic treatment to prevent the appearance of the psychoses'.[109] According to Mareș, these preventative and curative measures, though attractive, were difficult to put into practice and necessitated a long period of preparation. He remained convinced that 'meanwhile, the only means of fighting' against insanity was legislation providing for sterilization, even if this 'can only be done by first winning over medical opinion and at least a part of the intellectual community of the country'.[110] The debate, he considered, had to be extended in order to attract other categories of specialists too.

At the end of the article, Mareș recognized that in Romania, little had been done in this direction, especially when compared with other European countries, where laws on eugenic sterilization had already been introduced. He mentioned Denmark, which was the first European country to legalize sterilization, in 1929, followed by Germany in 1933, Norway and Sweden in 1934, Finland in 1935, Estonia in 1936, and Lithuania in 1937. The American model of sterilization was emulated in some of these European countries, even though it had its detractors.[111] More importantly, a new eugenic programme, politically and ideologically motivated, was becoming more

107 Cahane Mareș, 'Câteva date statistice în legătură cu ereditatea în bolile mintale. Este necesară sterilizarea unor categorii de bolnavi mintali?', *Revista de Igienă Socială* 5, no. 10 (1935): 548.
108 Mareș, 'Câteva date statistice în legătură cu ereditatea în bolile mintale', 552.
109 Mareș, 'Câteva date statistice în legătură cu ereditatea în bolile mintale', 553.
110 Mareș, 'Câteva date statistice în legătură cu ereditatea în bolile mintale', 554.
111 'Sterilizarea degeneraților', *Lupta* 14, no. 4031 (1935): 1–2.

and more attractive among eugenicists everywhere, not only in Romania. The new programme was centred on the Nazi sterilization law (Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses), introduced on 14 July 1933, just a few months after the appointment of Adolf Hitler as chancellor of Germany with the aim of preventing the reproduction of those with hereditary defects. It is to the discussion of this law by Romanian eugenicists that we shall now turn our attention.

The Nazi Sterilization Law

The Nazi sterilization law, which came into force on 1 January 1934, contained eighteen paragraphs. According to the first paragraph, 'any person affected by a hereditary illness could be sterilized by surgical operation'[112] if it was established by doctors that the illness was hereditary. The following illnesses were taken into consideration: manic-depressive psychosis, schizophrenia, Huntington's disease,[113] congenital blindness and deafness, chronic alcoholism, and various serious physical deformities. Sterilization might be requested by any individual, or proposed by their legal representative, by a public physician, or, in the case of 'persons detained in a hospital, sanatorium, or in a health house or penitentiary', by the director of the institution. Any recommendation had to be accompanied by 'a certificate of a physician recognized by the German Reich showing that the person who is to be sterilized has been informed about the nature and consequences of sterilization'.[114] The proposal was then sent to a hereditary health court (Erbgesundheitsgericht), which was created at every larger district court, and this, in its turn, decided whether sterilization was necessary or not. Once approved, the final decision on sterilization was made by a higher hereditary health court (Erbgesundheitsobergericht) which pronounced a definitive ruling. It is interesting that the law specified that 'persons who have taken part either in the procedure or in the operation' must keep the sterilization secret. Otherwise, the penalty was 'up to one year's imprisonment and a fine'.[115]

112 Ioan Ionescu-Dolj, *Reforma dreptului penal german sub revoluțiunea național–socialistă. Anexe: Principalele legi germane, 1933–1940* (Bucharest: Tipografia Penitenciarului Văcărești, 1941), 21.

113 Huntington's disease, also known as Huntington's chorea, is a genetic neurodegenerative disorder.

114 Ionescu-Dolj, *Reforma dreptului penal german*, 22.

115 Ionescu-Dolj, *Reforma dreptului penal german*, 25.

Familiar with the eugenic programme of racial regeneration and demographic growth that had begun in Germany,[116] Gheorghe Marinescu pointed out that for the Nazi regime 'race science' was not 'just "any" science, or "trend" in science'. And racial hygiene was not simply a 'sport'. On the contrary! German race science had 'a combative tendency. Against the humanitarian goal of improving all of the human races, it limits itself to the improvement of just one race in particular which played the essential role in the formation of the German nation.'[117] Likewise, Nazi propaganda proclaimed, the more efficient protection of the nation's future racial interests was achieved through widespread positive and negative eugenic practices, including compulsory sterilization.

According to a report published by the Ministry of Justice of the Reich, in the first year in which the law was applied, 56,244 sterilizations (a greater number than all the 'insane' people officially registered in Romania!) had been carried out, of which 4,313 in Berlin.[118] The Nazi obsession with a racial utopia based on the principles of eugenics had become explicit, and more and more scientists and politicians all over the world were proclaiming the objectives of national policy to be the improvement of the biological quality and the quantity of the population. How, then, was this law received and discussed in Romania?

Opinions varied. Some writers remarked on the ambition with which the Nazi political regime was starting to model German society according to the principles of racial hygiene,[119] while others regarded it with concern. Grigore T. Popa, for example, suggested that the next eugenic measure 'for the prevention of society's future evils' would be 'the suppression of the individual'! Unfortunately, his prediction proved to be true. As we now know, the introduction of the euthanasia programme ('Action T4') in 1939 meant the killing of nearly 300,000 children and adults considered 'unworthy to live'. In July 1937, when Popa was writing the lines quoted above, the direction in which the Nazi programme of eugenic purification was heading was already predictable. Nevertheless, he accepted that for 'the removal of some hereditary illnesses (especially nervous illnesses) sterilization would be appropriate', though it was not to be applied in any form to eliminate criminality or 'vices' such as alcoholism: 'We can sterilize drunkards and murderers, [but] if the structure of society remains vitiated,

116 Nicolae Roşu, 'Revitalizarea rasei', *Curentul* 6, no. 1959 (1933): 1.
117 Marinescu, 'Despre hereditatea normală și patologică', 313.
118 Quoted in Radu Cernea, 'Eugenismul', *Românul* 3, no. 121 (1935), 1.
119 V. Ionescu, 'Sterilizarea', *Axa* 1, no. 17 (1933), 7.

other criminals and other drunkards will appear from the branch [that was] considered healthy'.[120]

Even such political and cultural personalities as Nicolae Iorga seemed impressed by the German sterilization programme. As the journalist Ilariu Dobridor remarked ironically, the great historian had apparently declared himself in favour of the eugenic sterilization practised by the Nazi regime, even though he was known as a critic of Adolf Hitler. Dobridor was critical of eugenic fantasies of racial improvement and declared ironically that the sterilization of 'degenerates' as 'a method of purifying the race' had 'the same usefulness as a fishing net for the sign of Pisces'. There should, he believed, be 'more prudence' on the part of scientists when they declared themselves in favour of '"biological rehabilitation" through eugenics'.[121]

There is no doubt that the introduction of the German sterilization law energized the Romanian eugenicists. Translations of the law and commentaries on it appeared, as was to be expected, in specialized publications such as *Revista de Igienă Socială*, *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic*, *Mișcarea Medicală Română* (*The Romanian Medical Movement*), and *Revista de Medicină Legală* (*Journal of Legal Medicine*), but also in periodicals of general cultural interest such as and *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* (*Journal of the Royal Foundations*), in popularizing magazines such as *Revista Ilustrată*, and in mass-market newspapers such as *Universul*.

In his short preface to the Romanian translation of the text of the law that he published in November 1933 in *Revista de Igienă Socială*, Gheorghe Banu highlighted some of the basic eugenic principles behind the Nazi quest to improve and protect the biological capital of the German nation. In the first place, he wrote, it was important to underline the tendency of post-war eugenic movements to promote the 'qualitative selection' rather than the 'qualitative growth' of the population. Deep-rooted worries regarding the degeneration of the race were used by eugenicists to promote the adoption of national programmes of biological and social selection. The principle of 'racial interest', Banu continued, had become a dominant one in the national politics of European countries and in North America. But the biological and social selection that the eugenicists desired presupposed a division of the population into an 'elite [which was] intellectually, physically and morally very restrictive; the mass of the common people, who constitute almost nine tenths of the population; [and] a dysgenic class, with pathological manifestations, constituting almost one tenth of the population'. This last group,

120 Popa, 'Problema raselor', 160.

121 Ilariu Dobridor, 'Eugenetică și sterilizare', *Dreptatea* 9, no. 2229 (1935), 1.

considered to be made up of 'antisocial elements, capable of diminishing the value of the race', included 'the insane, epileptics, deaf mutes, criminals, alcoholics, and vagabonds'.[122] Due to their prolificity and longevity, these were, Banu emphasized, a threat not only to the future of the race, but also to public health in the present because of the cost incurred by the caring, recovery, and social assistance services on their account.

This, according to Banu, was the context in which the sterilization law, which he translated as 'the law for the prophylaxis of defective progeniture', had been introduced in Nazi Germany. Some of its provisions were based on eugenic experiences in other countries, especially in the United States, but, Banu remarked, the law also included original concepts, such as the creation of the hereditary health court and the council of heredity, not to mention the application of sterilization by force, if necessary. Banu agreed that 'the basic principles, intended to protect and to develop the qualities of the race, from a biological point of view, completely correspond to the ideal of protecting racial values of the highest quality'. At the same time, he recognized that for 'a part of public opinion, which seeks to invoke the principles of human freedom, the rigours of this law appear drastic and harassing'. It was, after all, a totalitarian law, 'from the point of view of the principles of severity', but, Banu underlined, there could be no doubt that it was 'the most energetic and effective sterilization law in existence in [any of] the states of Europe'.[123]

Iordache Făcăoaru, too, commented at length on the German sterilization law, first in a comparative study published in July 1934 in *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*. Starting from the premise that sterilization was 'the most appropriate negative eugenic method for reducing the disproportionate growth of elements with serious hereditary defects', Făcăoaru emphasized that it had to be done for 'the conservation and biological purification of the race',[124] and should not be introduced as a punitive or repressive measure. Many of the American sterilization laws, he observed, were rather punitive than eugenic. Thus, the number of those sterilized in the United States up until 1 January 1933, namely 16,066 individuals, did not impress Făcăoaru, who, quoting Laughlin, considered that the number of those affected by hereditary mental illnesses amounts to 10% of the total population, in other words, almost 12,000,000 people. The sterilizations carried out so far were but a drop in the ocean.

122 G. Banu, 'Legea sterilizării în Germania', *Revista de Igienă Socială*, vol. 3, no. 11 (1933), 550.
123 Banu, 'Legea sterilizării în Germania', 554.
124 I. Făcăoaru, 'Sterilizarea eugenică', in *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*, vol. 1, no. 7 (1934), 200–201. See also I. Făcăoaru, 'Sterilizarea eugenică', in *Clujul Medical*, vol. 14, no. 7 (1934), 268–270.

The situations in which Sweden, Switzerland, and Denmark found themselves Făcăoaru also described as unsatisfactory, because their sterilization laws were not, in his view, very strict from the eugenic point of view. Germany, however, showed what could be achieved with the political support of the state. It was there, he considered, that the most elaborate sterilization law in Europe had been introduced, which he termed the 'Law for the prevention of dysgenic descendants'. His terms were slightly different from those of Banu, who had spoken of 'defective progeny' (*progenitură tarată*), while Făcăoaru referred to 'dysgenic descendants' (*descendent disgenic*). No standard terminology existed at that time in the Romanian language but both expressions described the same 'degenerates' unwanted by society.

Făcăoaru went on to explain clearly the content and applicability of the German law. It is worth mentioning that he also included the number of sterilizations anticipated by the German authorities for each category. For example, the plan was to sterilize 200,000 persons with congenital mental debility, 80,000 sufferers from schizophrenia, and 20,000 with manic-depressive dementia. A further 60,000 patients with epilepsy, 20,000 with physical infirmities, 18,000 deaf people, and 10,000 chronic alcoholics were also to be sterilized. The total number was 412,000. It is estimated that by the end of the twelve years of the Nazi regime, around 400,000 people had been sterilized as a consequence of the application of this law. Thus, the figures cited by Făcăoaru in 1934 proved to be quite exact. The Nazi sterilization programme had functioned according to the initial plan.

Nevertheless, Făcăoaru would have liked the German law to be applied also to other categories who, in his view, brought harm to the race. Among these were drug-users, kleptomaniacs, and the 'incurably lazy', together with 'girls and women who give birth to illegitimate children without indicating their paternity'. Perhaps even more shocking was his dissatisfaction at the fact that the German law did not also provide for the sterilization of dysgenic children, 'although the procedure to be followed would be simpler, the costs lower, the surgical intervention easier, and the result guaranteed'.[125] Five years later, under the name of 'Action T4', euthanasia was secretly introduced in Germany for the extermination of newborns and children with serious mental or physical disabilities.

The same Făcăoaru made a translation of the text of the German sterilization law for *Buletinul Eugenic și Biopolitic*, where it appeared, together

125 Făcăoaru, 'Sterilizarea eugenică', 205–206

with a short commentary, in October 1934.[126] The same issue contained an explanatory text, describing the heredity of the mental and physical illnesses included in the law.[127] Interestingly, this time Făcăoaru chose a translation for the expression *erbkranken Nachwuchses* different than Banu's, namely 'descendants defective through heredity' (*descendenții defectuoşi prin ereditate*), which, he hoped, better reflected the familiarity of the Romanian public with eugenic terminology. Specific terms aside, 'the fundamental idea of the law', according to him, was 'ensuring the racial health and efficiency'[128] of the nation.

This was also a long-term demand of the Romanian eugenicists, as demonstrated in the first book dedicated to eugenic sterilization, published in Bucharest in 1934. Written by Eugen Petit, jurist and legal adviser at the High Court of Cassation, and Gheorghe Buzoianu, surgeon to the Hospitals of the Civil Board in Bucharest, the book analysed eugenic sterilization from a legal and medical perspective. The legal analysis was Petit's contribution.[129] After a presentation of the Danish sterilization law, introduced in 1929, he went on to discuss the German law. In his view, there was an important difference between them. The Danish eugenic legislation was aimed at preventing the committing of criminal acts, while the German system was founded on hereditary determinism, according to which the transmission of hereditary illnesses to future generations must be eliminated.

Constantin Andronescu was the only Romanian eugenicist mentioned by Petit as a supporter of sterilization. Interestingly, Petit believed that in Romania there was no 'current of opinion formed in relation to the utility of such a law [of sterilization]. At least, so far, even the initiated regard it as a mere curiosity. Many completely ignore the importance of the problem.' It is hard to believe that Petit, who was familiar with the various eugenic movements in Europe and the United States, knew so little about the Romanian eugenic movement. His strategy, it seems, was different. A minor contribution on the part of the Romanian eugenicists helped Petit to construct his principal argument, namely that it would be legally difficult to introduce obligatory sterilization in Romania. 'Although many serious

126 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Legiuirile recente pentru sterilizarea eugenică', in *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic*, vol. 5, nos. 8–10 (1934), 231–239.

127 Mihai Zolog și Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Indicația și legislația eugenică a sterilizării', in *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic*, vol. 5, nos. 8–10 (1934), 186–192.

128 Făcăoaru, 'Legiuirile recente pentru sterilizarea eugenică', 235.

129 Eugen Petit, 'Problema juridică a sterilizării', in Eugen Petit and Gheorghe Buzoianu, *Sterilizarea din punct de vedere juridic și chirurgical* (Bucharest: 'Adevărul', 1934), 7–24.

arguments could be invoked in favour of the system of forced sterilization', he remarked, 'such a measure could not be introduced by way of an ordinary law'.[130] Likewise, he explained, the penal code currently in force in Romania explicitly forbade any denial of individual freedoms. Consequently, there would have to be a modification of the penal code to permit the introduction of a sterilization law.

But was eugenic sterilization really necessary in Romania? Petit could see no reason why voluntary sterilization, for example, should not be introduced, with the specification that it would be applied only in the case of individuals with incurable hereditary illnesses, and only after a committee of specialists agreed on the diagnosis. The advantages of such eugenic measures would, in Petit's view, be the following: those sterilized would be able to have 'a home of their own like normal people' once there was no more danger of their transmitting hereditary illnesses, and those who had 'sickly sexual passions' could have 'a quiet life in society by means of a simple surgical operation'.[131] The sterilization procedure, Petit insisted, had to be secret, as in Germany. Stigma and 'moral humiliation' had to be avoided as far as possible. As for compulsory sterilization, Petit was against it. 'Human dignity', he professed, 'firmly demands the defence of our body against any touch, even that of society, albeit motivated by the best of intentions'. And further on: 'no one can be subjected by force to any surgical operation, even if the intervention is necessary to save their life. The more so when it is a matter of suppressing the function of an organ destined for the perpetuation of the species."[132]

Petit's argumentation was followed by a translation of the whole text of the German sterilization law[133] and by a text by Gheorghe Buzoianu.[134] The latter offered an erudite commentary on the various techniques of sterilization and castration for men and women. Buzoianu knew very well the surgical sterilization procedures, vasectomy for men and salpingectomy for women, and he explained them in easily intelligible terms; likewise, the impact of sterilization on the health of the individual, and especially on sexual performance. 'Our aim', he warned, was 'to stop the procreation of inferior elements', which could be achieved by sexual sterilization, without

130 Petit, 'Problema juridică a sterilizării', 16–17.

131 Petit, 'Problema juridică a sterilizării', 21.

132 Petit, 'Problema juridică a sterilizării', 22–23.

133 'Legea pentru prevenirea bolilor ereditare ale tinerilor generații din 14 iulie 1933', in Petit, Buzoianu, *Sterilizarea*, 27–34.

134 Gheorghe Buzoianu, 'Sterilizarea sexuală din punct de vedere chirurgical', in Petit and Buzoianu, *Sterilizarea*, 37–62.



Fig. 9. Gheorghe Marinescu (Courtesy of Biblioteca Documentară de Istoria Medicinii, Institutul de Sănătate Publică, Bucharest)

causing 'any physical, functional, or psychological disturbance for the individual operated on'.[135]

Buzoianu was in favour of the application of sterilization for eugenic reasons, namely 'for the improvement of the health of the people, putting powerless degenerates outside the situation of being able to reproduce'; there was no need, he said, for total sterilization, in other words, castration, which was recommended only in the case of 'aggressive degenerates'.[136] Sterilization of women, he suggested, should be regarded in the same way. In the case of those who suffered from 'mental deficiencies', sterilization was necessary from the eugenic point of view, but this procedure did not in any way diminish ovarian secretion, nor did it affect the menstrual cycle of these women. In short, Buzoianu concluded, sexual sterilization could achieve the eugenic objectives of protecting society from future 'degenerates' without too much affecting the lives of those persons who were required not to have children.

Such clinical discussions about sterilization had their legal and medical purpose. Another example is that of Constantin Daniel, director of the gynaecology section of the Colțea Hospital in Bucharest, who analysed sterilization as a medical practice.[137] It was important for experienced physicians like Daniel to explain that sterilization did not modify women's sexual or hormonal functions, thus putting aside many of the concerns that some people might have had about this simple surgical measure that could have an important eugenic effect on the biological quality of the population.

The opinions of experts were important. Gheorghe Marinescu [figure 9], the most respected Romanian psychiatrist of the period, also offered a balanced perspective. 'From a theoretical point of view, obviously the idea

135 Buzoianu, 'Sterilizarea sexuală din punct de vedere chirurgical', in Petit and Buzoianu, *Sterilizarea*, 57.

136 Buzoianu, 'Sterilizarea sexuală din punct de vedere chirurgical', in Petit and Buzoianu, *Sterilizarea*, 58.

137 Constantin Daniel, 'Sterilizarea operatorie la femeie', *România Medicală* 8, no. 12 (1930): 169–170.

of sterilization is correct', he said. However, physicians could not prove with certainty 'that by the application of sterilization, the number of idiots, mentally deficient, epileptics, alcoholics, criminals, etc. is reduced'.[138]

Equally important was the moderate tone adopted by Buzoianu, Daniel, and Marinescu, in contrast with the provocative claims made by Ioan Manliu, who proposed the euthanasia of the criminally insane and 'the replacement of capital punishment with sterilization',[139] or Eugen Relgis, for whom individuals with disabilities had no right to exist. 'Today, with the help of science', he said, 'degenerates can be eliminated by euthanasia. It is, however, preferable from all points of view that degenerates should not be born at all – more than that: should not even be conceived. And this is possible, with the help of science: through the *sterilization* of those who present pathological characters or incurable illnesses.'[140] Sterilization, for Relgis, was 'a veritable revolution, not only in the field of eugenics, but also in the social field. We may even say that it is the basis of the regeneration of the human species, of the social reforms that will lead to the disappearance of so many hereditary illnesses'.[141]

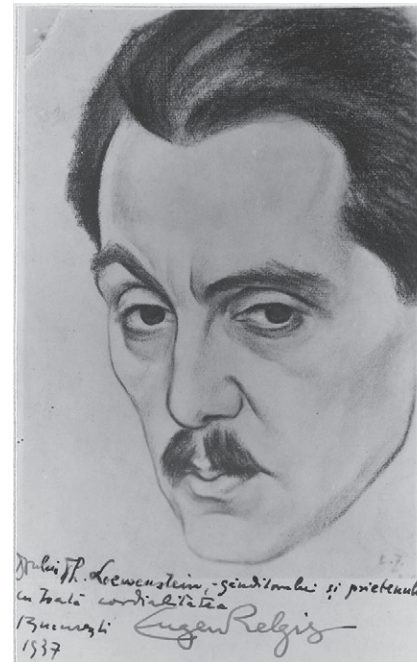


Fig. 10. Eugen Relgis (Courtesy of the National Library of Israel)

Relgis [fig. 10] made no distinction between obligatory and voluntary sterilization. For other eugenicists, however, the difference was very important. For example, in a lecture on eugenics, heredity, and race, delivered on 29 January 1935, Gheorghe Banu stated that the 'ideal' of Romanian eugenicists was 'the generalization of voluntary sterilization, freely consented to by those interested'. To familiarize the educated public with this eugenic

138 Marinescu, 'Despre hereditatea normală și patologică', 307.

139 Manliu, *Raționalizare*, 183.

140 Eugen Relgis, *Umanitarism și eugenism* (Bucharest, 'Vegetarismul', 1935), 28–29 (emphasis in original). For a different view on euthanasia, see Alexandru Finkelstein, *Eutanasia* (Cluj: Tipografia Albert, 1938).

141 Relgis, *Umanitarism și eugenism*, 64. See also Manuel Devaldès, *La maternité consciente: le rôle des femmes dans l'amélioration de la race* (Paris: Radot, 1927).

method would require 'a work of education and perseverant propaganda',[142] but Banu was convinced that this was possible in Romania too.

Against the background of these discussions about eugenic sterilization, the Society of Eugenics and the Study of Heredity (Societatea de Eugenie și Studiul Eredității) was created in Bucharest in May 1935, under the leadership of Gheorghe Marinescu. The moment was opportune. According to the monthly *Justiția Olteniei* (*Oltenia Law Journal*), 'the Romanian people finds itself at the most painful crossroads in the history of its ethnic being'. As the state ignored 'the problem of the degeneration of our race', it was left to the leading representatives of the scientific community to identify the urgent eugenic problems faced by Romania and to present them to those in positions of power and decision making. The creation of the society was described admiringly as a 'brilliant apprehension of the great permanent aims of a nation that does not want to perish'. Among the priority objectives of the society, attention was drawn to the popularization of 'the theoretical principles of eugenic science, together with all the practical means, capable of increasing the number of well-endowed elements of our race and while at the same reducing the number of inferior and dysgenic elements, carriers of grave anomalies that can be transmitted hereditarily'.[143]

Among the founder members of the society should be mentioned Gheorghe Banu, Francisc Rainer, Ioan Manliu, Iuliu Moldovan, Constantin I. Parhon, Gheorghe K. Constantinescu, professor in the Department of Zootechnics of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest, Alexandrina Gh. Cantacuzino, president of the National Council of Romanian Women, and the jurist Mircea Djuvara. The vice-presidents of the society were the physicians Medeea Niculescu, president of the Association of Women Doctors in Romania, Sabin Manuilă, and Titu Gane, and the lawyers Ion Gr. Perieţeanu, former minister of Public Works and Communications, and Constantin Al. Viforeanu, prosecutor general at the High Court of Cassation.

The society was made up of five sections, dealing with: a) the study of heredity; b) social medicine; c) psychology and sociology; d) law and biopolitics; and e) propaganda. It had two branches: one in Craiova, headed by Ion Vasilescu-Bucium, the president of the Court of Cassation and Justice, and one in Chișinău, presided over by Iosif Lepși, the director of the city's National Museum of Natural History.

142 Gheorghe Banu, 'Eugenie, ereditate, rasă', *Revista de Igienă Socială* 5, no. 2 (1935): 107.
143 'Pro eugenie', *Justiţia Olteniei* 16, nos. 8–9 (1935): 59.

Some details about the objectives of the propaganda and law sections have been preserved. For example, the plan of activity of the propaganda section included organizing 'conferences and meetings, competitions and any other events of a eugenic character', publishing 'articles and reports in various newspapers', distributing 'brochures', issuing 'posters and stamps', and, lastly, projecting 'films or simple eugenic precepts in cinemas'.[144] The law section, in turn, proposed 'researching the indissoluble connections that link criminology to genetics and the choice of the most suitable means of combatting the causes of criminality'.[145]

The society's statutes emphasized not only research on 'normal and pathological heredity' (the wording preferred by Marinescu) and the study of 'the anthropological and ethnic character of the Romanian people', but also education and propaganda 'by all methods to show the role of heredity in the vigour, history, and culture of our people and to create a dynamic eugenic mentality'. The society likewise set out to offer 'biological, economic, [and] social solutions for perfecting the heredity of the Romanian people and stopping degeneration especially in the villages'. The sterilization of 'degenerates, idiots, imbeciles, the feeble-minded, [and] criminals' was one such solution.[146]

Against the background of the international radicalization of eugenics, especially in Nazi Germany, Marinescu wished to distance himself from the racist exaggerations of some of his colleagues. The version of eugenics that he proposed was eugenics for the Romanian *nation*, not for the Romanian *race*. 'We *are not racists*', he insisted, referring to the society's members. And further on, 'we do not engage in politics; we are above politics'.[147] What counted for him was science. The declared intention was to offer scientific support for the introduction of a national eugenic programme, especially as, in fact, the progress made in this direction was not remarkable. Marinescu recognized this when he responded to 'an international questionnaire on eugenics'. It was sent by the German government at the beginning of 1935 to the minister of Health, Ioan E. Costinescu, who, in his turn, asked Gheorghe Marinescu to formulate a response on the part of the Society of Eugenics and the Study of Heredity.

144 'Statutele Societății de Ereditate și Eugenie', in *Statute, regulamente, organizații medicale*, Fond I. M. IV 184, Biblioteca Facultății de Medicină, Bucharest.

145 Ion Vasilescu-Bucium, 'Criminologia și eugenia', *Revista de Medicină Legală* 1, no. 2 (1936): 90.

146 'Statutele Societății de Ereditate și Eugenie'. See also Marinescu, 'Despre hereditatea normală și patologică', 340.

147 Gheorghe Marinescu, 'Cuvânt introductiv' to Gheorghe K. Constantinescu, *Ereditate și eugenie* (Bucharest: Ed. 'Librăria Academică', 1936), 8–9 (emphasis in original).

Some of the questions in the questionnaire referred directly to sterilization. For example:

> What laws or decisions exist regarding the prevention of hereditarily ill offspring? […] What is the reason used for sterilization? Is it from a eugenic, medical, social point of view? On the basis of what decisions is sterilization applied: legal, concerning sanitary politics, on request, voluntary? Is sterilization performed on an out-patient basis? What methods are used? Is the observation of those sterilized continued after discharge? Are the records of sterilized patients archived? When was sterilization introduced and how many persons in total have been sterilized up to the end of the year 1934?

Other questions referred to the activity of hospitals in the field of eugenics and protection of the race, such as:

> Have heredo-biological stations been annexed to certain hospitals? What duties do they have? Do certain hospitals have heredo-biological stations for the cultivation and propagation of the sciences of heredity and of race? What are their duties? Are courses held for the instruction of physicians and auxiliary sanitary personnel regarding heredo-biology and eugenics, and in which institutions? Are there hospital personnel available to the public to advise them on questions of heredity and the cultivation of the race?[148]

The response to the questionnaire that Marinescu prepared together with Gheorghe Banu was 'concise', as Romania did not have 'special legislation on eugenic protection or the prevention of hereditarily ill offspring, just as there was no sterilization law'.[149]

Consequently, the new Society of Eugenics and the Study of Heredity prepared a national programme of biological protection of the Romanian people, which included, among other things, a selection of 'the most robust and most gifted [elements] of the Romanian people, ensuring at the same time the increase in number of these elements', together with the preparation of 'the legislation necessary to attain this goal'.[150] 'Eugenics', said Marinescu,

148 Marinescu, 'Despre hereditatea normală și patologică', 326–327.

149 'Răspuns la chestionarul internațional asupra eugeniei și instituțiunilor spitalicești. România', in *Statute, regulamente, organizații medicale*.

150 'Autorizarea de funcționare, actul constitutiv și statutele Societății Regale Române pentru Eugenie și Studiul Eredității', *Revista de Igienă Socială* 6, no. 4 (1936): 273. See also Sabin Manuilă, 'Societatea regală română de eugenie și studiul eredității', *Sociologie Românească* 1, no. 5 (1936): 31–32; and Ion Vasilescu-Bucium, 'Eugenia și studiul eredității', *Mișcarea Medicală Română* 8, nos. 3–4 (1935): 169–174.

had become 'a capital problem of our people',[151] the importance of which could no longer be ignored by the Romanian elites. One of the greatest philanthropists of the interwar period, Constantin Vasiliu Bolnavu, had already been convinced by Marinescu, and had promised to apply eugenic methods on one of his properties.[152]

None of the eugenic societies in Romania had as its principal aim the introduction of compulsory sterilization, although many of their members were decidedly in favour of it. I have already mentioned Ioan Manliu. Iordache Făcăoaru was another eugenic enthusiast. Făcăoaru was a member of ASTRA's Eugenics and Biopolitics Section and, at the time, director of the Bioanthropology Section of the Institute of Statistics in Bucharest. In the mid-1930s, Făcăoaru published several articles on sterilization, describing both familiar legislation such as the German and Danish laws and less well-known eugenic projects in countries such as Poland and Finland.[153]

In April 1935, Făcăoaru published an article in *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* titled 'The Proliferation of Dysgenics and their Cost for Society and State'. Recalling the warnings launched by Manliu regarding the degeneration of the Romanian nation, Făcăoaru declared that Romania was threatened 'by a danger unknown in the past: the multiplication of elements with defective heredity. This situation brings with it the progressive racial inferiorization of the ethnic body and the increasing of public expenses for the maintenance of dysgenics.'[154] Although exact statistical data on the number of 'dysgenics' in Romania did not exist, Făcăoaru said that it was desirable that '10% of the population of the country', in other words, 1.8 million people, should not have offspring. Alongside those with serious hereditary illnesses, physical and mental, he included tuberculosis-sufferers, delinquents, criminals, alcoholics, prostitutes, beggars, and vagabonds, together with 'wasteful elements due to their ethnic origin', for example, the Roma and the Tatars.[155]

Basing his analysis on famous cases of dysgenics in the United States – for example, those of the Jukes family, described by the sociologist Richard

151 Marinescu, 'Despre hereditatea normală și patologică', 341.

152 Marinescu, 'Cuvânt introductiv', 10.

153 See, for example, Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Proiectul legii eugenice poloneze', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 6, nos. 4–6 (1936): 160–163 and Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Privire critică asupra legii finlandeze de sterilizare în comparație cu legea germană', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 8, nos. 10–12 (1937): 339–354.

154 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Înmulțirea disgenicilor și costul lor pentru societate și stat', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 6, nos. 4–6 (1935): 169.

155 Făcăoaru, 'Înmulțirea disgenicilor și costul lor pentru societate și stat', 179–182.

L. Dugdale, and of the Kallikak family, studied by the psychologist Henry H. Goddard – and in Europe – such as the Zero family, analysed by the Swiss psychiatrist Josef Jörger – Făcăoaru asked that 'the reproduction of degenerates be made impossible, regardless of the method, be that complete isolation or eugenic sterilization'.[156]

Făcăoaru was not a mere imitator of the Nazi racial revolution. Alongside his support for the sterilization laws in Germany, he was equally attracted by the model of eugenics and national biopolitics promoted by his mentor, Iuliu Moldovan. Indeed, like many other eugenicists who, in the interwar period, worked with Moldovan at the Institute of Hygiene and Social Hygiene in Cluj, Făcăoaru rejected the idea of racial purity. However, like Manliu and Relgis, he frequently resorted in his studies to eugenic metaphors of racial degeneration. It thus comes as no surprise that, in his view, the legalization of sterilization was the most efficient method of preventing the biological decline of the Romanian nation and, at the same time, a credible means of eugenically purifying the ethnic body of dysgenic elements.

Eugenics without Sterilization

In the mid-1930s, the debate about eugenic sterilization intensified in Romania, due, on the one hand, to the publicity surrounding the Nazi eugenic achievements, and on the other, to the growing interest in the subject among the Romanian public. The introduction of 'eugenic marriage' was the ideal aspired to by those who were convinced that in order to regenerate the nation, certain measures had to be introduced, such as the legal requirement of prenuptial certificates and of preventative sterilization. It was eugenic marriage, said Doctor Ygrec, 'that will truly regenerate what for some time it has been customary to term "race"'.[157] At the same time, however, attention was drawn to the fact that social and cultural conditions in Romania were different from those in the countries where such eugenic measures had already become popular.[158]

Meanwhile, explanations regarding the aims of sterilization had also become more numerous – as had the critical voices that publicly opposed its introduction. Grigore Odobescu, whom I have already mentioned, offered

156 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Familiile degenerate și costul lor pentru societate și stat', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 6, nos. 5–7 (1936): 221.

157 Doctorul Ygrec, 'Legiferarea certificatului prenupțial', *Dimineața* 32, no. 10704 (1936): 1.

158 'Ereditatea și eugenetica', *Dreptatea* 7, no. 1592 (1933): 1.

a succinct presentation of the different sterilization techniques used by eugenicists. According to Odobescu, it was possible to speak of 'repressive sterilization', applied to criminals; of 'social prophylactic sterilization', used on those affected by hereditary mental illnesses; of 'optional sterilization', used especially in cases of sexual behaviour considered abnormal, and, lastly, of 'eugenic sterilization'. This last functioned both at the individual level and at the societal level. In individual cases, sterilization might be justified 'for therapeutic or prophylactic purposes'. At the level of society, its application could be justified in economic terms, such as poverty; for neo-Malthusian purposes, aimed at reducing the population surplus; and for eugenic considerations, in the strict sense, namely using 'the concepts of Mendelian genetics to pursue the improvement of the individual for the benefit of the collectivity'.[159]

Was Odobescu in favour of sterilization? On the one hand, he said, sterilization, as a eugenic method, did not suit '[our] conceptions, habits, and our spiritual structure. However, it would remain ineffectual especially because it would not correspond to our specific social necessities and thus it would not be able to remedy any of the evils that at the moment gnaw at and soften the vitality of our people and which will continue to undermine its future.' On the other hand, 'neither the voluntary sterilization practised in Switzerland nor prophylactic sterilization as in America would find a favourable atmosphere in our country'. Nevertheless, Odobescu agreed that eugenic sterilization might be justified in certain cases, such as 'the neuro-psychically ill (the insane, especially the incurable), both those who need to be hospitalized forever and even more the patients with serious hereditary illnesses, rigorously verified'.[160]

Clearly, Odobescu was not convinced of the efficiency of eugenic sterilization in preventing the biological degeneration of the Romanian people. Moreover, many individuals were latent carriers of hereditary illnesses, and these, he said, did not attract the attention of the eugenicists. A correct identification of the 'abnormal' necessitated 'the precise and extensive reconstitution of the genealogies of those individuals generative of hereditary illnesses'. And this process of reconstituting the genealogy of each individual suspected of being dysgenic was difficult to carry out. Then there was also the external factor, that of environment and education, which was usually neglected when the issue of sterilization was raised and to which Odobescu accorded an important role in the physical and mental development of each individual.

159 Odobescu, *Politica eugenică*, 8–9.
160 Odobescu, *Eugenie pentru neamul românesc*, 11–12.

This criticism of genetic determinism was shared by Dumitru Enăchescu, Odobescu's colleague at the Central Hospital of Mental and Nervous Illnesses in Bucharest. Enăchescu warned that 'on the basis of our knowledge, regarding the biological laws of heredity, we cannot make a fair selection of who should be sterilized and who not. Our knowledge is insufficient to be able to affirm with certainty that the progeny of a person [who is], let us say, defective, will or will not be degenerate.'[161]

The protection of the race was, however, necessary, and Enăchescu identified three maladies that were contributing decisively to the degeneration of the Romanians: syphilis, alcoholism, and tuberculosis. Many of those taken into psychiatric hospitals and asylums owed their institutionalization to these conditions. However, even more sufferers, Enăchescu acknowledged, were free. Many syphilitics, alcoholics, and tuberculosis patients 'exist in society as mediocre and most often sub-mediocre individuals'. What, then, did Enăchescu propose? As he was against eugenic sterilization, his solution was different, namely, 'a serious and severe prophylaxis of social maladies'. This he considered to be 'the most effective method at the present moment by which we may preserve and improve our race'.[162]

Other authors expressed their opposition to eugenic sterilization in equally explicit terms, complaining that there was not sufficient information about the transmission of hereditary illnesses and that the Romanian public was not sufficiently informed about the science of heredity. The low level of education of the population prompted Gheorghe K. Constantinescu to publish a study of the relation between heredity and eugenics, in which he explained in detail the Mendelian laws of heredity and the bases of genetics as a science. With regard to sterilization, Constantinescu's opinion was similar to that of Odobescu and Enăchescu. 'We shall have to wait a number of years for the results of [this eugenic] experiment', he pointed out, 'in order to be able to formulate a more decisive point of view'.[163] The aim of eugenics was the creation of 'people healthy in mind and body, ever tending towards ennoblement, in order to create a more and more perfect and harmonious type'.[164] According to Constantinescu, this objective could be achieved without the introduction of compulsory sterilization.

There was, however, no consensus among eugenicists as regards a satisfactory definition of the 'perfect' human type. Had science, wondered

161 Dumitru Enăchescu, 'Sterilizarea eugenică', *Revista de Medicină Legală* 1, no. 4 (1936): 278.
162 Enăchescu, 'Sterilizarea eugenică', 279.
163 Constantinescu, *Ereditate și eugenie*, 91.
164 Constantinescu, *Ereditate și eugenie*, 103.

Nicolae Iorgulescu, adviser on medical and anthropological matters in the Ministry of Justice, 'established a standard type of person, biologically and sociologically?' Which was more important from the eugenic point of view, 'a beautiful woman representing the physical qualities of the species, […] fertile […] but not always chaste', or an 'ugly' but 'virtuous' woman, who had, moreover, 'exceptional intellectual and spiritual qualities'?[165] The latter, Iorgulescu believed, should not be rejected by eugenicists merely on aesthetic grounds.

A national eugenic movement had to assume responsibility for the biological improvement of all Romanian women and not endorse the legalization of sterilization. What did this mean in practical terms? According to Iorgulescu, it was necessary first 'to keep all Romanian children and to raise them, using scientific methods of selection and assistance'. Then,

> At the appropriate age, we shall select out of our peasant woman's nine children the most successful, be it the first-born or the seventh. Let us take these children under our special protection and give them the possibility to develop as much as possible. As for the other seven, let us say, who will not prove to be valuable, let us nevertheless give them a corresponding usefulness: let us not kill them […], as the more inactive, more vegetative nature in them will certainly waken on its own, in a future generation, from which will emerge some of the most successful, even splendid, exemplars of the human species.[166]

Iorgulescu's message was clear: the improvement of the eugenic qualities of the population could be achieved by preventative measures and by the protection of mothers, children, and families, without the need to resort to radical measures of rejection and elimination of those considered less valuable for the progress and biological perfection of society.

Leonida Iosif, the village physician whom we encountered in chapter 2, had an equally firm critical position. In an article titled 'What Can Eugenics Achieve Practically in our Country', Iosif declared himself to be categorically opposed to the introduction of eugenic sterilization in a rural country like Romania. While Constantinescu spoke from the perspective of genetics, Iosif had in view the general character of the Romanian people, who, he considered, had a 'Latin mentality', different from the

165 Nicolae Iorgulescu, 'Neavenirea avortului preventiv, imoralitatea "avortului moral" și antieugenia celui eugenetic', *Curierul Judiciar* 44, no. 13 (1935): 196.
166 Iorgulescu, 'Neavenirea avortului preventiv', 197.

'Anglo-Saxon mentality of the countries where the sterilization law had been introduced'.[167]

In Iosif's view, introducing the sterilization of criminals and alcoholics would not solve the problems of criminality or alcoholism in Romania. The endocrinological treatment, with hormones, of individuals with criminal tendencies would, he believed, have much better effects than their sterilization. As regards the transmission of venereal diseases, Iosif called for the introduction of a prophylaxis of syphilis in the villages, in order to protect the population from the disastrous consequences of the disease. Iosif's arguments were all the more convincing as he was himself a country physician and was daily confronted with these social and medical problems, but his recommendation was preventative, rather than negative, eugenics.

Iosif did not spare psychiatry, a medical field with a considerable impact on eugenic thinking. Was the psychiatrist, he asked, really 'objective and impartial, not unfairly stigmatizing an individual?' On the basis of these considerations, Iosif rejected both the adoption of a eugenic sterilization law and the introduction of obligatory prenuptial medical certificates. Could eugenics then achieve any of its practical aims? As long as illiteracy, alcoholism, and contagious diseases reigned supreme in Romania, Iosif concluded that this was not possible. Once the rural population was prosperous and educated, it would become aware of the importance of eugenics: 'They will seek medical assistance of their own accord, and the awareness of their responsibility will prevent them from marrying and procreating'. In such a future, Iosif stated, the number of 'degenerates' would fall appreciably, and 'the final aims of eugenics will be attained'.[168]

The reticence surrounding the ambition of solving the social and medical problems of Romania by means of eugenics was shared by another country physician, Emilia Daneș. In a letter to the Bucharest journal *Tribuna Medicală* (*The Medical Tribune*), sent 'from a village where, for every ten inhabitants, you meet one with tertiary syphilitic lesions', Daneș raised some interesting questions regarding the Society of Eugenics and the Study of Heredity. In the first place, she noted, the society's agenda was so ambitious that 'it could be mistaken for the nation-building programme of the modern Romanian state'. Was it possible, she asked, for a eugenic society to deal at the same time with the protection of the pregnant woman and the defence of the child, with the hygiene of adults and the struggle against social diseases,

167 Leonida Iosif, 'Ce poate realiza practic eugenia la noi', *Mișcarea Medicală Română* 8, nos. 5–6 (1935): 367.

168 Iosif, 'Ce poate realiza practic eugenia la noi', 369–370.

with 'the complex study of heredity using statistics and medical-genetic examinations', and with legislation on sterilization and the prenuptial medical certificate? These 'objectives' were, in fact, 'of immediate concern, and should therefore draw the attention of leaders of any state in our days'. It would have been more useful for the health of the population, Daneș continued, if a society were founded for the procurement and distribution of neosalvarsan, an efficient medicine for the treatment of syphilis. By wishing 'to address all the problems affecting our people', the new society was destined 'to remain a decorative organization, and thus sterile from a practical point of view'.[169]

It was a stinging remark, but Daneș did not stop here. What really made her 'tremble with bewilderment', was the role assigned to women in the national campaign for social and biological improvement proposed by the Society of Eugenics. 'Is it possible," she exclaimed, 'that all these [male] scientists think about women the way they have written?' Marinescu's proposal was that Romanian women should not work until the age of forty-five (this being considered the age at which a woman's period of maximum fertility ended), but should 'stay at home' and 'attend to their family'.[170] This was, Daneş remarked with sarcasm, 'very nice, very idyllic, and very national',[171] but an absurd proposal. However, the ironic tone of her letter reflected a truth: Marinescu and the other male eugenicists saw women only through the prism of their biological and reproductive functions, as mothers, not as equal partners in social and cultural life. According to the gynaecologist Constantin Stanca, the first director of the Institute for the Study and Prophylaxis of Cancer in Cluj, 'the biological purpose of woman' was to become a mother. This role was 'the most important known to society in ensuring the social equilibrium of the great collectivity that is called the Nation'.[172]

To Daneș, it seemed pointless to further explain a eugenic programme based on a 'total lack of understanding of the soul of woman', and a wrong vision of national regeneration. Her feminist critical approach was explicit:

> When the work of woman alongside man has won so many victories in the new configurations of public life in all countries, when in social

169 Emilia Daneș, 'Societatea de ereditate și eugenie', *Tribuna Medicală* 3, no. 1 (1935): 15–16.
170 Marinescu, 'Necesitatea creerei de urgenţă a unei societăţi de ereditate şi eugenie', 2.
171 Daneș, 'Societatea de ereditate și eugenie', 16.
172 See Constantin Stanca, 'Rostul biologic al femeii', *Buletin Eugenic şi Eugenic* 11, nos. 1–3 (1940): 65.

> environments, the emphasis has been put on caring for children by the collectivity, in order to make full use of woman's freedom to work and to create a true practical eugenics, I find strange and inexplicable the tendency to return to medieval times, when woman was held in the gynaeceum, as an object of pleasure and an instrument of reproduction.[173]

No one had ever framed the question of gender inequality quite so bluntly before in a medical journal. Furthermore, and echoing Iosif's views, Daneș believed that eugenics should be introduced first in the countryside, in villages where the peasants 'live undernourished, alcoholized, unclothed, unwashed, untreated for elementary illnesses, without matches, without good maize flour, without books'. Indisputably, she argued, 'true eugenics' should be carried out by those who 'writhed helplessly in the darkness of the villages', and not by 'scholars from the capital' who had limited contact with the real life of the Romanian peasant.

What remained to be done? Daneș was sceptical regarding the possibility of achieving a eugenic programme in Romania for as long as everything was reduced to academic discussions. 'Revolt is futile', she noted bitterly, 'criticism useless, despair ineffectual. We are left with no more than the power to smile when we read that there are plans for a league of parents with many children'. In expectation of a change of medical strategy, both from both the Ministry of Health and from the Society of Eugenics and the Study of Heredity, she wryly recommended 'patience, lice, and scabies'.[174] Few Romanian physicians explained the difference between the theory and the practice of eugenics more eloquently than Emilia Daneș.

Daneș's letter did not go unanswered. The response came from the physician and poet Vintilă Ciocâlteu, a former student of Gheorghe Marinescu and winner of a Rockefeller scholarship at the Harvard Medical School. In an article published in the newspaper *Currentul* (*The Current*), Ciocâlteu defined eugenics as an *idée force*, capable of changing the destiny of nations. The person animated by such an idea, he believed, 'masters but is not mastered; guides but is not guided; defeats but is not defeated'.[175]

Reflecting on Daneș's letter, Ciocâlteu admired the doctor's sarcasm, but he did not share her scepticism. The Society for Eugenics and the Study of Heredity, he believed, 'may have the role of an *idée force*. Around it can

173 Daneș, 'Societatea de ereditate și eugenie', 17.

174 Daneș, 'Societatea de ereditate și eugenie', 17.

175 Vintilă Ciocâlteu, 'Eugenia – o idee forţă', *Curentul* 8, no. 2625 (1935): 2.

gravitate all the tendencies towards the improvement of the race'.[176] His hope was that the eugenic programme might become reality in Romania, aided also by the public standing and scholarly appreciation enjoyed by Gheorghe Marinescu.

Odobescu, Enăchescu, Constantinescu, Iosif, and Daneș believed that the social and biological degeneration of the Romanian population could be controlled by other means than eugenic sterilization. Indeed, this category of eugenicists took care to make a distinction between the excesses of negative eugenics and other, positive, measures of biological improvement. On the other hand, these sceptical attitudes were criticized by the supporters of eugenic sterilization. Făcăoaru, for example, lamented Odobescu's lack of enthusiasm for eugenics and Iosif's deficient knowledge of genetics. Unlike Odobescu, who had stated that the Romanian public was not yet ready to accept eugenic sterilization, Făcăoaru maintained that creating a favourable 'atmosphere' for the acceptance of these eugenic practices was the responsibility of 'the spiritual leaders of the nation'. Although he appreciated the commitment to raising the level of medical education and hygiene in Romania, Făcăoaru considered that what Odobescu was proposing was not 'eugenics', but rather 'curative, preventative medicine, demography, individual and social hygienic education of the people'.[177] A conceptual clarification was needed, Făcăoaru remarked, the more so as this debate about sterilization had begun to attract experts in other fields, not only physicians.

The Legal Perspective

The introduction of eugenic sterilization in Romania continued to be a subject of fierce debate, and not only among psychiatrists. As Enăchescu himself remarked, it was 'a question, which at the present moment, is of equal interest to the biologist, the jurist, and the sociologist'. It belonged 'in the area of political and social concerns, it being hoped by this biological method to achieve the physical and moral perfection of mankind'.[178] Medicine was not the only discipline that proposed solutions for the biological improvement of society. Criminal law, said the prominent jurist Mircea Djuvara, 'seeks

176 Ciocâlteu, 'Eugenia – o idee forţă', 2.

177 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Reviste românești în schimb cu Buletinul', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 7, nos. 3–4 (1936): 131.

178 Enăchescu, 'Sterilizarea eugenică', 273.

preventative measures to eliminate evil by means of special measures of social hygiene'.[179] The mentally ill were not the only ones considered to be an obstacle in the way of the much hoped for eugenic perfection; criminals, especially those sexually motivated, were also labelled by eugenicists as dysgenic and antisocial. According to Mihai Kernbach, professor in the Department of Legal Medicine of the Faculty of Medicine in Cluj, eugenics was one of the scientific methods used to combat criminality, as it offered 'reliable methods for making a prophylaxis of the defective and degenerate'. He continued: 'The prenuptial consultation or certificate, abortion, and eugenic sterilization are today used on a large scale'.[180]

Already at the meeting of the Legal Section of the Association for Social Study and Reform held on 8 May 1920, Eugen C. Decusară had proposed the introduction of legal provisions to combat 'morbid heredity and organic or inherited vices' and to permit 'the castration of inveterate criminals' together with 'forbidding the marriage of individuals affected by hereditary illnesses and defects'.[181] In the mid–1930s, Gheorghe Banu reiterated the same idea, suggesting as immediate eugenic measures 'the isolation of deficient elements, that is to say *segregation*; the preventative *sterilization* of profoundly defective elements to prevent the procreation of non-values; and finally – as a radical measure – *castration*, especially of recidivist criminals'.[182] On the other hand, the lawyer Maria Profira Dimitrescu was more reserved. In a lecture delivered in the palace of justice in Bucharest in December 1934, she argued for the introduction of the prenuptial certificate, although 'she did not hesitate also to suggest "sterilization",' a measure considered 'daring', but which was 'well received by the audience', including by Iorgu Petrovici, the dean of the Ilfov County bar.[183] According to the newspaper *Dimineața* (*Morning*), it was in the 'national interest' to legislate for 'eugenic abortion and sterilization', both considered efficient 'measures to prevent the degeneration of the race'.[184]

179 Mircea Djuvara, *Teoria generală a dreptului*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Socec, 1930), 198.

180 Mihai Kernbach, 'Criminalitatea și combaterea ei prin medode științifice', *Patria* 18, no. 77 (1936): 10.

181 'Darea de seamă despre activitatea secției judiciare', *Arhiva pentru Știința și Reforma Socială* 2, nos. 1–3 (1920): 462.

182 Gheorghe Banu, 'Certificatul medical prenupțial', *Revista de Igienă Socială* 6, no. 5 (1936): 289 (emphasis in original).

183 'Certificatul pre–nupțial. Conferința d–nei avocat Maria Profira Dimitrescu', *Curentul* 7, no. 2470 (1934): 7.

184 'Problema avortului', *Dimineața* 31, no. 10129 (1935): 6.

Ion Vasilescu-Bucium, judge of instruction and president of the Court of Cassation in Craiova, was among the jurists with a particular interest in eugenic issues. In May 1935, Vasilescu-Bucium was appointed chair of the Legal Section of the Society of Eugenics and the Study of Heredity. A month earlier, he had published two articles, in *Justiția Olteniei* and *Mișcarea Medicală Română*, in which he discussed the relation between eugenics and the modern legal system. According to Vasilescu-Bucium, the modern legislation introduced in Europe starting with the French Revolution was 'inspired by an exaggerated liberalism and a false humanitarianism'. It was necessary, he considered, for the penal codes to be adapted to the new eugenic realities 'in the higher interest of the social collectivity'. To fight against criminality, there was a need for 'more effective means of prophylaxis and social selection',[185] such as the introduction of the medical certificate, eugenic abortion, sterilization, and castration.

In Romania, Vasilescu-Bucium continued, there was also a need for the penal code to be modified in order to reflect the application of the principles of heredity and eugenics. Abortion was criminalized in the newly adopted Carol II Penal Code, but 'eugenic abortion' was allowed in the case of 'one or both parents suffering from mental illnesses'. Article 482 of the law (which after the adoption of the penal code became article 484) recognized 'pathological heredity' as the main cause of many hereditary illnesses, including insanity and deafness, but also stipulated certain protective measures designed to prevent abuse. Thus, a physician could only perform an 'abortion for medical or eugenic reasons' after it was sanctioned by a court order.[186] Vasilescu-Bucium welcomed this legal development, but he believed it was 'too timid a eugenic achievement',[187] in comparison with the sterilization laws introduced in other countries, especially in Nazi Germany.

The foundation of the Society of Eugenics and the Study of Heredity in Bucharest marked an important moment in the process of institutionalizing eugenics in Romania, a process begun a decade earlier with the founding in Cluj of the Medical and Biopolitical Section of ASTRA. However, Vasilescu-Bucium noted further on, there were still decisive steps to be taken in this direction. 'The ideal of our generation must be the eugenic ideal', he considered, 'determining in our country too that powerful current

185 Ion Vasilescu-Bucium, 'Conceptul eugenic în legislația modernă', in *Justiția Olteniei*, vol. 16, nos. 6–7 (1935), 41.

186 *Codul penal Carol al II–lea*, vol. III, 154 and 156.

187 Ion Vasilescu-Bucium, 'Eugenia și studiul eredității', *Mișcarea Medicală Română* 8, nos. 3–4 (1935): 173.

of eugenic legislation – with the same energy and courage – just as in the past we gave the unconditional tribute of our blood for the defence of the country'. This was 'the moment for all worthy Romanians – physicians, sociologists, jurists – each, in their special field of social activity, to give their unhesitating contribution, in the difficult struggle against the anti-social elements that impede the advance of a people that has not yet spoken its decisive word in the history of civilization'.[188]

In Vasilescu-Bucium's opinion, the existing legislation acted to the detriment of the biological improvement of the nation, because it had been conceived without taking into account the deterioration of social and hygienic conditions. He hoped that the new penal code that was to be introduced in Romania would become the necessary legal instrument for the eugenic reconstruction of the country. In the following issue of *Mișcarea Medicală Română*, published in June 1935, he dealt with this aspect directly. Eugenics, Vasilescu-Bucium wrote, was 'a new doctrine of salvation', created 'in the higher interest of the selection of the race'. Criminology, in its turn, was the science that studied not only the causes of criminality, but also how to prevent and to combat it, and thus was integrated 'in the rhythm of eugenics'.[189] Both eugenics and criminology aimed to combat a social phenomenon, but one that had hereditary roots and a specific pathology. Thus, a law of eugenic prevention was not only aimed at introducing 'measures restrictive of the perpetuation of defectives and anti-social elements', but could, Vasilescu-Bucium considered, 'infuse the whole organism of the nation [with] a new sap of vitality and social regeneration'.[190]

The relation between criminology and eugenics also preoccupied the legal experts assembled at the International Congress of the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission, organized in Berlin from 17 to 25 August 1935.[191] As indeed Franz Gürtner, the Reich's minister of justice, stated in his opening speech, this event was used by the Nazi regime to justify the

188 Vasilescu-Bucium, 'Eugenia și studiul eredității', 174.

189 Ion Vasilescu-Bucium, 'Eugenia și înoirile codului penal', *Mișcarea Medicală Română* 8, nos. 5–6 (1935): 364. The article was republished in two issues of *Justiția Olteniei* 16, nos. 10–11 (1935): 83–84 and nos. 13–14, 111–112, as well as in *Pandectele Săptămânale* 11, no. 26 (1935): 563–565.

190 Vasilescu-Bucium, 'Eugenia și înoirile codului penal', 365.

191 See Eberhard Schmidt, 'Zum internationalen Kongreß für Strafrecht und Gefängniswesen', in *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Strafrechtswissenschaft*, vol. 55, no. 1 (1936), 177–363. See also Johannes Lange, 'In welchem Falle und nach welchen Grundsätzen empfiehlt sich im modernen Strafsystem die Anwendung der Sterilisation durch Kastration oder durch Vasectomie oder Salpingectomie?', in *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Strafrechtswissenschaft*, vol. 55, no. 1 (1936), 291–306 and 'Résolutions du Congrès Pénal et Pénitentiaire International de Berlin', in *Revista de Drept Penal și Știință Penitenciară*, vol. 19, nos. 7–8 (1935), 257–266.

racial policies that it applied in the field of criminal law and to dispel current 'prejudices' regarding the doctrine of National Socialism.[192]

The Romanian delegation at the Congress included the lawyer Hurmuz Aznavorian, president of the Public Law Section of the Legislative Council, Constantin Rătescu, president of the second section of the High Court of Cassation and Justice, Vespasian V. Pella, diplomat and expert on international law, and Nicolae Iorgulescu.

Section III of the congress, chaired by Ernst Delaquis, professor of criminal law at the University of Berne, took place on 20 August 1935, and was dedicated to the sterilization and castration of criminals. It was another Swiss participant, François Naville, director of the Medico-Legal Institute in Geneva, who made a general presentation of the theme, together with a synthesis of the eleven reports received from the national rapporteurs. Some of these were internationally recognized eugenicists, such as Harry Federley from Finland, Paul Popenoe from the USA, Arthur Gütt, one of the authors of the Nazi sterilization law, from Germany, and Georges Paul-Boncour from France. However, support for the legalization of eugenic sterilization also came from Silvio Longhi, the Italian rapporteur, a distinguished specialist in criminal law, and the Czech eugenicist Jarmila Veselá.

Naville's recommendations made a distinction between sterilization and castration, but both were recommended for repeating sexual offenders. The following day, however, at Gütt's insistence, a proposal was introduced that the sterilization of criminals, on health and eugenic grounds, should be legalized in all the countries present at the congress.[193] Nicolae Iorgulescu did not agree with this proposal, however, although he acknowledged that in Romania, castration was already carried out on medical grounds. In his view, sterilization could have undesired effects in the long term, becoming 'a dangerous anti-conceptional weapon [and] having as a consequence the diminution of the natural power of procreation and therefore the diminution of the population of the country'. Equally important was Iorgulescu's argument that sterilization and castration 'can produce only a slight result in the combatting of crime'. He insisted that they should not be applied as punitive methods, but used only cautiously and in those cases where there were serious medical motives to justify them. He also disagreed with the view that there was no long-lasting impact on the health of the individual

192 Jan Simon van der Aa, ed., *Proceedings of the XIth International Penal and Penitentiary Congress held in Berlin, August 1935* (Berne: Bureau of the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission, 1937), 10–11.

193 Simon van der Aa, *Proceedings*, 307–308 and 313.

proposed for sterilization or castration. 'From the scientific point of view', he said, 'sterilization, no matter in which way it is carried out, constitutes a mutilation; castration in particular produces a definite and profound degradation in all the biological, psychological and social functions and manifestation of the human being. From the medical and social standpoint, such methods should be rejected.'[194]

Consequently, Iorgulescu proposed a modified resolution, as follows:

> The Section declares that in consideration of the present knowledge of the hereditary character of diseases, the suppression of the power of procreation must not be applied in a general manner as a prophylactic weapon against criminality. It recommends that the penal laws should consider the suppression of the power of procreation in all such cases where therapeutical medical interests are in perfect concordance with the interests of the protection of society. […]
> The medical officers of asylums and hospitals may apply to their inmates who have been under observation for not less than two years, the measures of sterilization or of asexualizing therapeutics, especially to feeble-minded persons or idiots, or also in other cases for therapeutic purposes, provided that they observe the necessary legal guarantees, without incurring the risk of becoming accused of mutilation, in the sense of corporal injury.[195]

A third version of the resolution was proposed by the Slovene jurist Metod Dolenc and the Spanish criminologist Quintiliano Saldaña, the author of the first course in international criminal justice, delivered at the Hague Academy of International Law in 1925. They, too, wanted to limit considerably the use of sterilization and castration against criminals. In the end, it was the version of the resolution formulated by Naville and Gütt that received the most votes from the participants.[196]

As the congress came to an end, Iorgulescu tried again, this time together with the representative of Brazil, Cândido Mendes de Almeida, to convince the general assembly to accept an amendment, namely:

> The assembly recommends that the different laws introduce provisions permitting the application of the methods of sterilization only on the persons against whom disorders of the behaviour or with antisocial

194 Simon van der Aa, *Proceedings*, 314–315.
195 Simon van der Aa, *Proceedings*, 315–316.
196 Simon van der Aa, *Proceedings*, 328–329.

> reactions of sexual origin have made necessary an imprisonment or a confinement in an establishment of security or in a hospital. The said methods should only be applied during the execution of the punishment of the penalty or during the confinement, after a long medical observation and after all other therapeutical means have failed. For performing the operations of sterilization operations, the medical men will take the precaution of guarantee provided by the respective laws.[197]

Only twenty-nine participants voted in favour of the amendment proposed by Iorgulescu and Mendes de Almeida. It was therefore rejected. This failure did not, however, in any way diminish the firmness with which the Romanian delegation, and especially Nicolae Iorgulescu, promoted a moderate attitude regarding the sterilization and castration of criminals, even at a congress organized in Berlin and dominated by Nazi officials and eugenicists.

The final resolution adopted by the congress included the following recommendations. The first was to 'make a clear distinction between the two terms, "sterilization" and "castration", which refer to operations of a different character, different kind and different consequences'; the second suggested that all participating states 'amend or supplement their respective laws, so as to facilitate the performance of such operations at the request or with the consent of the person concerned'. It was likewise emphasized that 'the same applies to sterilization for reasons of health or of a eugenic nature, provided the person to be operated upon consents to the operation'. It was also agreed that 'compulsory sterilization for eugenic reasons' was 'a recommendable measure of prevention, as it will reduce in the future the number of abnormal persons from among whom criminals are recruited to a great extent'. Another proposal was that the same principles that guided eugenic and medical sterilizations be applied also in the case of the sterilization of criminals. Finally, it was recommended that national legislatures 'guarantee, from all points of view, that compulsory castration and sterilization will only be carried out with extreme prudence, and according to a regulated procedure, providing for a thorough investigation of the case by a committee of physicians and jurists'.[198]

In view of the serious reservations with which the Romanian delegation received this resolution, it comes as no surprise that it was not proposed to parliament for debate and approval. However, this did not prevent

197 Simon van der Aa, *Proceedings*, 481–482.

198 Ion Vasilescu-Bucium, 'Criminologia şi eugenia', 88 and Simon van der Aa, *Proceedings*, 485–486.

Vasilescu-Bucium from continuing to request a revision of the penal code to permit eugenic sterilization, even if this was not necessarily approved by the president of the Society of Eugenics and the Study of Heredity, Gheorghe Marinescu.

Marinescu's reticence about supporting the introduction of compulsory sterilization was also observed at the first Latin Congress of Eugenics (Premier Congrès Latin d'Eugénique), hosted in Paris by the Faculty of Medicine from 1 to 3 August 1937, and at the International Congress of Anthropology which followed in Bucharest. In Paris, Gheorghe Banu presented 'the principles of a practical eugenics programme', including, among other measures, the introduction of the prenuptial medical certificate, segregation, and preventative sterilization. His mention, in closing, of the motion sent in 1931 to the Ministry of Health by the Society of Neurology, Psychiatry, Psychology, and Endocrinology was intended by Banu as an example of support for preventative sterilization by prominent Romanian psychiatrists. Marinescu commented in positive terms on his younger colleague's presentation, but the support he offered to the eugenic programme outlined by Banu was limited to the introduction of the prenuptial certificate.[199]

At the Bucharest congress, however, Marinescu was more explicit. The third section of the congress, dedicated to heredity and eugenics, was chaired by the Dutch psychiatrist Gerrit Pieter Frets, the president of the Dutch Eugenics Federation and of the Human Heredity Committee of the International Federation of Eugenics Organizations.[200] Vasilescu-Bucium again pleaded for the inclusion of negative eugenic measures in the Romanian penal code in order to be able to counter biological degeneration and antisocial behaviour.[201] His presentation was followed by an intense debate between those in favour of voluntary sterilization and those who

199 Gheorghe Banu, 'Les facteurs dysgéniques en Roumanie. Principes d'un programme pratique d'eugénique', in *Premier Congrès Latin d'Eugénique* (Paris: Masson, 1937), 296–319. See also Gheorghe Banu, 'Principes d'un programme d'hygiène raciale', *Bulletin de l'Académie de Médecine de Roumanie* 1, no. 5 (1936): 835–869; Gheorghe Banu, 'Principes d'un programme d'hygiène de la race', *Revista de Igienă Socială* 6, no. 10 (1936): 565–598; and, especially, his most important eugenic work: *L'hygiène de la race. Etude de biologie héréditaire et de normalisation de la race* (Paris and Bucharest: Masson, 1939).

200 See George Schreiber, 'Compte rendu de la XIe Assemblée de la Fédération Internationale des Organisations Eugéniques', *Revue Anthropologique* 45, nos. 1–3 (1935): 78–92.

201 Ion Vasilesco-Bucium, 'Tendances eugéniques dans le nouveau code penal roumain Carol II', in *XVIIe Congrès International d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie Préhistoriques* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Socec, 1939), 678–681. See also Bruno Steinwaller, 'Rumänische Strafrechts- und Strafprozeßrechtsreform', *Monatsschrift für Kriminalbiologie und Strafrechtsreform* 29, no. 5 (1938): 249–252.

insisted that sterilization should be compulsory. Marinescu's opinion was that the application of voluntary sterilization could be permitted in the case of hereditary mental illnesses, but he rejected the compulsory sterilization of the mentally ill on social and religious grounds. Frets agreed with Marinescu, underlining that in the Netherlands, the majority of eugenicists and geneticists were against compulsory sterilization.[202]

On the opposite side of the debate was the psychiatrist and geneticist Gheorghe Stroescu, according to whom voluntary sterilization was inefficient. 'The only means of avoiding the multiplication of hereditary illnesses and of improving the race' was, in his view, 'compulsory sterilization'. Basing his argumentation on his medical experience in France and Germany, and comparing eugenic practices in the two countries, Stroescu expressed his preference for the latter. In Romania, he observed, 'compulsory sterilization is the only means of averting the continuing growth [in the number] of the mentally ill, who have multiplied especially in mountain villages'.[203]

Endorsing Stroescu's point of view, Iordache Făcăoaru also described 'voluntary sterilization' as being 'inefficient'. And to reconcile the two perspectives, he put the following motion before the participants: 'Given that it has been established that voluntary sterilization does not produce effects in the countries where it has been applied, the third section chaired by Mr Frets proposes that sterilization for eugenic ends should become obligatory and coercive'. To Marinescu, this formulation seemed too drastic, and he suggested another: 'The third section chaired by Mr Frets proposes that eugenic sterilization should be applied with prudence and only with the consent of the patient or of their family'.[204]

As at the Berlin congress, there followed a vote of the participants, but this time, it was the moderate perspective, expressed by Marinescu, that prevailed. Although all the participants agreed that eugenics was essential for any national programme of biological improvement, this could, in Marinescu's view, also be achieved without the forced sterilization of the mentally ill and the castration of recidivist criminals.

At the end of the day, all this was merely academic discussion. The involvement of the state was needed for these eugenic ideas to be put into practice. The Carol II Penal Code had legalized eugenic abortion, but no legislative measure had yet been taken regarding sterilization. Daniel Danielopolu,

202 'Discussions', in *XVIIe Congrès International*, 681.

203 'Discussions', 682.

204 'Discussions', 682. See also M. Gr., 'Congresul internațional de antropologie', *Adevărul* 51, no. 16441 (1935): 3.

professor in the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest, whose contribution had been influential in favour of eugenic abortion, would have liked to see the introduction of a clause regarding sterilization, 'obviously well circumscribed and only with prior authorization from the prosecutor's office'. Sterilization, he believed, would provide a much better solution to the country's eugenic problems, but it would have to be introduced by means of a 'special law'.[205]

The new civil code, introduced on 7 November 1939 and its revised version of 1940, confirmed the right of the state to oversee 'the purity, the health, and the improvement of society', including the prevention of marriages 'which may produce degenerate and mentally ill children'.[206] These legal provisions were important, but not sufficient, noted Alexandru C. Angelescu, professor in the Law Faculty in Cluj and specialist in matrimonial law, especially if they were compared with the laws of eugenics and protection of the race in Nazi Germany. However, in Romania, too, the state was at last putting 'the hereditary health of the race' at the centre of national politics and was preoccupied with 'the race's possibilities of affirmation in the future'.[207] It was a promising start, a sign that cooperation between eugenicists and political power was not only possible, but might even be fruitful. 'Whatever the future may be', Angelescu concluded, 'the eugenic issues of tomorrow will remain, for they are the only ones capable of ensuring the consolidation of the State in its daily struggle, in the defence of the needs and of the ideals of the [Romanian] people'.[208] Angelescu was expressing the opinion of many legal experts and physicians when he declared that 'eugenic issues are today of capital importance for the State' and that the protection of the health of the nation 'must be moved to the forefront of the concerns of civil law'.[209]

The opinions of jurists about sterilization reflect the level that the interwar debate about eugenics had reached by the early 1940s. At the same time, as we have seen, the legal perspective complemented the medical one, with lawyers and physicians frequently collaborating, especially within the Society for Eugenics and the Study of Heredity and the joint parliamentary committee on abortion. Nevertheless, while compulsory sterilization became one of the defining principles of so-called 'Anglo-Saxon' (especially American) and Nordic eugenics, in Romania it was almost unanimously rejected. However,

205 Daniel Danielopolu, 'Modificările aduse Codului penal în Senat. Legiferarea avortului', *Universul* 52, no. 116 (1935): 3.

206 Quoted in Alexandru C. Angelescu, *Factorul eugenic în căsătorie* (Cluj: Tipografia 'Cartea Românească din Cluj', 1942), 42.

207 Angelescu, *Factorul eugenic în căsătorie*, 65.

208 Angelescu, *Factorul eugenic în căsătorie*, 116.

209 Angelescu, *Factorul eugenic în căsătorie*, 7–8.

for this discussion of eugenic sterilization to be as complete as possible, it is necessary also to take into consideration the opinions expressed by another influential group, namely the clergy.

The Orthodox Christian Perspective

In comparison with the public messages transmitted by the Roman Catholic Church, among them the 1930 encyclical *Casti connubii* (*On Christian marriage*), which condemned negative eugenic methods such as abortion and sterilization, the Orthodox Church took an ambivalent attitude with regard to eugenics. In the opinion of Șerban Ionescu, professor of moral law in the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, Orthodoxy, unlike Protestantism and Catholicism, had no common ground with Malthusian theories or with racial eugenics. The Orthodox did not promote the prevention of births by 'unnatural means' and nor did they see 'in the institution of marriage a concession on the part of God in the world of sin, to which the Almighty turns a blind eye as in Protestantism'.[210]

It was from this perspective that a lecture on eugenics by Gheorghe K. Constantinescu was presented in the Bucharest church gazette *Glasul Monahilor* (*The Monastic Voice*). The attention of faithful readers was drawn to the 'barbarous' methods of improving the race that were proposed by the eugenicists. 'Not through eugenics', the author notes, 'are good qualities multiplied […], but through the evangelical teachings of the Church. The human race is not lost through failing to apply scientific methods, but through turning away from God'.[211]

A more permissive and more tolerant opinion on eugenics was offered by the archpriest Florea Codreanu. In a text published in *Biserica și Școala* (*Church and School*), the official magazine of the diocese of Arad, in November 1941, Codreanu explained that the meaning of *eugenics* was 'good stock, nobility, while the sense that it is given by physicians is ennoblement, beautification, strengthening in body and soul of a people or of the entire human race'. Many might be surprised, he admitted, at the presence of such a theme in a church magazine, but it was also important – being 'a matter of the ennobling of mankind both in body and in soul',[212] – to make it known to the faithful.

210 Șerban Ionescu, *Morala ortodoxă față cu celelalte morale confesionale* (Bucharest: Editura Cercului de Studii Social–Creștine, 1941), 215.

211 I. D., 'Despre eugenie', *Glasul Monahilor* 14, no. 482 (1936): 4.

212 Florea Codreanu, 'Eugenia creștină', *Biserica și Școala* 45, no. 46 (1941): 373.

Codreanu identified three types of eugenics: pagan, practised by the ancient Greeks and Romans, expressed especially in sporting competitions and in the glorification of the human body; modern, created by medical science; and, finally, Christian. How was this last type characterized? For Codreanu, Christian eugenics consisted in love for the other and help for the sick and needy. 'And there is no feebleness or incapacity', he believed, 'that cannot be at least to some extent corrected. Whether in school or in the family, in the workshop, in the army, the weak need the invigorating thrill of emotion. Here begins Christian eugenics. And for the thrill of emotion to be able to materialize, the weak need encouragement [and] strengthening of the soul'.[213] Christian eugenics, as conceived by Codreanu, was possible because it was an integral part of Romanian national character.

Two years later, Codreanu offered more explanations, some of them connected to his obsession with physical education and the perfect body,[214] others to the relation between medicine and religion. Many physicians in Romania were practising Orthodox believers, who found no incompatibility between science and prayer, but, on the contrary, were convinced that only in this way could they be good physicians and good Christians at the same time. 'In other words, modern medicine applies Christian therapeutics and, consequently, Christian eugenics may very well be the eugenics that we need'. Two authors were particularly appreciated by Codreanu: the French biologist and eugenicist Alexis Carrel and the Romanian geographer Simion Mehedinți. The latter's books 'aim to formulate a [version of] eugenics for the Romanian people'. Without 'observing the truths contained' in these books, Codreanu considered, 'it will not be possible to achieve eugenics in our country'.[215]

In his final article dedicated to the subject, published in February 1943, Codreanu gave a succinct resumé of the principal coordinates on which Romanian Christian eugenics was founded. It began with the Geto-Dacians, who provided 'the example of a large-scale eugenics', more precisely, 'the remaking of the people through belief in somatopsychic unity and then through measures of uprooting the passions', and concluded with Orthodoxy, which offered 'the dogma of the unity of soul and body'. Both were important and had to be cared for, 'as both will be judged together'. Physical education, Codreanu believed, despite what older and newer advocates of sports maintained, did not contribute to eugenics. 'On the contrary: by

213 Codreanu, 'Eugenia creștină', 374.

214 Florea Codreanu, 'Eugenia', *Biserica și Școala* 47, no. 4 (1943): 26–27.

215 Florea Codreanu, 'Eugenie prin educația fizică', *Biserica și Școala* 47, no. 7 (1943): 50.

placing hope in muscular force, sport annihilates physical resistance and makes wild the soul'. Sport was not eugenic, but 'physical work, constructive work' was. Codreanu recommended working the land as physical exercise to maintain a healthy body.

Fasting, 'which in medicine is interpreted as dieting', was another means by which it was possible to practise Christian eugenics. Social assistance was also important. The poor and weak had to be helped with clothing and food, 'and only when they have no one should they be taken into state care'. On the other hand, 'the lazy, the wrong-doers are to be re-educated, set to work, and, in the extreme case, let him who does not work, not eat either'. Finally, at the foundation of Codreanu's Orthodox Christian eugenics was the family, 'the foundation both in moral education and in physical recovery'.[216] He thus insisted that for the eugenic preservation of humanity, biological consciousness was necessary, as long as it did not enter into contradiction with Christian morals and Christian judgment.

Codreanu urged the application of a coherent eugenic programme. Some of his ideas, such as recognizing the importance of the family and protecting it, were similar to those of Moldovan and Marinescu; others, such as those about Geto-Dacian eugenics and the negative effects of physical education and sport, were quite different. The common ground between Orthodox Christian and secular eugenics was important, but Codreanu's plan was theological, not ideological. His conclusion deserves to be quoted in full:

> The true eugenics of our times has as its aim the employment of all means for the somatopsychic remaking of [the individual] and of peoples. Christian eugenics takes the thought of this remaking all the way. Modern eugenics wants to give the country healthy people. Christian eugenics wants whole Christians. Modern eugenics wants a strong, hardy people, to master the land of the country in which they live; to defend it in case of need. Christian eugenics has in view the divine commandment in which it is said: Be fruitful, and multiply, and subdue the earth, but also the great Christian ideal of conquering the Kingdom of Heaven too.[217]

The objectives of Christian eugenics – reformation and improvement of nation and society – were, in fact, in consonance with the visions of the Orthodox Church regarding modern medicine, sexual education, and nationalist morality.

216 Florea Codreanu, 'Eugenia creştină în familie', *Biserica și Școala* 47, no. 8 (1943): 59.
217 Codreanu, 'Eugenia creştină în familie', 59.

A totally different perspective was offered by the Orthodox theologian Liviu Stan. In 1942, he published *Rasă și religiune* (*Race and Religion*), a text replete with racist, antisemitic, and eugenic connotations, expressing, according to the author himself, 'the convictions of an entire generation, as Christian as it is nationalist and racist'.[218] For Stan, racism was not only a necessary ideology, but also useful to Romania, a country that at the time was undergoing a profound political transformation. 'The racist ideology', he noted, 'stimulates the peoples that [adopt] it; it makes them conquer the most favourable positions for their development; it creates for them the best conditions for life, so that they can be at their maximum efficiency possible and permitted by the laws of nature; it makes them realize their full potential, to attain what is called vital abundance'.[219] Importantly, in Stan's view, racism was compatible with religion. Not only does race, he argued, 'influence religious life in various forms, but the very *idea of race*, the consciousness of belonging to a race [...] constitutes a determining factor of religious life'.[220] Even more important for this discussion is the fact that for Stan, 'the racist truth' was compatible with Orthodoxy. Racism, he believed, 'will impose revisions and reforms in the life of Western Christianity that for our Orthodox East do not constitute any threat, because both racism and nationalism, as a form subordinate to racism, with their whole constellation of values, are found in the treasury of the doctrine and of the life of the Orthodox Church; both are realities that Orthodoxy acknowledges in doctrine and in practice'.[221]

Like Codreanu, Stan was familiar with the efforts of Iuliu Moldovan and Gheorghe Marinescu to popularize biopolitics and eugenics in Romania, and hoped that their ideas would prevail, 'because otherwise we are not worthy to go on living, to go on enjoying the life that God has given us'. However, unlike Codreanu, Stan did not have kind words for 'the monsters that are born of dysgenics', and did not hesitate to declare:

> Charitable action and social assistance are of no use, resolve nothing, and there will be no end to it, if the root of the evil that calls for them is not dried up. Otherwise, it is all a consumption of energy in vain without the lessening of people's tragedy, but rather with the increasing of unhappiness

218 Liviu Stan, 'Precuvântare' to Liviu Stan, *Rasă și religiune* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1942), i.
219 Stan, *Rasă și religiune*, 36.
220 Stan, *Rasă și religiune*, 79.
221 Stan, *Rasă și religiune*, 122.

> by extending it over those who could live a free and creative life, instead of one of servitude to dysgenics and unfortunate degenerates.[222]

Inspired by the debates about race and racism, but also by Orthodoxy, Stan elaborated a national theology in which the protection of the nation was dictated by the divine will revealed in eugenic principles. This idea resonated perfectly with Manliu's request to the Orthodox Church to involve itself in biological projects of national protectionism.

For a Romanian version of eugenics to succeed, it would have to be, at the same time, both Christian and secular. Was such a eugenic theory possible? It is difficult to say. In any case, what we may observe is an increasing institutionalization of scientific research on heredity and eugenics. On 21 January 1938, at the invitation of the minister of Health, Gheorghe Banu, the Mental Hygiene Committee met in Bucharest. Among its members were the psychiatrists Leon Ballif, Demetru E. Paulian, Grigore Odobescu, Constantin Urechia, Gheorghe Preda, Petre Tomescu, Nicolae Ionescu-Sisești, and Gheorghe Zapan. 'It is time', Banu told his colleagues, 'to think of a beginning of purification of our race, mental hygiene [being] one of the objectives of this vast field of research'. What counted was 'the protection of the normal type of our race'. This could be achieved by 'various methods and at various ages', and Banu expected the members of the committee 'to decide on the gradual introduction of measures, starting with those less radical, and thus realizable'. Nor should it be forgotten that mental hygiene 'draws its roots [from] heredity and eugenics'.[223]

Taking Belgium as an example, Banu proposed the creation of mental hygiene and heredity dispensaries, with the aim of observing the social and intellectual abilities of children of different ages. However, it was Petre Tomescu's formulation that was accepted by the members of the committee. His proposal was to establish mental hygiene offices in Bucharest, Iași, and Sibiu, each made up of a psychiatrist, a psychologist, and social care workers. These offices were to have 'activity in primary and secondary schools, dealing with the tracing of morbid cases, the tracing of mental debilities, and the professional orientation [of pupils]'.[224] The principal idea was to detect deviations of mental behaviour as early as possible. School was not only the ideal place for the education and socialization of the child, but also the place where 'the spiritual needs of the child' could be 'met by

222 Stan, *Rasă și religiune*, 144.
223 'Igiena mintală', *Viitorul* 30, no. 9010 (1938): 3.
224 'Igiena mintală', 3.

the psychologist's methods of educative psychotherapy [and] through the principles and measures of eugenics and of mental hygiene'.[225]

The Mental Hygiene Committee continued its work through the year 1938. It is not clear whether the mental hygiene offices were set up in the end, but on 24 October 1940, Romania's first Institute of Hereditary Illnesses and Tumoral Illnesses was established.[226] If he had lived two years longer, Gheorghe Marinescu would certainly have rejoiced at these initiatives, which were rightly seen as signs of public recognition for his activity as president of the Society of Eugenics and the Study of Heredity. In the sombre atmosphere of the war years, however, these eugenic concerns sometimes took a racist turn: as we shall see in the following chapter, the debate about eugenic sterilization was not only focused on the mentally ill and criminals, but also on ethnic minorities, often seen as a source of national degeneration.

Conclusions

In the early 1940s, there were clear signs that the initial scepticism surrounding eugenics, in general, and eugenic sterilization, in particular, had been dispelled. Eugenics had become a theme of interest for a variety of authors, ranging in their professions from physicians and lawyers to theologians and journalists. We find, for example, the publisher and writer Petre Georgescu-Delafras stating that the sterilization of the 'unfit, of the infirm, the deformed, of those affected by serious and incurable diseases' and 'unfit to leave successors' was one of the measures necessary for 'the strengthening and advancement of the [Romanian] people'.[227]

Such opinions also reflected the efforts taken at the political level to find a suitable way to introduce a sterilization law. In 1941, the psychiatrist Petre Tomescu, at the time dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest, became minister of Health. He, in turn, set up a committee 'for the eugenic study of the issue of the sterilization of categories of chronic patients with hereditary illnesses'.[228] A bill was expected on the part of the new ministerial committee, but this did not materialize until October 1943. A new Anti-Venereal Disease Law was then introduced in Romania, specifying the obligatory

225 Nestor, *Probleme de psihologie şcolară*, vol. 1, 12.

226 'Decret–Lege pentru înființarea Institutului de Boli Ereditare și Boli Tumorale', *Monitorul Oficial* 108, no. 250 (1940): 6091.

227 Petre Georgescu-Delafras, *Întărirea și ridicarea neamului* (Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1939), 30.

228 Petru Tomescu, *Doi ani de activitate la Ministerul Sănătăţii, 1941 și 1942* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice 'Tiparul Românesc', 1942), 119.

presentation of a health certificate for civil marriage. According to article 3 of the law, the registrar was obliged 'to request, before the celebration of marriages, proof issued by an official doctor or an official sanitary service, showing that neither of the future spouses suffers from any venereal disease in a contagious state, together with the blood test certificate, issued likewise by an official laboratory or one headed by an official doctor, noting the absence of evolving syphilitic infection'.[229] According to Aurel Tiniș, a physician in the village of Lunca-Bradului in Mureș County, this 'eugenic and biopolitical measure',[230] was an efficient means of managing a number of social and medical problems associated with the protection of the family, especially the spread of venereal diseases. Almost a decade after the tragedy of Zina Pascal, her wish was finally granted. The Anti-Venereal Disease Law not only prevented 'the contamination of one of the spouses by the other', but also sought 'the prevention of the procreation of sick children'.[231]

At the same time, we can see how in Romania too there were versions of racial biopolitics in circulation that promoted the idea of a totalitarian state as the epitome of Romanian ethnic supremacy. For example, the neuropathologist Irimia Bistriceanu continued to believe that 'a racial biopolitics, to ensure the conservation as intact as possible of the biological capital of a nation'[232] could not be achieved without the application of negative eugenics. His proposal was thus to take into consideration 'the two Nazi legal provisions of sterilization and castration', followed by the suggestion 'that their adoption in our legislation too would constitute the beginning of a new age for Romanian racism'.[233] Traian Herseni underlined the same in January 1941:

> We need eugenic laws and eugenic practices. Reproduction cannot be left to chance. The science of heredity (genetics) shows us clearly that human societies have at their disposal a secure means of physical and psychological improvement of humanity –, but for this, not just anyone should be allowed to reproduce and to transmit hereditary defects, and

229 'Noua lege pentru combaterea boalelor venerice', *România Medicală* 21, no. 18 (1943): 243.
230 Aurel Tiniș, 'Examenul medical prenupţial obligator în mediul rural', *Ardealul Medical* 2, no. 10 (1942): 441–442.
231 Nicolae Vătămanu, 'Noua lege antivenerică. Certificatul de sănătate la căsătorie', *Universul* 60, no. 269 (1943): 5. See also Nicolae Vătămanu, 'Noua lege antivenerică. Tratamentul boalelor venerice este obligator', *Universul* 60, no. 259 (1943): 5.
232 Irimia Bistriceanu, 'Sterilizarea şi castraţia ca factori biologici de protecţie a rasei', *Mişcarea Medicală Română* 14, nos. 5–6 (1941): 424.
233 Bistriceanu, 'Sterilizarea şi castraţia', 429.

> nor should those with [positive] qualities be left without offspring. The dysgenic must be barred from reproduction, the inferior races must be completely separated from the [Romanian] ethnic group. The sterilization of certain categories of people should not be regarded foolishly as a breach of human dignity; it is a eulogy to beauty, morality, and perfection in general.[234]

I shall discuss in the following chapter how eugenicists regarded the separation of the 'inferior races' from the so-called 'Romanians by blood'. For now, suffice it to mention the antisemite Toma Petrescu, who in a book published in 1940 with the title *Ni se pierde neamul* (*Our Race is Disappearing*), suggested the 'forced sterilization' of 'the bastard children resulting from mixed marriages' as a solution to the much-discussed problem of the danger posed by the Jews to 'the health of the [Romanian] race'.[235]

A sterilization law was not introduced by Antonescu's regime, although it was included in the proposed Law Decree for the Protection of the Family prepared by the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Biological Capital of the Nation in January 1944. This included the obligatory sterilization of all 'individuals suffering from the following conditions: mental debility, idiocy, hereditary epilepsy, mental alienation, hereditary blindness and deaf-muteness', regardless of whether they were hospitalized or cared for at home by their families. The 'sentence of sterilization' was delivered by 'a committee made up of three doctors specialized in psycho-nervous illnesses and chaired by a magistrate from the Court of Appeal'. It was likewise proposed that regional eugenic committees should be created, which would function alongside the three institutes of hygiene in the country (Bucharest, Iași, and Sibiu-Cluj), together with a central eugenic committee affiliated to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. This committee was made up of the three directors of the institutes of hygiene, three psychiatrists, and a magistrate from the High Court of Cassation. The members of these committees were appointed for five years 'by decree at the proposal of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection'.

The surgical methods used for sterilization were vasectomy for men and salpingectomy for women. Castration was forbidden. Sterilization was to be carried out 'only in the services of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection' designated by a decision of the ministry and 'by the chief doctors

234 Herseni, 'Rasă și destin național', 2.

235 Toma Petrescu, *Ni se pierde neamul. Activitatea jidanilor împotriva nației românești* (Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1940), 36–37.

of these services'. Finally, the law required that these sterilization operations be kept secret and specified that 'the doctors who carry out sterilization operations' could not 'be held to account before the civil and penal courts'.[236]

The influence of the German sterilization law was clear, and it can be said with some certainty that the proposal of the Law for the Protection of the Family was drafted by Iordache Făcăoaru. His commitment to this eugenic method remained constant throughout the interwar period and continued in the early 1940s, when 'the ideas of biology and eugenics' were integrated in the Antonescu regime's policy of 'regeneration of the biological evolution of the Romanian family' and racial protectionism.[237] Eugenic sterilization – preventive or compulsory – like the prenuptial medical certificate, was considered to be one of the social and biological measures necessary to ensure the future of the Romanian people. On the other hand, eugenic sterilization, by its nature, had significant implications for the state, as it offered a means of reducing expenditure and reinvesting financial resources in other areas of public health and social protection, instead of the money being spent on the treatment and institutionalization of groups of individuals who were considered to be 'dysgenic'.

As we have seen, Romanian eugenicists had divergent opinions in this regard. Some, including Sterian, Constantinescu, Iosif, and Odobescu, regarded eugenic sterilization with scepticism and offered convincing arguments against it. Others, including Doctor Ygrec, Moldovan, Marinescu, Banu, and Mareș were in favour of voluntary sterilization but reticent with regard to such radical attitudes as those of Manliu, Nicolaescu, Făcăoaru, and Stroescu, who argued for compulsory sterilization. As for the Orthodox Church, it was opposed to any possible undermining of its traditional role as guardian of the nation, although some of its theologians, such as Liviu Stan, had developed a racist theory in accordance with both eugenic and Christian principles.

In the end, despite intense debates, conferences, and media propaganda, the supporters of eugenic sterilization did not manage to win the political support necessary for it to become law. It should also be emphasized that while in the 1920s and 1930s, eugenic sterilization had been defined predominantly as a medical and legal practice, targeting individuals suffering from a mental illness and recidivist criminals, in the 1940s, it gradually came to be identified with Romanian racism. Attention thus shifted from patients in asylums and hospitals towards ethnic minorities

236 Fond Nicolae Caranfil, no. 765, files 37–38, ANR, Bucharest.

237 M. Paraschiv, 'Higiena rasei la noi', *Mișcarea Medicală Română* 14, nos. 9–10 (1941): 696.

who were considered harmful to the organism of the Romanian nation and to its racial future. Mihai Antonescu confirmed this change of direction in Romania's state policy when he spoke, in 1941, about 'the purification of our race of all elements foreign to its soul'.[238] As in the rest of Europe, so in Romania, the debate about eugenic sterilization – which took the form of an obsession regarding the health of the nation – had more influence than is generally supposed in the historiography of the interwar period. The debate continued during the Second World War, when the Romanian state turned from words to action, from the biopolitical protection of the nation to its racial purification. The vocabulary of eugenic sterilization was thus superimposed on the political language of the survival of the nation,[239] and both were infused with the same logic of elimination of those considered 'degenerate', 'dysgenic', and 'inferior'. Ioan Manliu's stirring call – 'Let us stop the degeneration of the nation!' – found its final realization not in the eugenic sterilization of mental patients and criminals, but in the deportation of Jews and Roma to the concentration camps of Transnistria.

238 Mihai Antonescu, 'Directive și îndrumări date inspectorilor administrativi și pretorilor trimiși în Basarabia și Bucovina', in *Martiriul evreilor din România, 1940–1944. Documente și mărturii* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1991), 139.

239 See Ion Colfescu-Delaturda, 'Ideea de rasă', *România Eroică* 5, nos. 9–10 (1942): 181–187.

6. The Roma and Romanian Blood

Abstract: This chapter reveals how during the early 1940s, the eugenic vision of the biopolitical state widened to include the 'purification' of Romania not only of its Jewish population but also of its Roma people. Biopolitics and eugenics merged into Romanian racism. The more Romania became involved in World War II, the more racism and anti-Roma eugenics became fully accepted by the political regime of Ion Antonescu, leading to the deportation and extermination of these two ethnic groups to Transnistria.

Keywords: racism, anti-Roma eugenics, Holocaust, Transnistria, Ion Antonescu

On 17 May 1942, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie to conduct a census of all 'nomadic gypsies (*căldărari*, *lingurari*, etc.)' and of those sedentary Roma who were 'convicts, recidivists, or do not have means of existence or a specific occupation from which to live honestly by work, and thus constitute a burden and a danger to public order'.[1] The census was completed two weeks later, on 31 May. On this occasion, 40,909 Roma were entered on the gendarmerie's lists: 9,471 nomadic and 31,438 sedentary. The following day, 1 June, saw the start of the deportations of these Roma to Transnistria,[2] deportations that continued all through the summer of 1942.

1 Ministerul Afacerilor Interne către Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, 17 May 1942. Quoted in *Documente privind deportarea țiganilor în Transnistria*, vol. 1, ed. Viorel Achim (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004), doc. 3, 5.

2 Transnistria: the area between the Dniester and the Southern Bug, under Romanian occupation from 1941 to 1944 following the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union. The region broke away from the Republic of Moldova in 1990.

Turda, Marius. *In Search of the Perfect Romanian: National Specificity, Racial Degeneration, and Social Selection in Modern Romania*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press / Central European University Press, 2026.
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At the beginning of the deportations, the criterion used by Romanian officials was the label 'nomad' attached to an individual and their family. However, the distinction between nomadic and sedentary Roma was far from clear. According to the data centralized at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in July 1942, '130 nomadic Gypsies were evacuated [from Bucharest] to Transnistria and a detailed census was carried out of all the sedentary Gypsies who were convicts, recidivists, or without a profession'.[3] It was of no importance whether these nomadic Roma had or had not broken the law in any way: their deportation to Transnistria was carried out, as the physician Demetru E. Paulian remarked, without exception. According to him, 'when the government took the initiative of sending those wandering nomads to Transnistria, the order was misinterpreted [and] they were all sent, the good and the bad alike'.[4]

Paulian was one of those public figures who considered the mass deportation of the nomadic Roma to be excessive. Others, however, were of a different opinion. The Romanian population, especially in the cities, appeared to be in favour of these measures of 'evacuation' of the nomadic Roma, no doubt also helped by a press campaign against them. Often described as a 'calamity' and a 'terror',[5] the nomadic Roma, from the point of view of the Romanian authorities, posed a social, sanitary, and racial danger. Eugeniu Munteanu, first praetor[6] of the town of Agnita in Târnava-Mare County (today Sibiu County), wrote in 1924: 'In Romania, the nomadic Gypsies are a permanent danger for the population of the villages. Slipping with ease from place to place, they escape the control of the police authorities and not even the harshest sanction of our laws can control them'.[7]

This negative attitude towards the nomadic Roma on the part of such forces of law and order as the police and the gendarmerie did not change in the course of the interwar years, and it became accentuated in the early 1940s. Here is the opinion expressed in the Sibiu newspaper *Țara* (*The Country*) in September 1941: 'Gypsy camps, in whatever part of the country they

3 'Activitatea Prefecturii Poliției Capitalei', *Universul* 59, no. 181 (1942): 5.

4 Demetru Paulian, *Țiganii în Europa* (Bucharest: Imprimeriile 'Curentul'), 1944, 30–31.

5 'Copiii de țigani', *Curentul* 15, no. 5253 (1942): 3 and 'Copiii cerşetori', *Curentul* 15, no. 5296 (1942): 3.

6 In the administrative organization of interwar Romania, the first praetor (*prim–pretor*) was a representative of the central authorities in a district (*plasă*), ranking above the praetor (*pretor*), with responsibilities regarding administration and policing.

7 Eugeniu Muntean, 'Pericolul ţiganilor nomazi', *Poliţia* 5, no. 8 (1924): 130. See also Ştefan Popescu, 'Supravegherea şi controlul ţiganilor nomazi', *Revista Jandarmeriei* 20, no. 5 (1942): 21–28.

may be, are merely nurseries of criminals and are nothing but nests with no certain identity'.[8] It was not an uncommon opinion. The 'contamination' of Romanian with 'Gypsy' blood was highlighted not only by eugenicists, but also by state officials.

A revealing example is that of Major Ioan Peșchir, commandant of the gendarmerie of Timiș-Torontal. On 21 April 1942, just a month before Ion Antonescu asked the minister of Internal Affairs to make a census of all the nomadic and sedentary Roma, Peșchir sent an informative note about 'The Gypsy problem'. In it, he described the concerns caused by the presence of Roma families in Timiș-Torontal County. According to Peșchir, 2,057 Roma lived in the county. They constituted 'a bad example of morality, laziness, filth, and drunkenness'. The Roma families had numerous children compared with the Romanians, and the document highlighted the negative demographic consequences of the high fertility of Roma women. Another problem was the intermixing of Romanians and Roma. It was 'sad', Peșchir remarked, that there were 'Romanians who live with Gypsies in concubinage, just as there are Romanians who have married Gypsy women'. These cases were not numerous, but they illustrated, he considered, 'a lack of Romanian dignity among our people' and a moral contamination. In the face of the racial danger posed by the Roma and 'for the preservation of our pure race," Peșchir proposed a eugenic programme, together with the adoption of 'measures of regulation [of] relations of Romanians with Gypsies, their isolation; forbidding the further sale of Romanian property to Gypsies', and, finally, the application of 'measures to prevent [their] multiplication'.[9]

The negative publicity circulated about the Roma during the late 1930s and early 1940s, which continued to denigrate them as an undesirable ethnic group, meant more than empty words; it had a real foundation and political weight. In a text published in November 1940 the legionary poet Vasile Posteucă considered 'the mixing of Romanian blood with foreign blood' to be 'a crime against Romanian history and a betrayal of our national destiny'. Ethnic mixing, he pointed out, was 'a curse on the Romanians' who, for centuries, have been ruled by 'half-breeds'. Those whose blood was mixed with 'Greek, Turkish, Jewish, Gypsy blood' were not 'Romanians'. Such individuals, he insisted, should not be allowed to continue as members of the nation. National survival depended on 'racial self-interest' and on 'the purity of national blood'.[10]

8 D. Rădulescu, 'Țiganii nomazi, oamenii nimănui', *Țara* 1, no. 130 (1941): 6.

9 Legiunea Jandarmi Timiş–Torontal, Informative note 'Problema țiganilor', no. 183, 21 April 1942, Fond 27, doc. 1, Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, ANR, Bucharest.

10 Vasile Posteucă, 'Blestemul corciturilor', *Cuvântul* 17, no. 37 (1940): 1–2.

This racist reality is also reflected in a text entitled 'The Ten Commandments of the Regenerated Man', published in May 1942 by the poet and journalist Ioan Alexandru Bran-Lemeny. These 'commandments', according to Bran-Lemeny, should be followed by all Romanians who claimed to be 'faithful to their race'. The first commandment, for example, concerned self-knowledge: 'Be honest with yourself; learn to know yourself'. The eighth, however, was about the Roma: 'Romanian, be aware that the blood of the inferior races constitutes a great danger for our people'. The call to action was clear. Away with elements of nomad origin!' said Bran-Lemeny. 'The problem of elements of Asiatic, and also Jewish, origin must be solved immediately and radically'.[11] In his view, this was the undertaking to regenerate the nation that must be assumed by every Romanian.

On 9 October 1942, the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the deportation to Transnistria of all the nomadic Roma living in Romania, amounting to 11,441 persons (2,353 men, 2,375 women, and 6,714 children) – 1,927 more than on the lists drawn up at the end of May –, had been completed on 15 August. To these, however, were added sedentary Roma considered 'dangerous to public order' – more precisely, 'criminals and delinquents, pickpockets and [those who steal] on trains, [and] those who live only from theft'.[12] Thus, by 16 September 1942, 13,176 such persons (3,187 men, 3,780 women, and 6,209 children) had been deported to Transnistria. A further sixty-nine 'offenders released from prison' were also deported by 20 September 1942, thus raising the total number of 'nomadic and non-nomadic Gypsies' deported to Transnistria between June and September 1942 to 24,686 persons.[13]

According to the initial plan, there remained 18,262 sedentary Roma to be deported. However, on 14 October 1942, it was decided in the Council of Ministers to stop the deportations to Transnistria of both Jews and Roma, with the exception of 'Gypsies not yet evacuated, who by their presence pose a danger to public order'.[14] Even though General Constantin Vasiliu, commander of the Romanian gendarmerie and undersecretary in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, also confirmed 'that as far as the Gypsies are concerned,

11 Ioan Al. Bran-Lemeny, 'Cele zece porunci ale omului regenerat', *România Eroică* 6, no. 1 (1942): 5.

12 Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, no. 43074, 9 October 1942. Quoted in *Documente privind deportarea țiganilor în Transnistria*, vol. 1, doc. 179, 268–269.

13 Anexă, Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, Serviciul Jandarmeriei, Secția a III–a. Quoted in *Documente privind deportarea țiganilor în Transnistria*, vol. 1, doc. 179, 270–271.

14 Ministerul Afacerilor Interne, Cabinetul Subscretarului de Stat, 14 October 1942. Quoted in *Documente privind deportarea țiganilor în Transnistria*, vol. 1, doc. 189, 286–287.

the evacuations are finished',[15] some Roma continued to be deported during 1943, thus feeding a general sense of fear and insecurity among those remaining in Romania. To be a 'Gypsy' had become a source of shame, both personal and collective, a stigma at once social and eugenic. Two decades of eugenic propaganda had led to the normalization of the perception of the Roma in general, not just the nomads, as an asocial, dysgenic, even racially inferior group; in short, in the early 1940s, the presence of the Roma in Romanian society had become undesirable.

Some of the Roma believed that the solution to the difficult situation in which they found themselves was to declare themselves to be Romanians from the racial point of view. Could the certificates of nationality issued by Romanian officials at the time turn *Roma* into *Romanians*? After all, some of the Szeklers and Csángós had tried the same thing, making use of the Romanian sero-anthropological and eugenic research that, as we have seen, suggested a racial kinship between them and the Romanians, although they did not share the same religion, the same language, or the same culture. Could the Roma also be considered Romanians, especially as many of them had lived for centuries on the same Romanian lands? What had happened to the argument about the 'ethnic consciousness' of the Roma, namely that 'everyone with a human face [was] entitled to enter the community of public life'? In the early 1930s, there had still been hopes that 'by the strengthening of the ethnic pride of this Romanian minority', it would be possible to reach a form of historical reconciliation between Romanians and Roma, this being 'an admirable mental therapeutic to close and heal wounds created by an unjust past of subjection and poverty'.[16] In the early 1940s, this hope was bitterly betrayed.

On 29 October 1942, an official request was sent from Tecuci for the attention of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Dimitrie I. Popescu, in which he was asked to clarify whether 'Roma/Gypsies could be issued with certificates that they were of Romanian nationality and ethnic origin'.[17] On 10 November, hoping to clarify the issue, the Ministry of Internal Affairs sent the request on to the Ministry of Justice. A few days later an answer came from the Ministry of Justice explaining to the Ministry of Internal Affairs that 'Gypsies are not of Romanian ethnic identity. They may, however, have

15 'Consiliul de Miniștri de marți', *Timpul* 6, no. 1954 (1942): 3.

16 'Țiganii și conștiința etnică', *Dreptatea* 7, no. 1823 (1933): 1. See also Laurențiu Anghel, 'Frați romi', *Glasul Romilor* 5 no. 13 (1939): 2 and Gheorghe Niculescu, 'Rasismul și romii', *Glasul Romilor* 7, no. 1 (1941): 3.

17 Primăria Orașului Tecuci către Ministrul Afacerilor Externe, no. 16455, 29 October 1942. CCNR, Fond 2383, dos. 34, 1942, file 3, Ministerul Justiției, ANR, Bucharest.

the status of Romanian citizens'. An equally simple and direct answer was given to the mayor of Tecuci on 10 December 1942: 'Gypsies (Roma) are not Romanians by blood'.[18] Similar requests for such certificates were also sent during 1943 by the mayors of Oltenița, in Ilfov County, and Corabia, in Olt County: the answers received were always the same: the Roma were not 'Romanians by blood'.

What did this statement mean? Why were the Roma not considered to be Romanian? And what can this example tell us about the wider perception of the Roma in Romania in a period in which many of them were deported to Transnistria and left to die there in inhuman conditions? These are the questions that I propose to answer in this chapter. As the correspondence mentioned above demonstrates, the reason why someone was considered ethnically Romanian was based on the idea of race, not that of citizenship. Blood – understood as a biological bond, inherited over the generations – was invoked not only in a metaphorical sense but also in a real one, with a precise political purpose, namely ethnic purification, with, as its corollary, the transformation of Romania into a 'biological state'.[19] In short, not being 'Romanian by blood' in 1942 meant belonging to other 'races' and ethnic groups, and those who were Jewish or Roma could be deported to Transnistria or to the Nazi extermination camps.

Romanian Blood

Racist arguments about blood were initially directed at Romanian Jews, who, since 1938, had been subjected to a number of antisemitic legislative measures aimed at depriving them of civil and political rights. Two such measures were signed by King Carol II on 8 August 1940 and published in *Monitorul Oficial* (Romania's official gazette) the following day. The first regulated the legal situation of Jews, stating the legal and religious criteria by which someone could be defined as a Jew.[20] The Minister of Justice, Ion V. Gruia, presented the factors that, in his view, made necessary the introduction of such a decree-law. Romania was, he said, an 'authoritarian

18 CCNR, Fond 2383, dos. 34, 1942, files 1–5, Ministerul Justiției, ANR, Bucharest.

19 'D–l prof. Mihai A. Antonescu, vicepreşedintele Consiliului, despre statul biologic şi funcţional', *Societatea de Mâine* 18, no. 4 (1941): 85–86.

20 'Reglementarea situaţiei juridice a evreilor din România' (Decret–lege nr. 2650 din 8.VIII.1940), in *Statutul evreilor din România*, ed. V. Pantelimonescu (Bucharest: Editura ziarului 'Universul', 1941), 37–46. See also 'Decret–Lege privitor la starea juridică a locuitorilor evrei din România', *Monitorul Oficial* 108, no. 183 (1940): 4079–4086.

and totalitarian' state that proclaimed the supremacy of the nation. This was 'less a juridical community or a political collectivity, [and] more a spiritual and organic community founded on the law of blood from which springs a hierarchy of political rights'.[21] The political ambition was to validate the ethnic stratification of the country that had been gradually constructed from 1918 onwards, with 'Romanians by blood' at the top of the political hierarchy and the unwanted ethnic minorities, such as Jews and Roma, at its bottom.

The second law forbade marriages between Jews and 'Romanians by blood'.[22] The justifications that Gruia gave for the adoption of the law were 'the permanent and living care' of the Romanian state 'to establish the guidelines for national self-defence' and the adoption of 'Romanian blood' as the basis of ethnic belonging. It was a matter not simply of the political application of sero-anthropological and eugenic arguments, which, Gruia said, had already deciphered 'the physical structure of the blood' and had demonstrated 'the inextricable possibilities of its Romanian purity'. It was equally the state's specific attempt 'to consider Romanian blood [to be] an ethnic and moral element'[23] of nationality.

According to Gruia, with the signing of these laws, Romania was becoming a racial state like Nazi Germany. In such a state, those citizens who had 'Romanian blood' and were Christians had to be separated from those who did not have such blood and were not Christians, such as the Jews. Romania, Gruia further maintained, was the land of ethnic Romanians, and not of those who were Romanian only by citizenship. And in order to be considered Romanian from an ethnic point of view, one had to have at least three generations of 'Romanian blood'. Only that sort of ethnically *perfect* Romanian was permitted to hold high office in the state. 'A foreigner to Romanian blood', Gruia argued, 'in such a post of command, means a danger to the [Romanian] people or the possibility of a danger, born out of the unsuspected impulses of foreign blood'. Thus, by using blood as a criterion of ethnic belonging, Gruia announced the beginning of the long-awaited racial regeneration of the Romanian state, on the basis of a legislative framework that sought 'the promotion of the nation in its

21 Vasile Gruia, 'Expunere de motive la decret lege nr. 2650/1940 privitor la reglementarea situaţiei juridice a evreilor din România', in *Statutul evreilor din România*, 51.

22 'Oprirea căsătoriilor între românii de sânge şi evrei" (Decret–lege nr. 2651 din 8.VIII.1940), in *Statutul evreilor din România*, 67–69. See also 'Decret–Lege privitor căsătoriilor între românii de sânge şi evrei', *Monitorul Oficial* 108, no. 183 (1940): 4086–4088.

23 Vasile Gruia, 'Expunere de motive la decret lege nr. 2651/1940 privitor la oprirea căsătoriilor între românii de sânge şi evrei', in *Statutul evreilor din România*, 70–71.

organic and creative elements', and at the same time, 'the purification of the nation of parasitic and heterogenous elements'.[24]

The new laws were both antisemitic and eugenic. Their aim was not just to prevent the access of Jewish citizens to economic resources and to public office, but also to ensure the eugenic protection of the racial qualities of ethnic Romanians. As can be seen, particular attention was given to the prevention of mixing of blood between Romanians and Jews, although, as even well-known racial antisemites acknowledged, such cases were quite rare. In November 1940, Prince Mihail Sturdza, at the time foreign minister, recognized that in Romania, unlike in other countries, the 'Jewish question' was not 'a problem of corruption of the blood; Romanian blood has never mixed with that of Israel'. It was, in fact, a matter of 'a spiritual corruption' and 'a problem of social arithmetic',[25] with the Jews being over-represented in relation to the majority population. Mircea Nicolescu, councillor at the Court of Appeal in Bucharest, also pointed out that that so-called 'Jewish crisis' did not constitute a 'racial threat', as the Romanian 'was repelled by any alliance of blood with foreigners of another rite, especially those of Mosaic religion'.[26]

Obviously, not all Romanians thought this way, and there were, of course, many cases of Romanians having Jewish spouses. Some of them, as might be expected, learned with some anxiety about the passing of these laws. In a memorandum sent to Ion V. Gruia on 20 August 1940, a group of women, 'Romanian by blood' but married to Jewish men, remarked with indignation that although born 'Christian', their children were now considered 'Jewish'. It was unfair, said these mothers, that 'a woman, Romanian by blood, cannot give Romanian descent', while other people, who had 'in their veins not a drop of Romanian blood', passed for Romanian merely because they were Christians. The signatories requested that a distinction be made between 'a Christian mother with parents of Jewish origin' and 'a mother, Romanian by blood'. What was happening to their children, they maintained, was no more and no less than a 'confiscation of Aryan blood'.[27]

The question of Romanian blood and origins was a complex one, as Eugen Petit explained in an article published in the legal studies journal *Dreptul* (*Law*) in July 1940. Petit tried to clarify the problems of 'ethnic origins' and

24 Gruia, 'Expunere de motive la decret lege nr. 2651/1940', 74–75.

25 'Chestiunea evreească', *Universul* 57, no. 306 (1940): 9.

26 Mircea Nicolescu, 'Criteriul ritului sau al sângelui', *Pandectele Românizării* 1, nos. 15–16 (1941): 475.

27 'Legea privitoare la starea juridică a evreilor are nevoie de unele precizări. În atenția d–lui ministru al justiției', *Curentul* 13, no. 4498 (1940): 3.

mixing of 'blood' but was not interested in the obvious cases of individuals with a clearly defined racial identity, whose 'blood was Romanian'. What happened, he asked, if the father and mother belonged to different ethnic groups? What ethnic origin would be attributed to the child, that of the father or that of the mother? For example, could a child born to a Romanian mother and a Jewish father be considered Romanian by 'blood'? And what about a child whose mother was of Roma ethnicity? Petit's answer to these questions – and, as it happened, also to the memorandum of the women 'Romanian by blood' – was negative.

According to Petit, 'ethnic origin' was hereditary, inherited from the mother. It was based on 'identity of blood',[28] and could not be acquired by obtaining citizenship or by religious conversion. It might seem that Petit agreed with the argument in the memorandum, that if the mother was of Romanian ethnic origin, then so was her child. However, it was not so. This principle, he emphasized, was applicable only to individuals belonging to the same ethnic group or from the same group of races. In other words, both parents had to be 'Romanians by blood' or at least of 'Aryan' origin.

Petit developed this aspect of the problem in the second part of his article, published in September 1940. In a totalitarian state – such as Romania aspired to be – the principal objective was, he noted, 'the purification of the race, not allowing elements of foreign ethnic origin to vitiate the blood of the citizens'. In his view, peoples of Aryan origin, including the Romanians, had to avoid mixing with non-Aryans, such as Jews and Roma; otherwise, the future was sombre. In support of his argument, Petit cited A. C. Cuza and Adolf Hitler, who, in his book *Mein Kampf*, described non-Aryans as 'the enemies of the human race', considering that 'their bacillus, destructive of civilization', led 'directly to the dissolution of humanity'.[29]

It was difficult, Petit admitted, for 'the ethnic problems raised by racial cross-breeding' to be solved. What was to be done, for example, if an Aryan woman was married to non-Aryan man and they had a child together? In such a case, the mother's Aryan origin was not sufficient to protect the child. According to Petit, 'the interest of the entire nation in preserving purity of race requires that such a [child] be regarded by the governing powers of the state with the most justified suspicion'. That child, in other words, had mixed blood, for, Petit believed, it was sufficient for there to be 'a drop of non-Aryan blood, to vitiate it entirely'.[30]

28 Eugen Petit, 'Originea etnică. I', *Drapelul* 68, no. 18 (1940): 118.

29 Eugen Petit, 'Originea etnică. II', *Drapelul* 68, no. 20 (1940): 134.

30 Petit, 'Originea etnică. II', 134–135.

What could be done to prevent racial mixing in the present and in the future? Education and legislation were what Petit recommended. All 'Romanians by blood' had to be taught to love their people and country and encouraged to marry within their ethnic group. At the same time, Petit suggested that those who had already engaged in sexual relations with Jews and had non-Aryan children should be severely punished. A eugenic control of reproduction had to be introduced, with the aim of consolidating the regenerative capacities of the Romanian race.

In a book published a year later, in 1941, under the same title, *Originea etnică* (*Ethnic Origin*), Petit analysed in detail Gruia's arguments regarding the two decree laws introduced in August 1940, adding, however, new details regarding the definitions of 'blood' and of 'race'. This time, he noted the following: 'The ethnicity of a people is determined by researching the original races that contributed to its composition'. Thus, in his view, a person of 'Romanian ethnic origin' or 'Romanian by blood' was an individual 'in whose veins flows Daco-Romano-Slavic blood, *to an overwhelming degree*'.[31] It was, he acknowledged, impossible to establish the exact proportion of the three 'component ethnic elements of the Romanian people', but the 'autochthonous Dacian element' was preponderant, followed by the Roman and the Slav. Petit's sources were not anthropological; he relied above all on linguistic studies, starting from the writings of the historians Ioan Bogdan and Constantin C. Giurescu regarding the ethnogenesis of the Romanians. As for the ethnicity of children resulting from mixed marriages, it was not sufficient for one parent to have 'Romanian blood'; the other also had to belong to a people that had in its veins 'Dacian or Roman or Slavic blood'. For example, from the marriage of a Romanian woman with a Spaniard, a Frenchman, or an Italian, all of whom had 'Roman blood', there could be born children of 'Romanian ethnic origin'.[32] Could there be anything, Petit wondered, nobler than 'a child born of a Romanian woman and an Italian man, for example, whose blood is the most perfect expression of the Latin race?'[33]

Petit's interpretation relied on the recurrent themes of Romanian biopolitics in the interwar period, connecting the dominant ethnic culture to the indigenous population. The status of being a Romanian was thus given by race, descent, and family, but also by historical continuity and cultural

31 Eugen Petit, *Originea etnică* (Bucharest: Editura ziarului 'Universul', 1941), 15 (emphasis in original).

32 Petit, *Originea etnică*, 43–44.

33 Petit, *Originea etnică*, 48.

authenticity. Only 'true' Romanians were considered 'creators of national culture'. Petit adapted these cultural and historical themes to the eugenic programme of ethnic purification promoted at the time in Romania and in Nazi-occupied Europe. In so proceeding, he expressed from a juridical point of view the same change that may be observed at the level of Romanian culture, science, and politics in the early 1940s. The laws of the country, Petit concluded, had to mirror these new racial realities, and the lawmakers should take into account not only juridical but also biological and ethnic principles, 'according to which the dominant blood of those who make up part of the Romanian Nation is Daco-Romano-Slavic (with a preponderance of the first two elements)'. For the first time in the modern history of Romania, ethnic origin was legally codified, not only 'in the interests of purification of the race', but especially 'for the purpose of ensuring Romanian dominance'. His message could not be clearer: 'Romania has belonged, belongs, and will always belong only to the Romanians'.[34]

Petit's reflections on the ethnic origin of the Romanians were not purely speculative but offered veritable racial guidelines for those who wanted to understand the implications of marriage to a Jewish or Roma spouse. In a country like Romania and in a period in which race, family, and nation were interconnected, the issue of ethnic origin was of capital importance. After decades of debate about national specificity, race had finally become a criterion used in the political actions of the state. The eugenic and racist obsession with the 'blood' of the Romanian nation had thus come to play the same role in the ethnic identification of an individual and of a group as language and religion.

As we have in the previous chapters, 'race', 'nation', and 'people' constantly overlapped, these terms often being used together in public and political debates about national specificity. This was 'the politics of ethnic realities', as the writer and Greek Catholic (Uniate) priest Ion Agârbiceanu termed it. 'Today we all seem to understand', he observed in February 1939, 'that along with good management and strong defence, along with internal peace imposed by national solidarity, we are duty-bound to concern ourselves in a real way with the regeneration of our race'.[35] And the historian Constantin Kirițescu added in his turn, in an article about education in the rural primary school, that 'caring for health is the primordial condition of life of the Romanian, according to individuality, nation, and race'.[36]

34 Petit, *Originea etnică*, 60.

35 Ion Agârbiceanu, 'Politica realităților etnice', *Tribuna* 2, no. 31 (1939): 1.

36 Constantin Kirițescu, 'Igiena ţăranului român', *Universul* 57, no. 198 (1940): 3.

In the early 1940s, however, racism and antisemitism contaminated the biopolitical and eugenic project of protecting the biological capital of the Romanian nation. As Iosif Stoichiția, general secretary of the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance, announced in a radio broadcast, 'the biological renewal of the nation' required 'the adoption of a broad programme of biopolitics'.[37] Preserving the racial quality of the Romanian family and ensuring its ethnic future, along with 'applying the principles of racial hygiene',[38] were officially declared to be political objectives of the Romanian state. Emil Cioran's childhood friend, Bucur Țincu, concurred. In a text about 'the theory of races as a political doctrine' published in the newspaper *Universul* in June 1941, Țincu subscribed to the eugenic ideal of the nation, especially in the biopolitical version outlined by Iuliu Moldovan. A 'populous nation must be well defended against biological and spiritual decadence. Eugenic measures have here a decisive role', he warned. In a period in which Romanian racism was widespread, Țincu's observation no longer surprised anyone: 'The political force of the nation is in solidarity with its racial capacity. A nation maintained by a quantitatively and qualitatively superior racial stock dominates the stage of history.'[39]

On 6 September 1940, General Ion Antonescu became the head of the Romanian state, and the quest for the racial and eugenic purification of the population received a new and powerful impulse. The central role played by the idea of a Romanian race in the preparation and application of this programme is indisputable. Deputy Prime Minister Mihai A. Antonescu had not the slightest hesitation in saying on 27 March 1941 that 'we must take the courage to restore the Romanian Nation to its natural rights'. This meant, on the one hand, depriving the Jews of economic, civic, and political rights, while on the other, it was a matter of a eugenic 'cleansing' of Romania from within.[40]

Three months later, in the meeting of the Council of Ministers of 17 June 1941, the same Mihai Antonescu announced that the moment had come for 'the purification of the population'. Invoking the Roman emperor Titus, who in the year 70 captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Jewish

37 'Ocrotirea familiei', *Mişcarea Medicală Română* 14, nos. 5–6 (1941), 413. See also 'Program biopolitic', *Universul* 59, no. 236 (1942), 3.

38 Mircea V. Pienescu, 'Dr. G. Banu: L'hygiène de la race', *Curentul* 12, no. 3955 (1939): 1.

39 Bucur Ţincu, 'Teoria raselor ca doctrină politică. II', *Universul* 58, no. 163 (1941): 2. The first part of the article appeared in *Universul* 58, no. 162 (1941): 2.

40 'Raportul d–lui Ministru de Stat către Conducătorul Statului Român şi Preşedintele Consiliului de Miniştri', in *Noua legislaţiune cu privire la evrei*, vol. 3 (Bucharest: Curierul Judiciar, 1941), 19–20.

Second Temple (also known as the Temple of Herod), Antonescu threatened 'certain populations of ethnic origin' in Bessarabia and Bukovina with a similar policy. 'I assure you', he said, 'that not only with regard to the Jews, but with regard to all the nationalities – we shall come to practise a policy of total and violent removal of foreign elements'.[41] Finally, Ion Antonescu himself explained that his ultimate aim was 'a policy of purification of the Romanian race'. Nothing, he said, would prevent him from achieving 'this historical ideal of our people'. The European political context, he added, was likewise favourable to such a policy of ethnic purification. It was, apparently, 'the last chance that history puts at our disposal', and Antonescu did not want to waste it. Regaining the 'lost territories' – Bessarabia, northern Bukovina, and northern Transylvania – was, of course, important, but what was the use of a return to the borders of Greater Romania if the 'Romanian race' was not 'purified'? We may observe here a certain political messianism, a calling and the affirmation of an extraordinary role for the 'leader of the state'. 'If I do not purify the Romanian race', Antonescu claimed, 'I have done nothing, for it is not borders that make the strength of a nation, but the homogeneity and purity of its race'.[42]

Romania had become a biopolitical and eugenic state. This state was the guardian that protected the biological qualities of the nation. According to the new political leadership, Romania had to be consolidated not only under the banner of a new cultural ideology, but also through a synthesis of national morality and eugenics. 'A new destiny awaits humanity', Dan Smântănescu wrote in November 1941, 'that of restoring each race to the rights of its blood'. According to Smântănescu, to 'strengthen the value of the blood in its ethnic frame, […] the flow of creation must be corrected, and the homeland limited, by birth or ostracization, only to the representatives of the race'.[43]

Limiting the births of those who were not considered 'Romanians by blood', such as the Roma, seemed difficult to achieve, even if there were proposals for their sterilization, before and after some of them were deported to Transnistria. Their stigmatization and ostracization, however, together with the eugenic and racist descriptions that accompanied it, especially in the case of the nomadic Roma, continued uninterrupted. We can see it

41 Mihai Antonescu, Consiliul de Miniştri, 17 June 1941. Quoted in *Stenogramele şedinţelor Consiliului de Miniştri. Guvernarea Ion Antonescu*, vol. 3, ed. Marcel-Dumitru Ciucă, Maria Ignat, and Aurelian Teodorescu (Bucharest: Arhivele Naţionale ale României, 1999), 570.

42 Fond PCM, Cabinet, Fond 484/1941, fila 16. Quoted in *Evreii din România între anii 1940–1944*, vol. 2, ed. Lya Benjamin (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), 326–327.

43 Smântânescu, 'Problema rasei', 308.

displayed in the proposal to construct a special camp for them, on the model offered by Nazi Germany,[44] and in the introduction of 'measures of permanent sanitary control and periodic delousing of nomadic Gypsies'.[45] These measures were introduced early in 1940, on the basis of a report prepared by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection on 20 December 1939. The ministry proposed such measures in order to prevent the spread of epidemic typhus, but the language used was adorned with stereotypes referring to the nomadic Roma population and medicalized interpretations of their total lack of corporal hygiene and their supposed biological predisposition to the transmission of disease and infection.

Even some of the leaders of the Roma in the interwar period, such as Gheorghe A. Lăzurică, welcomed such measures, despite being sceptical about their efficiency. 'The problem of the nomadic Gypsies will not be solved so easily', noted Lăzurică in February 1940, 'even if the sanitary authorities impose a forced quarantine'. On the one hand, he continued, 'parasites are found also on the bodies of sedentary Gypsies, from the most dapper minstrel to the bear-keeper or tinsmith', and on the other, 'a disinfestation by hair cutting, bathing, and passing clothes through the stove has no effect if the next day, the nomads continue to live a dozen to a tent, unwashed and with clothes unchanged'.[46] The efficiency of such sanitary measures was reduced, it was believed, because of the atavistic character of the Roma. Such a conviction may be exemplified by the following remark: 'However frequent this deparasitization may be, the virus of infections does not leave them and from this point of view, as from that of thieving and criminal activities, the nomadic Gypsies remain a permanent and important danger'.[47]

There was thus a close connection between the eugenic labelling of the Roma as 'asocial' elements, with a hereditary disposition to delinquency and indolence, and the biological arguments regarding their supposed racial inferiority. Their alterity was highlighted constantly through their racialization, in a process that underscored the Romanians' intention to adhere to an exclusionary vision of national identity.

The identification of the Roma as dysgenic and belonging to a race 'foreign' to Romanian soil did not, however, start in 1940, but decades earlier. There

44 'Problema țiganilor nomazi: Din cartierul "Lazaret"–Sibiu', *Țara* 1, no. 94 (1941): 7.

45 'Jurnale ale Consiliului de Miniștri. Ministerul Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale', *Monitorul Oficial* 108, no. 10 (1940): 113. See also 'A fost interzisă vagabondarea țiganilor nomazi', *Curentul* 13, no. 4281 (1940): 3.

46 Gheorghe A. Lăzurică, 'Restricţiile pentru ţiganii nomazi. Un proect de organizare a acestor vagabonzi', *Curentul* 13, no. 4302 (1940): 3.

47 Rădulescu, 'Țiganii nomazi, oamenii nimănui', 6.

is a continuous process of dehumanization connecting the 'Gypsy slave' encountered by French travellers in Moldavia and Wallachia in the 1830s and 1840s – whom Nicolae Iorga considered to be 'in all respects a human monkey'[48] – with the 'dysgenic Gypsy' of the 1930s and 1940s, described by eugenicists as a 'feeble creature, bearer of all sorts of illnesses, incapable of a settled life and one of a higher level, living in a continual dependency and vagabondage, refractory to work and discipline, ruled by folly, cowardice, and baseness'.[49]

What happened to the Romanian Roma in the interwar period and during the Second World War was the exact opposite of what happened to the Szeklers and the Csángós. We have no example of a Romanian author suggesting that Roma and Romanians belonged to the same 'race'. Romanian racism and eugenics repeatedly stigmatized them: they were considered, along with Jews, the Tatars of Dobrogea, and the Gagauz people in Bessarabia, to be a 'ballast minority', an 'inferior race' and 'a great threat to the vigour of the [national] organism'. As we shall see next, there was a consensus among Romanian eugenicists that 'through mixing with the Gypsies, our healthy, courageous, cognizant, and worthy ethnic being has become spoiled, vitiated, disorganized'. Consequently, there was a need to introduce eugenic and racial protection measures such as 'forbidding marriages between Romanians and Gypsies; isolating the Gypsies and even sterilizing them'.[50]

At the beginning of the 1940s, there was already at the level of the Romanian collective mentality a set of anti-Roma perceptions based on their stigmatization and dehumanization. The characterization of the Roma, especially the nomadic Roma, as non-Romanian from a racial point of view became interwoven with the description of them as antisocial and dysgenic elements, constituting a danger for the Romanian people, and both these arguments contributed decisively to their deportation to Transnistria.

The Anthropology of the Roma

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a number of foreign anthropologists became interested in the Roma population of Romania and Hungary.

48 Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria românilor prin călători,* vol. 4, 2nd ed. (Bucharest: Casa Şcoalelor, 1929), 4.

49 G. I. Simeon, 'Prefață' to Leonard Darwin, *Ce este eugenia?* trans. G. I. Simeon (Bucharest: Şcoala Poporului, 1941), 20.

50 Simeon, 'Prefață', 19 and 21.

In 1871, the Polish physician and anthropologist Isidor Kopernicki concluded his study of 'Gypsy skulls' in Bucharest. The paper that he published a year later, in 1872, in the journal of the German Society of Anthropology, Ethnography, and Prehistory, included an analysis of twenty such skulls from the Colțea monastery, fifteen of them male. According to Kopernicki's measurements, the 'Gypsy skulls' varied between sub-dolichocephaly and sub-brachycephaly, with an average cephalic index of 77.7.[51]

Inspired by Kopernicki's research, the French linguist and anthropologist Abel Hovelacque presented his reflections on seven 'Gypsy skulls' brought from Romania at the May 1874 session of the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris. Like Kopernicki before him, Hovelacque noted the similarity between these skulls and skulls from India, deposited in the collection of the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, with which he was familiar. He established that the average cephalic index of the 'Gypsy skulls' was 77.5.[52] Five years later, in 1879, the Austrian anthropologist Augustin Weisbach, whom we encountered in chapter 3, published his study of fifty-two Roma men in the Hungarian army (thirty-nine from Hungary and thirteen from Transylvania). He suggested a similar cephalic index of 75.2, accepting the proposal of Kopernicki and Hovelacque that the Roma were sub-dolichocephalic.[53]

It is worth mentioning in this context the short resumé that the hygienist Iacob Felix made of these studies about the Roma in a lecture delivered at the Geographical Society in March 1892, especially as he noted an important methodological problem that would continue to trouble experts during the interwar period. Referring specifically to Weisbach's research of 1869–1870, which dealt with 'Romanian skulls' from Transylvania, Felix expressed doubts regarding the identity of some of the skulls that the Austrian anthropologist had examined. For example, said Felix, 'If we ask the Gypsies of the Romanian lands about their nationality, they declare [themselves] to be Romanian, and among the forty Romanian soldiers whose skulls Mr Weisbach classified, not according to anatomical data but according to their military registration, there were certainly also Gypsies; skull no. 16 in Mr Weisbach's collection seems to be the skull of a Gypsy'.[54] In

51 Isidor Kopernicki, 'Ueber den Bau der Zigeunerschädel', *Archiv für Anthropologie* 5, no. 3 (1872): 267–324.

52 Abel Hovelacque, 'Crânes tsiganes', *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, 2nd series, 9 (1874): 396–399.

53 Augustin Weisbach, *Die Zigeuner* (Vienna: Verlag der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft, 1889).

54 Iacob Felix, *Geografia medicală a României* (Bucharest: I. V. Socec, 1897), 30.

other words, some of Weisbach's observations about the skulls of Romanians, especially about their size, had to be revised, given that he had not made use of other anthropological methods of identification of the subjects under examination.

Far more complex anthropological studies were made by Eugène Pittard on the nomadic Roma of Dobrogea. In the late summer of 1901, Pittard measured forty-seven nomadic Roma (five women and forty-two men) from Dobrogea, cataloguing their somatic, cranial, and facial features. His preliminary results suggested that these Roma had an average height of 1.61 metres, with the forms of their heads varying between dolichocephalic and hyperbrachycephalic. Their eyes were predominantly brown, and their hair was black.[55] Pittard did not observe anything unusual about these Roma from Dobrogea, except that their skin was somewhat dark in colour and they were short of stature.

His research did not stop here, however. Pittard returned to the Balkans and to Dobrogea in 1902 and 1903 to collect more anthropological material about the nomadic Roma there. On the basis of his visits, he established, for example, that the differences between the Turkish Roma and the Romanian Roma were not merely religious – the former being Muslim and the latter Christian –, but also anthropological, caused by the ethnic mixing of Roma and Romanians throughout the period of slavery. The 'Gypsy race' (*race tzigane*),[56] as Pittard termed it, was consequently purer among the Muslim Roma than among those of Romania. Some nomadic Roma in Romania – admittedly 'not a very considerable' part – had certainly received 'Romanian blood', and this was proven, according to Pittard, by 'the examination of their cranial form'.[57]

A total of 1,300 nomadic Roma of various nationalities (Romanian, Turkish, Bulgarian, Tatar, Serbian, and Hungarian) were examined by Pittard in the course of the two years.[58] The average cephalic index that he established for this group was 78.2, slightly larger than that suggested by Kopernicki and by Hovelacque. A part of the results of his research was presented to the Romanian public on the occasion of the congress of the Romanian

55 Eugène Pittard, 'Contribution à l'étude des Tsiganes dits Roumains', *L'Anthropologie* 13, no. 3 (1902): 321–328.

56 Eugène Pittard, 'L'indice céphalique chez les Tziganes de la péninsule des Balkans (1.261 individus des deux sexes)', *Bulletin de la Société d'Anthropologie de Lyon* 23 (1904): 208.

57 Eugène Pittard, 'L'indice céphalique chez 837 tsiganes (hommes) de la Péninsule des Balkans', *L'Anthropologie* 15, no. 3 (1904): 333–349.

58 Eugène Pittard, 'Contribution à l'étude anthropologique des tsiganes dits Tatars', *Bulletin de la Société Roumaine des Sciences de Bucarest–Roumanie* 12, nos. 5–6 (1904): 379–389.

Association for the Advancement and Diffusion of Sciences, held in Bucharest in September 1903.[59] The following year, 1904, he published two studies of the cephalic index of nomadic and sedentary Roma in the Balkans, including Romania.

The first study contained craniological measurements made on 837 Roma men, of whom 477 were from Romania. The majority of them were nomads from Dobrogea, but some, such as those from the Prahova Valley and the area around Râmnicu Vâlcea, were sedentary. The results collected on this occasion confirmed the preliminary findings offered two years previously. Among the 477 Romanian Roma, nomadic and sedentary, Pittard found both dolichocephalic (68%) and brachycephalic (15%) cranial forms.[60] The relatively high frequency of brachycephaly among the sedentary Roma of Romania, compared with that of the Turks (only 9%) and Bulgarians (only 6%), was explained by Pittard as being due to 'the introduction of Romanian blood'. The Romanians among whom the Roma lived were largely brachycephalic. Becoming sedentary and adopting Christianity, Pittard considered, had likewise contributed decisively to the ethnic assimilation of the Roma into Romanian communities, a phenomenon also to be observed among the Roma of Transylvania.[61]

The second study, published in November 1904, extended the anthropological analysis to 1,261 nomadic and sedentary Roma in the Balkans. This time, the sample included 424 Roma women, 252 of whom were from Romania. The cephalic indices of Roma women were almost unknown to anthropologists, an exception being the German researcher Leopold Glück's study of the anthropology of the Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the 1890s Glück, at the time a physician in a hospital in Sarajevo, had carried out a craniological analysis of twenty-five Roma women (fourteen of them nomadic and eleven sedentary), and had established their average cephalic index to be 79.8.

Perhaps more interesting than the results of the measurements is the terminology used by Glück to describe the various groups of Roma whom he met in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He called the nomadic Roma, who had kept their traditions and their language, 'black Gypsies' (*schwarze Zigeuner*), while the sedentary Roma, who had assimilated linguistically and professionally into the society in which they lived, were the 'white

59 'Congresul asociației ştiințelor', *Adevărul* 16, no. 5079 (1903): 2.
60 Pittard, 'L'indice céphalique chez 837 tsiganes', 339–341.
61 Pittard, 'L'indice céphalique chez 837 tsiganes', 349.

Gypsies' (*weisse Zigeuner*).[62] The nomadic Roma were associated with a primitive and pagan environment, labelled with the colour black, suggestive of African peoples, and considered to be backward. According to Glück, the more the Roma abandoned their traditional culture and their nomadic way of life, the 'whiter' they became. The colour white, presumed to define the majority population, was the superior and normative colour, not only of human skin, but also of the European identity desired and imagined by anthropologists at the time.

Pittard mentioned Glück, but without applying his terminology to the Roma of the Balkans. He had, however, an opinion about Roma women in Romania, based on the experience of slavery. In his view, some of these Roma women were beautiful, but their beauty was mentioned rather as a disadvantage. In the period of slavery, the beautiful Roma women had not gone unnoticed by their Romanian owners, and the resulting consequence, the birth of mixed-race children, was, according to Pittard, another example of the mixing between the two ethnic groups.[63]

As for the cephalic index of the 424 Roma women that he studied, this varied between 70 and 92, the average being 79.67, very close to that established by Glück for the Roma women in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Pittard likewise established that 57% of the Roma women were dolichocephalic, and 22.3% brachycephalic. His conclusion was that, in contrast to Roma men, Roma women had among them not only fewer dolichocephalics, but also 'a much higher proportion of brachycephalics – almost double [that of the men]'.[64] The Roma women of Romania had the highest level of brachycephaly, 28%, while those of Bulgaria had the lowest, a mere 4%. Again, for Pittard, this could be explained by the fact that the Roma of Romania were more ethnically mixed on average than those of Bulgaria.[65]

A somewhat similar description is offered by Octav G. Lecca. In a study dedicated to the origin and history of the Roma, published in the magazine *Viața Românească* (*Romanian Life*) in 1908, Lecca described them as 'of middle stature', with a 'blackish face' and 'black curly hair'. From an anthropological point of view, he remarked, 'their skulls were very similar to those of the lower classes in India'. In his view, the following features were common to the two groups: 'narrow forehead and temples, frontal bone

62 Leopold Glück, 'Zur physischen Anthropologie der Zigeuner in Bosnien und der Hercegovina', *Wissenschafliche Mitteilungen aus Bosnien und der Hercegovina* 3 (1897): 403–433.

63 Pittard, 'L'indice céphalique chez les Tziganes de la péninsule des Balkans', 208.

64 Pittard, 'L'indice céphalique chez les Tziganes de la péninsule des Balkans', 212–213.

65 Pittard, 'L'indice céphalique chez les Tziganes de la péninsule des Balkans', 217.

pronouncedly sloping, brain with a very small volume; nevertheless, the skulls differ from one another in that among the Indians they are completely dolichocephalic, while those of the Gypsies present certain modifications and some are even sub-brachycephalic'.[66]

Also interesting is Lecca's psychological profile of the Roma. Patience, for example, was one of their qualities, and they would endure 'with the same cold blood and indifference, cold, hunger, heat, beating'. Another positive trait detected by Lecca was intelligence. The Roma, he said, were 'intelligent and able to do anything, if they do not lack the inclination'. However, his analysis is not without negative stereotypes. 'Unfortunately', he believed, 'their alertness and agility easily lead them to lying and theft and from here to prison'. Likewise, he mentions the 'laziness' of the nomadic Roma and their lack of 'morality' the latter resulting from their nature, which he considered primitive and uncivilized. In this respect, he said, 'the Gypsies are in the same place as the most backward peoples of Africa'. Although Lecca attributed the development of these negative traits to hereditary causes, he suggested that 'the wretched state in which they have lived for centuries' and 'the persecutions that they have had to suffer from everyone'[67] had also played a significant role.

These aspects of their supposedly wild and backward character were closely linked to the slavery – 'which we find in no country *except our own*' – in which the Roma had been held for centuries. The dehumanization and stigmatization of the Roma began in the fourteenth century, when the first 'Gypsy slaves' are mentioned in historical documents. These, Lecca noted, 'were sold like any goods, donated, exchanged, branded; they were entered in dowry lists or given as payment for a service rendered'. There could be no comparison, he continued, of 'the slavery of the Gypsies with the position of feudal serfs or with the "*rumâni*" or "*vecini*" peasants in our lands'.[68]

The Roma had always been in close proximity to the Romanians, but they continued to be little known and understood. Lecca's conclusion was that this group of people did not deserve the indifference and contempt of the Romanian majority population. They had to be understood and then accepted by society.[69]

66 Octav George Lecca, 'Asupra originii și istoriei Țiganilor', *Viața Românească* 3, no. 8 (1908): 177.

67 Lecca, 'Asupra originii și istoriei Țiganilor', 82–183.

68 Lecca, 'Asupra originii și istoriei Țiganilor', 190–191 (emphasis in original).

69 A similar view is put forward by George Potra in his *Contribuții la istoricul Țiganilor din România* (Bucharest: Fundația Regele Carol I, 1939).

Motivated by the need to know them better, Pittard published a new study about the nomadic Roma of Dobrogea in 1915. From 1901 to 1914, he had been in this region of Romania five times, collecting anthropological data about the Roma. The number of individuals examined by him totalled 1,210, of whom 780 were men and 430 women.[70] Together with the nomadic Roma, whom Pittard termed 'Romanian Gypsies', there was also in Dobrogea a group of Roma who were semi-urbanized and of Muslim faith. The situation of these 'Turkish Gypsies' was not necessarily any better, as, Pittard considered, they were 'despised by the Turks and barely tolerated by the Tatars'.[71]

This time, the sociocultural description of this ethnic group was more detailed. Pittard provided ethnographic commentaries on their work – for example, the various trades that they practised and with which they were identified: *lingurari* (wooden-spoon-makers), *căldărari* (cauldron-makers), etc. – and the nomadic manner in which they led their lives, sleeping in tents and crossing the steppe lands of Dobrogea in carts. The study also included photographs taken by Pittard of the tents where the nomadic Roma lived, of a group of Roma women and their children, almost naked in ragged clothes, alongside Romanian children wearing white blouses, of a Turkish Roma man with a turban, and of a Romanian Roma woman, photographed from the front and in profile. It was clear that after these repeated visits, Pittard had managed to win the trust of the communities of Roma that he had studied in Dobrogea. The photograph of a young Turkish Roma couple from Mangalia conveys a calm sense of confidence, clearly visible on the young man's smiling face. [figure 11]

Pittard's entire anthropological study was based on somatic measurements, of the head and of the body, and on the comparative analysis of this data with similar data obtained from other groups. His intention was to construct a craniological and anthropometric typology of the group of Roma that he had studied, underlining the differences between the female and male subjects. Such a complete and extremely minute investigation of the body, Pittard believed, offered credibility both to his anthropological research itself and to the conclusions that he had formulated, such as that the Roma, in general, were dolichocephalic or that the eyelashes of Roma

70 Eugène Pittard, 'Analyse de quelques grandeurs du corps chez l'homme et chez la femme (1.210 tsiganes provenant de la Dobrodja)', *Bulletin de la Société Roumaine des Sciences de Bucarest–Roumanie* 16, nos. 3–4 (1906): 231–253.

71 Eugène Pittard, 'Documents somatologiques pour l'étude des tsiganes', in *Bulletin de la Société Roumaine des Sciences de Bucarest–Roumanie*, vol. 24, nos. 3–4 (1915), 144.



Fig. 11. 'Turkish Roma Man and Woman'. From Eugène Pittard, 'Anthropologie de la Roumanie: documents somatologiques pour l'étude des Tsiganes'. In *Bulletin de la Société Roumaine des Sciences*, vol. 24, 1915 (Courtesy of Musée d'Ethnographie de Genève)

women were considerably longer than those of women from other ethnic groups.

Pittard did not speculate as to the racial origin of the Roma, focusing only on the description, from a craniological and somatic perspective, of Roma men and women, both nomadic and sedentary. Some Romanian researchers, however, adopted the explanation offered by Pittard, namely that the brachycephaly of the Roma was to be explained by their mixing with Romanians, especially in the period of slavery. In his study of the 'origin' of the *băieși* (also known as *rudari*, i.e., woodworkers) published in 1931, the ethnologist Ion Chelcea stated that many of the Romanianized Roma were brachycephalic. The explanation was that 'the masters of the old Gypsies of Romania were brachycephalic'. Following Pittard, Chelcea suggested that in the Balkan peninsula there had been a 'mixing of blood'

between the Roma and the rest of the population, which had modified the 'stable, organic characteristics specific to the Gypsies and to their race'. The same had happened in Romania, where, as a result of contact 'with the native population, we have "brachycephalic" Gypsies'. This did not mean that the *rudari* had lost their specific racial features. On the contrary! Some of them, according to Chelcea, had 'the nose frequently platyrrhine[72] and with the root considerably sunken'. These anthropoid features were 'also a sign of their racial primitiveness'.[73] It was a description that dehumanized the *rudari*, both from a biological and from a cultural point of view.

Another issue for discussion was the *rudari*'s ethnic origin. According to Chelcea, they constituted 'an ethnographic enigma', possibly being descended from Dacians.[74] Chelcea himself had not carried out anthropological research on them, and nor had he tried to map their line of descent on the basis of blood-group analyses, as Manuilă, Popovici, and Râmneanțu had attempted for other ethnic groups. For all that, three years later, at the meeting of the Romanian Society of Anthropology on 19 March 1934, he had no hesitation in declaring 'that from a *somatic* point of view, the Rudari are *Romanianized* Gypsies', even if they themselves did not define themselves as such. Moreover, Chelcea continued, 'this *Romanianization*' was regarded by the *rudari* 'as a *mark* of superiority', as they were, after all, 'a primitive population' that had to undergo 'a long process of *humanization*'.[75] In other words, for Chelcea, Romanianization through adopting the Romanian language, as the *rudari* had done, presupposed the passage to a higher level of culture and civilization. This seemed to be the most viable means of assimilation in Romanian society.

Serology, as I have mentioned in chapter 3, had already produced convincing results for those who sought to explain the racial structure of the populations of Romania. During the early 1920s, Sabin Manuilă and Gheorghe Popovici had established on the basis of analyses of blood groups the racial affinity between the Roma and the population groups in India to which they were related. This research, Nicolae Lahovary suggested, proved not only that the Roma 'had preserved so well their primitive type', meaning that

72 With the nose wide and flat, like that of the monkeys in Central and South American that bear this name.

73 Ion Chelcea, 'Originea rudarilor', *Societatea de Mâine* 8, nos. 16–17 (1931): 311–312.

74 See Ion Chelcea, *Rudarii: contribuţie la o 'enigmă' etnografică* (Bucharest: Casa Şcoalelor, 1944).

75 Ion Chelcea, 'Câteva observațiuni asupra Rudarilor din Muscel', in *Dare de seamă asupra ședințelor Societății Române de Antropologie din Cluj pe anul 1933–34* (Cluj: Tipografia 'Transilvania', 1934), 19 (emphasis in original).

from which they originated, but also that the influence of environment on their ethnic specificity was 'insignificant', especially taking into account the fact that in the case of the Roma, it was a matter of 'an ancient relocation and one that took place into countries like Romania, [...] fundamentally different in climate, vegetation, and way of life, from India'. Nevertheless, neither adaptability to a new environment nor the long period of time spent alongside Romanians – both of them important factors, which in Lahovary's opinion had led to 'a process of transformation and adaptation' – had had an impact on the racial structure of the Roma. 'We observe', he said, 'that neither the colour of their skin, nor the form of their head, nor their blood has changed at all'.[76]

It was believed that the anthropological method of blood group analysis was more precise and more scientific. Consequently, serology was used to create the 'racial map' of Romania. Petru Râmneanțu, as we have already seen, was one of those who in the 1930s published a number of sero-anthropological studies, especially of the various ethnic groups in Transylvania. He was convinced that all the other physical characteristics of race, such as the colour of the skin and the form of the head, were irrelevant and often misleading, while analyses of the blood groups in a population permitted the researcher to delimit the bio-racial boundaries of each ethnic group. The serological geometry of each individual examined reflected their ethnic affiliation, regardless of geographical vicinity and of the historical proximity of other individuals from a similar or different racial background.

Râmneanțu included the Roma in his serological investigations. For his study 'Research on the Ethnic Origins of the Population of the South-Eastern Transylvania on the Basis of the Serological Composition of Blood', published in 1935 in collaboration with Petru David, Râmneanțu had examined 443 Roma from the counties of Cluj, Târnava-Mare, Trei-Scaune, Odorhei, Mureș, and Ciuc. Their biological index was 0.96, much smaller than that of the Romanians from the same counties, who varied between 1.76 and 2.60. This could be explained by 'their ethnic origin identical with that of peoples in India, where the B or Asiatic property has its origin'. Without this method, however, it would have been impossible to identify these individuals as Roma, as their ethnic assimilation was almost complete. They had 'the colour of the face almost resembling that of Europeans, they no longer know their language, and often they have denied their own ethnicity'. According to Râmneanțu, 'this Europeanization of the Gypsies, produced

76 Nicolae Lahovary, 'Istoria şi o nouă metodă de determinare a rasselor', *Arhiva pentru Ştiinţa şi Reforma Socială* 7, nos. 1–2 (1927): 152–153.

by cross-breeding over many generations with the Romanians and partially with the Hungarians alongside whom they have lived, has increased the frequency of blood group A or European, and consequently also their biological index'.[77]

The integration of the Roma in the Romanian villages of Transylvania was also observed by other researchers. According to the sociologist Aurel Boia, it was possibly due to the fact that the Roma of Transylvania had not been slaves, in contrast with those of Moldavia and Wallachia. The latter, in the period of slavery, 'were ranked among animals and regarded as such by the Romanians – which completely excluded any closeness between the two ethnic groups'.[78] In Transylvania, not only were the Roma not dehumanized by the legacy of slavery, they were also more readily accepted by the Romanians, often with marriages taking place between the two groups – as had happened in the village of Șanț in Năsăud County, which Boia studied in 1938. By marriage, some Roma and their descendants had 'passed into the ranks of the Romanians', and Boia illustrated this *transformation* with the example of Xenia Șot, a Romanian woman who married a Roma husband, Filip Capra: 'Their daughters no longer considered themselves Gypsy folk, and got annoyed when they were so called; they married Romanian men, and although their descendants are sometimes still reminded of their Gypsy origins, they have definitively distanced themselves from that people'. By marriage, Boia believed, it was possible 'to achieve the assimilation of the Gypsies'.[79] And assimilation led to the abandoning of the term *țigan* ('Gypsy'), which was 'a pejorative name'. The assimilated Roma considered themselves 'more Romanian than Gypsy, bringing as arguments in support of this [their] religion and language, which are the same as those of the Romanians. For this reason, they seek to differentiate themselves from the nomadic Gypsies, whom they consider true Gypsies, considering themselves Romanian Gypsies'.[80]

Mixed marriages of Roma and Romanians were, however, harshly criticized by eugenicists. Another interesting detail in connection with the village of Șanț is that Iordache Făcăoaru had been there two years before. In addition to his anthropological studies to establish the 'racial composition'

77 Petru Râmneanțu (with Petru David), 'Cercetări asupra originii etnice a populației din sud–estul Transilvaniei pe baza compoziției serologice a sângelui', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 6, nos. 1–3 (1935): 57–58.

78 Aurel Boia, 'Integrarea țiganilor din Șanț (Năsăud) în comunitatea românească a satului', *Sociologie Românească* 3, nos. 7–9 (1938): 352.

79 Boia, 'Integrarea țiganilor din Șanț', 363.

80 Boia, 'Integrarea țiganilor din Șanț', 365.

of the population,[81] Făcăoaru had also been interested in the 'negative' aspects of the life in close proximity of Romanians and Roma, aspects which, he believed, were evident in the genealogy that he had made of an 'asocial' family in the village. Made up of fifteen members, spanning three generations, this family was considered 'the most dangerous family in Șanț', not only because of the physical violence that it displayed, but also for the alcoholism and mental illnesses that characterized some of its members. For Făcăoaru, some of these were dysgenic elements, 'profoundly harmful to their social environment' and who should be removed from the village. It was not sufficient, he said, to apply a 'ban on marriage or the sterilization of individuals in this category'; what was needed was 'their permanent detention in labour colonies'.[82]

Such suggestions would become more and more frequent in the early 1940s, but before discussing them, it is worth pausing for a moment to reflect on one of Boia's arguments about the absence of any memory of slavery among the Roma of Șanț and in Transylvania in general, in contrast to other regions of Romania, where slavery had existed until the middle of the nineteenth century. Was the memory of slavery important to the ways in which Romanians perceived the Roma? An answer to this question is provided by Domnica I. Păun. In 1931 Păun began working for the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company and also participated in one of the monographic campaigns carried out in Bessarabia by the Sociological Section of the Romanian Social Institute. She conducted research in the village of Cornova, in Orhei County, home to 380 families of Romanians, six families of Jews, one of Germans, one of Ukrainians, and ten of 'Gypsies'. The memory of slavery was still alive in this village. The Roma, Păun discovered, were not considered 'foreign', but nor were they 'the same' as the other ethnic groups in the village. From her discussions with the Romanian villagers she realized that 'the inferiority of social situation in which the Roma had been for centuries as slaves of the Cornovans' had resulted, 'more than half a century after their emancipation, [in their] forming a category apart',[83] both ethnically and socially. They did not mix with the Romanians, and the reasons, as Nicolae Slobozean, one of the Romanians interviewed by Păun explained, concerned the different ethnic specificity of the Roma.

81 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Compoziția rasială a populației din Șanț (Năsăud)', *Sociologie Românească* 1, no. 10 (1936): 12–16.

82 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Studiul genealogic al unei familii asociale din Șanț (Năsăud)', *Sociologie Românească* 2, no. 4 (1937): 176–178.

83 Domnica I. Păun, 'Țiganii în viața satului Cornova', *Arhiva pentru Știința și Reforma Socială* 10, nos. 1–4 (1932): 521.

'The Gypsy', said Slobozean, 'even if he becomes white, will never become Moldavian'.[84] Not only was regional identity expressed in this answer, but also its association with the presumed whiteness of Romanian skin, a feature that did not characterize the Roma in the village.

Another aspect emphasized by Păun was the ethnic solidarity that existed between different communities of Roma in the region in question. At a first impression, the Roma appeared 'to form a social-economic unit', but on closer investigation, Păun observed 'that it is in the first place one based on ethnicity. Relations among Gypsies from different places are close and enduring, transcending differences of clan within the race.' The Roma of Cornova, according to Păun, were of a different 'race' from that of the Romanians, and 'blood relations' between the two communities were very rare, constituting truly 'exceptional cases'.[85]

Nevertheless, some anthropologists and eugenicists continued to insist on the argument that many sedentary Roma had in fact sought to assimilate into the majority Romanian population, which made their identification difficult. According to the census of 1930, 262,501 Roma lived in Great Romania, constituting 1.5% of the total population of 18,057,028. (The proportion using the mother tongue, Romani, was only 0.6%.) Of these, 221,726 (84.5%) lived in rural areas, and the remaining 40,775 (15.5%) in urban areas. Transylvania was the region with the most Roma: 75,342. It was followed by Muntenia with 71,784, Moldavia with 32,194, Oltenia with 22,239, the Banat with 17,919, Crișana-Maramureș with 15,895, Bessarabia with 13,518, and Dobrogea with 11,448. The region with the fewest Roma was Bukovina: 2,164.[86]

A major source of unease for the Romanian authorities hence arose: the nomadic Roma could easily be distinguished from other ethnic groups, but in the case of those who were sedentary and assimilated, new strategies of ethnic identification were needed. As Sabin Manuilă explained to his collaborator Dumitru C. Georgescu,

> in registering the Gypsies, the census enumerators faced quite serious difficulties. Because the term 'țigan' ['Gypsy'] was considered throughout the country a degrading one, a considerable number of Gypsies or inhabitants of Gypsy origin – especially those who feel more or less assimilated into other ethnic groups – did not declare their Gypsy ethnic origin, but

84 Păun, 'Țiganii în viața satului Cornova', 525.

85 Păun, 'Țiganii în viața satului Cornova', 526–527.

86 See Sabin Manuilă, *Studiu etnografic asupra populației României* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, 1940), 34–37.

> declared themselves, as was natural, to be of the community into which they felt assimilated.[87]

The difficulties that Manuilă and Georgescu faced in their attempt to provide correct and certain details on the number of Roma living in Romania were highlighted again in a report prepared for Ion Antonescu and sent to him on 7 September 1942, when the deportations of Roma were, at least officially, over.

The two statisticians drew attention to the 'increasingly pronounced' tendency of the sedentary Roma 'to disperse and melt into the mass of the majority population'.[88] The situation was particularly worrying in the regions of the Old Kingdom. Here, the Roma had been slaves for centuries, and after their emancipation, they had spread 'through the villages as possessors of certain primitive trades indispensable to the farming activity of the [Romanian] peasantry'. This physical proximity of the two ethnic groups and the general process of social and political emancipation in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had, in the view of Manuilă and Georgescu, led to 'a weakening of the Romanians' repulsion towards this population foreign to their race'.

At the same time, these historical processes had 'permitted the camouflaging or disappearance of the Gypsies in the mass of the majority population', such that even 'the pejorative term *Țigan*' was used 'more in anger to sanction a behaviour than to describe a real bio-ethnic condition, that is, the true Gypsy'. Consequently, the existing statistics could not be very precise either, and Manuilă and Georgescu recognized that in 1930, for example, not 'all the Gypsies were recorded' and certainly not all 'the inhabitants with a mixture of Gypsy blood'. In order to determine the exact number of sedentary Roma in the Old Kingdom, 'and the intensity of the diffusion of Gypsy blood in our population', the two researchers insisted, there would have to be 'a vast and extended investigation drawing on historical sources, existing statistical data, and a series of laborious anthropological and serological investigations'.[89] The conclusion of the report was that although the Roma were 'keepers by borrowing of some of the old traditions

87 Sabin Manuilă, Dumitru C. Georgescu, *Populația României* (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeria Națională, 1937), 59.

88 'Institutul Central de Statistică. Referat conținând o analiză statistică a populației țigănești din România, în cadrul frontierelor din 1942, pe baza rezultatelor recensământului general al populației din 1930" (7 September 1942). Quoted in *Documente privind deportarea țiganilor în Transnistria*, vol. 1, doc. 104, 163.

89 'Institutul Central de Statistică. Referat', 165.

and certain elements of Romanian folklore', they were 'nevertheless social and national non-values and a racial threat' to 'our nation', which, at that historical moment, was trying to protect its 'purer biological substance', and in so doing aspire to a 'Romanian ideal of humanity'.[90] The reason why the Roma in Romania could not conform to this ideal was in equal measure, both racial and eugenic.[91]

Anti-Roma Eugenics

The stigmatization of the Roma as a dysgenic and inferior group had already become explicit in the 1930s. In his study mentioned above, published in April 1935 in *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic*, Iordache Făcăoaru [figure 12] included the Roma among the categories of 'dysgenics' and 'hereditary defectives'. In this respect, Făcăoaru agreed with eugenicists in other countries, who similarly complained of the 'hypertrophy of the sick parts of the body of the nation as a consequence of the accumulation of hereditary defects'.[92]

The problem was both eugenic and social, as the so-called 'defectives' were seen as parasitic elements, who did not contribute economically and financially to the well-being of society. Victor Preda also underlined this aspect, when he suggested that:

> These individuals, incapable of helping themselves and incapable of providing even the smallest social service, remain in the care of the State, burdening, with their upkeep, the budget of the nation. On the other hand, through this social invasion of individuals bearing defective genes, the biological value of the ethnic group is much reduced, due to the fall in hereditary potential, which may have serious repercussions, leading to a biosocial degeneration of the ethnic group in its entirety.[93]

As elsewhere, it was the state that spent money on the healthcare and social protection of 'degenerate individuals', but Făcăoaru did not have precise statistics at hand regarding these costs. He speculated, however, that the

90 'Institutul Central de Statistică. Referat', 172.

91 Guido Landra, 'Il problema degli zingari', in Guido Landra, *Il problema della razza in Romania* (Bucharest: Istituto Italo-Romeno di Studi Demografici e Razziali, 1942), 51-6.

92 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Înmulțirea disgenicilor și costul lor pentru societate și stat', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* 6, nos. 4–6 (1935): 170

93 Victor Preda, 'Aspecte sociale ale geneticii moderne', *Revista Fundaţiilor Regale* 9, no. 11 (1942): 353.



Fig. 12. Iordache Făcăoaru, centre, standing. Sabin Manuilă, sitting, on his right (author's personal collection)

number of persons affected by tuberculosis, for example, was around one million and that the Romanian state spent 'over 200 million lei on their care, while the general economy of the country annually loses 17 billion lei'.[94]

Sufferers from tuberculosis were not the only individuals who, according to Făcăoaru, 'fill out the parasitic part of our ethnic body, damaging its mental and physical vigour by legitimate or illegitimate cross-breeding with persons often of better biological quality'. The Roma, sedentary and nomadic alike, were also considered 'dysgenic', constituting 'a parasitic and harmful foreign body'.[95]

Făcăoaru estimated the total number of Roma in Romania to be somewhere in the region of 400,000, much more than the figure established by the census of 1930.[96] He admitted that some sedentary Roma, for example those who worked as 'day-labourers, small farmers, craftworkers, musicians, or travelling salesmen', were useful to society, but he considered all the nomadic Roma to be a eugenic, racial, and social threat to the nation. Even those sedentary Roma who lived in colonies on the edges of towns and

94 Făcăoaru, 'Înmulțirea disgenicilor', 179–180.

95 Făcăoaru, 'Înmulțirea disgenicilor', 182.

96 A figure also used by the German ethnologists Karl Christian von Loesch and Wilhelm Emil Mühlmann in their book *Die Völker und Rassen Südosteuropas* (Berlin: Volk und Reich Verlag, 1943), 35.

villages led, in Făcăoaru's view, 'a life of unimaginable material and moral misery'. In his opinion 'the great majority [of the Roma], men, women, and children, pursue begging and theft'.[97]

There were also Roma mixed 'with other ethnic groups through marriage', which led to the lowering of 'the biological and social level of the latter'. The resulting 'half-breeds' (*corci* in Romanian), as Făcăoaru called them, were 'poor, lazy, and filthy', with a level of education and living conditions 'above those of the Gypsies, but below that of the other ethnic groups'. Giving as an example one such village of 'half-breeds', namely Varnița in Putna County, Făcăoaru claimed that they were at the level 'of the most inferior elements in our villages'. And their lack of civilization was also reflected in the 'lower mental level' that Făcăoaru attributed both to them and to some Roma in a community near the city of Cluj whom he had studied in 1933. The 'intellectual level' of the latter was 'inferior to that of delinquents, criminals, and prostitutes'. Consequently, Făcăoaru concluded, there was a need in Romania for eugenic and racial policies to reduce the biological and cultural impact of these 'elements of extra-European origin'.[98]

The study that he carried out together with his wife, Matilda (Tilly) Făcăoaru, in the Roma colony outside Cluj included 52 men and 63 women. They were then compared with 67 men and 74 women from the category of so-called 'intellectuals', particularly doctors, nurses, university teachers, and nursing assistants, together with 200 Romanian peasants: 100 men and 100 women. All the participants in the project were adults. What the Făcăoaru couple intended to demonstrate was that the differences between the European races were not only 'of a somatic nature', but also extended 'to the physiological and psycho-motor functions, work efficiency, resistance to tiredness, etc'. Such a study, they argued, had 'great practical significance for the issue of social selection'[99] in Romania.

The muscular strength of the right hand, which the Făcăoaru couple measured in these adults with the aid of a dynamometer,[100] was for them one of the physiological functions that varied according to a person's ethnic origin. Thus, 'Dinaric' men had the strongest right hands, followed by 'Nordic,

97 Făcăoaru, 'Înmulțirea disgenicilor', 183.

98 Făcăoaru, 'Înmulțirea disgenicilor', 183. See also I. Făcăoaru, 'Inteligența unei familii de țigani', in *Dare de seamă asupra ședințelor Societății Române de Antropologie din Cluj pe anul 1933–34* (Cluj: Tipografia ASTRA, 1935), 6.

99 Iordache Făcăoaru and Tilly Făcăoaru, 'Forța musculară manuală în raport cu rasa', in *Dare de seamă asupra ședințelor Societății Române de Antropologie din Cluj pe anul 1935–1936* (Cluj: Tipografia ASTRA, 1936), 98. The study was also published in *Clujul Medical* 17, no. 6 (1936), 427–430.

100 An instrument for measuring muscular strength.

Mediterranean, East European, Oriental, and Alpine'; a similar hierarchy was attributed to women. Then, a comparison was made between the Romanians, termed 'Aryans' in the study, and the Roma, the results being clearly in favour of the former. According to this study, the 'Gypsies' had 'muscular strength inferior to that of the Aryans for both hands, in both series of subjects [i.e., men and women]'.[101]

Starting from such observations, the two authors constructed a eugenic and racial typology of the Roma, according to which they were distinguished from the 'Aryans [i.e., Romanians] not only in the pigmentary complex, but also in their morphological and physiological characteristics'. The example of muscular strength, together with the fact that the Roma were more often 'left-handers', with the left hand stronger than the right, than 'right-handers' – the latter being considered 'normal, because in the white race, their proportion was overwhelming' – seemed to confirm not only the physical inferiority of the Roma, but also their 'mental functions', especially lack of intelligence and other eugenic stereotypes and racist associations. One of these was that the Roma were 'very lazy and indolent, with an aversion to any physical effort'.[102] All these characteristics were accentuated with age, because, as might be expected, 'Gypsies wear out their muscular strength faster than Aryans. Physical development is more accelerated among them, but aging also begins earlier."[103]

An anthropological description of the Roma was not, however, complete without cranial and somatometric measurements. At the meeting of the Cluj Society of Anthropology on 7 May 1936, the Făcăoaru couple presented their studies of 'cephalic indices' and 'the stature of the Gypsies' in the Iris colony. Starting from the premise that 'Gypsies have as an original characteristic dolichocephaly' and making use of Pittard's studies of the nomadic Roma of Dobrogea, they confirmed 'cross-breeding' with Romanians among the sedentary Roma of Cluj.[104] This ethnic mixing explained that fact that some of these Roma were brachycephalic or even hyperbrachycephalic.

Average height was established as 158.9 cm for men and 148.9 cm for women, which made the Roma 'the shortest of all the ethnic groups studied' by Iordache and Tilly Făcăoaru, separately or together. For example, the average height of the Romanians of Măguri, another village in Cluj County, was, according to their research, 167 cm; that of the Szeklers of the village of Lăzarea (Gyergyószárhegy),

101 Iordache Făcăoaru and Tilly Făcăoaru, 'Forța musculară manuală în raport cu grupurile etnice și straturile sociale', in *Dare de seamă*, 101.

102 Făcăoaru, Făcăoaru, 'Forța musculară manuală în raport cu grupurile etnice', in *Dare de seamă*, 102.

103 Făcăoaru, Făcăoaru, 'Forța musculară în raport cu etatea', in *Dare de seamă*, 120.

104 Făcăoaru, Făcăoaru, 'Indicele cefalic la ţigani', in *Dare de seamă*, 121.

today in Harghita County, was 165.6 cm, and for the Hungarians of the village of Pănet (Mezőpanit) in Mureș County, it was 165.8 cm.[105]

The point of all these anthropological arguments was to provide so-called evidence that the inferiority of the Roma was not merely social and cultural, but also biological. The research carried out by the two Făcăoaru was, in fact, aimed at facilitating as precise an understanding as possible of the eugenic and racial value of the Roma. Sabin Manuilă had suggested the same thing at a symposium organized by the Association for the Urbanism of Bucharest in 1935. On that occasion, Manuilă had underlined the problems associated with the creation of a 'new anthropological type' in the Romanian capital because of the presence of the Roma there, an ethnic group, he pointed out, which even assimilated had kept its undesirable hereditary traits. He invited his audience to imagine the creation of two ethnic colonies in Bucharest: one of Germans and the other of Roma. Starting out in life with equal chances of success, the two groups, Manuilă argued 'will each evolve in a manner predestined by their hereditary qualities'. Among the Germans, these qualities were good organization, stability, and group solidarity, qualities that were missing among the Roma. According to Manuilă, '[t]he group of Roma will live scattered, rootless, in a permanent provisional state'. While the Germans would have 'small, but well cared-for families', the Roma would have 'many offspring'. There was no doubt that it was ethnic origin and heredity that determined the eugenic value of the Germans and the dysgenic value of the Roma, and the example that Manuilă provided was the following: 'If we transplanted a number of new-born German children into a Gypsy social environment, and a number of Roma children into a German social environment, these groups of children would remain isolated in their adoptive collectivity, even if through education a sufficient degree of assimilation might be achieved.' The assimilation of individuals of different races by changing their social environment and through education was partially possible, Manuilă believed, but could never be complete. Reinforcing his explanation with a familiar example, he compared the Roma of Romania with 'the Negroes of the United States', who continued to be 'an isolated group in the body of the American nation'.[106] There was thus, Manuilă believed, a need for social selection combined with a eugenic one, and not only in Bucharest, but throughout the country.

105 Făcăoaru, Făcăoaru, 'Statura ţiganilor din colonia Iris (Cluj)', in *Dare de seamă*, 126.
106 Sabin Manuilă, 'Evoluţia rasselor din regiunea București', in Sabin Manuilă, Dinu V. Rosetti, and Dem. I. Dobrescu, *Istoria rasselor și civilizaţiilor din regiunea București* (Bucharest: Editura ziarului Tribuna Edilitară, 1935), 4–5. See also 'Rasele și civilizaţiile din București', *Adevărul* 49, no. 15704 (1935): 4.

In a study published together with the physician Ovidu Comșia early in 1937, Iordache Făcăoaru made a synthesis of the various forms of eugenic biopolitics directed against those described and labelled as 'dysgenics'. The Roma, in his view, were a minority 'composed of elements of negative value', and he grouped them together with 'delinquents, sick people, social misfits, and all categories of dysgenics'. They consisted of individuals lacking biological and intellectual value and, moreover, with a tendency towards anti-social or criminal behaviour. 'This biological and social ballast', according to Făcăoaru and Comșia, had the unfortunate role 'of halting progress, and if it does not succeed in all societies in slowing down the ascending course of the collectivity, then it manages everywhere to immobilize the ethnic body at an inferior level'.[107]

What could be done with minorities such as the Roma who constituted 'a serious bio-ethnic threat' to the Romanian population? In the search for a solution, Făcăoaru considered, the following questions would have to be answered:

1. What ethnic groups do we have that are deficient in comparison to our people?
2. For what reasons is cohabitation with these minorities not desirable?
3. If there is crossbreeding with biologically deficient ethnicities or races, how frequent is it?
4. What is the biological level of the half-breeds compared with the maternal ethnicities or races?
5. What are the villages and regions of Romania harmed by the mixture of ethnicities of non-European origin?
6. What essential somatic, social, economic, and cultural differences are there between us and the ethnic groups of non-European origin?
7. What is their prolificacy in comparison with our prolificacy?
8. What measures are recommended for their biological isolation and possibly for their gradual elimination from our nation?
9. Until a solution is found to the problem of minorities in this category on the basis of research, what urgent temporary measures are necessary in order to regulate their marriages and military service?[108]

107 Iordache Făcăoaru and Ovidiu Comşia, 'Criterii pentru determinarea valorii eredo–biologice. Încercare metodologică', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 7, nos. 1–3 (1937): 76. See also Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Selecţiunea valorilor biologice', *Transilvania* 70, no. 3 (1939): 161–166.

108 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Amestecul rasial şi etnic în România', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 9, nos. 9–10 (1938): 281.

It might be said that all the anthropological and eugenic research carried out after 1918 was guided by these questions. Romanian researchers tried to provide convincing answers, not only to clarify the debate about national specificity, but also to enhance their scientific expertise in support of the biopolitical strategy of the Romanian state.

In 1938, when he published this article, Făcăoaru considered that these questions had not yet found satisfactory solutions. For example, 'marriages with persons from the *ballast* minorities of the most inferior quality' had not been banned. The undermining of the biological potential of the nation thus continued through ethnic promiscuity. 'In the case of mixing with inferior races such as the Gypsies', he said, 'the lowering of the biological level constitutes a process with consequences so disastrous that all the other social and political considerations regarding the estrangement of our ethnic being are of absolutely secondary importance'.[109]

At that time, there were still public voices opposed to the stigmatization and dehumanization of the Roma. Negative eugenic proposals such as their forced sterilization were also subject to criticism. In the summer of 1937, an article about 'the sterilization of Gypsy children' in Nazi Germany appeared in the newspaper *Adevărul*. It reproduced extracts from a eugenic appeal made by Theodor Günther, the mayor of Berleburg in Westphalia, and published in the Nazi doctors' official journal, *Ziel und Weg* (*Goal and Path*). The Roma, Günther wrote, had long ceased to be the 'strong sons of their homeland of origin, India'. In the twentieth century, they had become 'degenerate branches, stunted and, through incest, completely degraded, of a family tree that had once been proud'; they were, in Günther's opinion, individuals 'without character, cowardly and asocial'. Accordingly, he suggested, they should be sterilized in order to protect 'the pure-blood German population [from] this Gypsy scourge'. In presenting these ideas, the Romanian author (unfortunately anonymous) expressed 'disgust', underlining the fact that 'not the slightest shade of pity' could be found in Günther, 'whose jargon will certainly remain one of the great disgraces of the times in which we live'.[110]

In the early 1940s, such anti-Roma racist language was also adopted by the Romanian eugenicists. In an article published in November 1940 in the

109 Făcăoaru, 'Amestecul rasial şi etnic în România', 285. A similar explanation is offered by Petru Râmneanțu, 'Înregistrarea biologică şi demografia', in *Probleme de sănătate publică*, ed. Iuliu Moldovan (Sibiu: Tipografia 'Cartea Românească din Cluj', 1943), 90.

110 'Nazismul și romii. Naziștii cer sterilizarea copiilor de țigani', *Adevărul* 51, no. 16428 (1937): 7. See also 'Țiganii din Germania amenințați cu sterilizarea', *Universul* 55, no. 170 (1938): 10.

Sibiu newspaper *România Nouă* (*New Romania*), Sabin Manuilă identified the Roma as the ethnic group most harmful to the Romanians from a racial point of view. The 'Jewish problem' was, for him, 'Romania's most important social problem, most acute political problem, and most serious economic problem' but the Jews did not constitute a 'racial problem', due to the fact that 'racial mixing' between Romanians and Jews was rare.

The 'Gypsy problem', however, Manuilă described in quite different terms. First and foremost, 'the Gypsy ethnic group', he noted, was Romania's 'most inferior in terms of social and especially moral value'. Their inferiority was not, however, caused by 'their anatomical structure', but must be sought, he considered, 'in their sub-mediocre intellectual structure and especially in the structure of their unstable character'. Secondly, he drew attention to the biological alterity represented by the Roma. 'The anthropological type of the Gypsy must be defined', Manuilă suggested, 'as an undesirable type, which must not be allowed to influence our racial constitution'.

Given these arguments, it comes as no surprise that Manuilă defined the 'Gypsy problem' as being 'Romania's most important, acute, and serious racial problem'. In his view, the situation was dramatic, calling for immediate state intervention. An alarm had to be sounded. Otherwise, Manuilă warned, the racial cross-breeding caused by the assimilation of the Roma in Romanian society, and the 'Gypsy-Romanians half-breeds' who had appeared as a result, would lead to the continuing weakening of the racial structure of the nation. The influence of the Roma was noticeable, he continued, in 'all social classes', which were 'crammed with Gypsy-Romanian offspring, bringing as a dowry into our social life the conception of moral life inherited from their Gypsy parents, together with the instability specific to their race'. How different, Manuilă insisted, was this 'Gypsy anthropological type' from 'our sober, rationalist, stable, and firm Daco-Romanian type'! A more striking contrast between two ethnic groups would be hard to imagine!

'The racial peril of the Gypsification of our race' was an imminent one, Manuilă considered. To these grave reflections, he added the difficult of solving the 'Gypsy problem', because 'the Gypsies have a tendency towards rapid and undesirable assimilation and because they tend to mix with the most inferior social classes, where no form of propaganda or education can yield palpable results'. The message could not be clearer: 'We should be concerned with the increasingly acute problem of the never-ending and undesired mixing of Gypsies and Romanians, a mixing that degrades the Romanian race. The Gypsy immixture in Romanian blood is the most dysgenic factor affecting our race."[111]

111 Sabin Manuilă, 'Problema rassială a României', *România Nouă* 7, no. 41 (1940): 5.

The text is short, but extraordinarily rich in eugenic and racist references. It clearly illustrates Manuilă's racism and eugenic thinking, and is, in this respect, a representative text for the anti-Roma discourse of early 1940s Romania. However, Manuilă was not alone in describing the presence of the Roma in Romanian society in such racially offensive language. Other authors were using equally offensive eugenic terms, describing the Roma as the antithesis of the Romanian national self.

Take, for example, the text titled 'Racism towards the Gypsies', written by the Orthodox theologian Liviu Stan and published in January 1941 in the newspaper *Cuvântul*. Like Manuilă, Stan was convinced that the Roma were a 'source of infection and degeneration'. Their mixing with Romanians led to the appearance of 'hybrids, produced by the crossbreeding of our race with their race'. These 'hybrids' he termed *Mitici*, using a name popularized by Romania's foremost playwright, Ion Luca Caragiale, but which for Stan denoted not so much the Bucharest social type represented by Caragiale's character *Mitică* as, more generally, the 'negative and ruinous elements of Romanian life'. The difference between Romanians and *Mitici*, and at the same time the similarity between the latter and the Roma was underlined as one of the principal features of Romania's bio-ethnic realities. The 'Mitici just like the Gypsies, and the Gypsies just like the Mitici; in other words, the Gypsified Romanians and the Gypsies alike' were, Stan pointed out, 'refractory towards the authentic values and ideals of our race'. The eugenic and racial harm caused by the Roma was not only biological, but also spiritual and cultural.

It was this aspect that particularly troubled Stan. 'Gypsy blood has infiltrated Romanian blood', he complained, 'and in polluting this biological element, it has polluted and deranged our spirituality wherever it has reached and has corrupted our ethical behaviour'. It was a matter of 'moral contamination', much harder to remove from society than the 'blood infiltration' of the Roma. After centuries of living with and alongside the Romanians, the Roma had managed, according to Stan, 'to create a Gypsy moral climate' that had contaminated the racial foundation of the Romanian people, especially 'the weak or poorly formed examples of our race'. These were 'painful observations', meant to alert the Romanian authorities that 'in terms of the threat posed by the racially mixed elements to the eugenics of our race and to our spiritual condition, after the Jews come the Gypsies'.[112]

In order for the Romanian people to prevent further biological degeneration, Stan recommended that the state should adopt 'a racist policy also

112 Liviu Stan, 'Rasism față de țigani', *Cuvântul* 18, no. 92 (1941): 1.

towards the Gypsies', just as it had done towards the Jews. The time was right, he believed, to adopt the eugenic programme of racial protectionism. 'The total remaking of the Romanian race, the purification of the blood and the disinfection of our spirituality' called for 'the elimination of the toxins slipped in by the corroding and accursed nomadic race of the Gypsies'. He also suggested that 'any mixing of Romanians and Gypsies' should be forbidden, together with the introduction of a ban on marriages between them, followed by 'the total isolation' of the Roma in 'a sort of Gypsy ghetto'.

This version of Romanian racism had a sacred mission. It was not a matter of merely suppressing those who did not conform to the eugenic and racial ideal of the *perfect* Romanian, but of a veritable anthropological and spiritual transformation, a transfiguration, as Cioran would have said. For this renewal of the Romania nation to take place, the so-called inferior ethnic groups had to be eliminated. Petru Tipărescu, as I have mentioned in chapter 2, had tried to demonstrate 'the degeneration of the [Jewish] race' and the danger that the Jews posed for the Romanian people. For Stan, and for Manuilă, the Roma were the most destabilizing biological factor in Romanian society. 'As long as Gypsy infiltration and influence over our racial nature do not cease', concluded Stan in prophetic tones, 'we shall never achieve sufficient moral equilibrium and the harmonious development of our natural qualities, in order to erupt with new light into the life of the new world. We shall not be able to become what God meant us to be.'[113]

Such a rallying cry, Stan hoped, would not be ignored by the political elites of the moment. And, indeed, it was not ignored, either by Ion Antonescu or by other authors who tried, in their turn, to offer eugenic and racist arguments to justify the elimination of the Roma. Iordache Făcăoaru's older brother, Gheorghe, was one of the most ideologically driven, 'a fanatical patriot'.[114] At the beginning of 1934, he joined his brother at the meetings of the Anthropology Society of Cluj, where he presented summaries of the anthropological research that he had carried out in Dobrogea a year earlier.[115]

Two years later, Gheorghe Făcăoaru returned to Cluj, after a journey through Europe with the Romanian boy scouts. On this occasion, he also took part in the February 1936 meeting of the Anthropology Society, this time presenting a paper about the ethnic psychology of the various peoples

113 Stan, 'Rasism față de țigani', 2. See also Liviu Stan, 'Căsătoria religioasă și familia', *Revista Teologică* 31, nos. 7–8 (1941): 317–325.

114 The characterization is by Iordache Făcăoaru. See *Istoria familiei Făcăoaru* (1975), 31. Manuscript, Cabinetul de Manuscrise, Biblioteca Academiei Române, Bucharest.

115 Gheorghe Făcăoaru, 'Cercetări etnografice în Dobrogea', in *Dare de seamă asupra ședințelor Societății Române de Antropologie din Cluj pe anul 1933–34*, 12–13 and 19–22.

he had encountered in Europe and North America.[116] Around this time, he was beginning to show an interest in demographic and biopolitical issues that prefigures the themes of the articles he would publish several years later.

The first of these appeared in the summer of 1938, in the nationalist newspaper *România Eroică* (*Heroic Romania*), edited by Ion Colfescu-Delaturda, with whom Gheorghe Făcăoaru went on to enjoy a close collaboration. The theme of the article was Romania's national minorities. According to their alleged racial worth, he divided them into two groups: 'assimilable' and 'non-assimilable' minorities. In the first group he included those minorities who were 'useful or at least harmless from the point of view of racial quality' to the Romanian majority – these were the 'Christian minorities of Aryan origin'. The second group consisted of 'Jews and Gypsies, nomadic and sedentary'. He believed that the 'the Jews were a source of corruption and social fragmentation' and that 'the Gypsies were a prevailing source moral and sanitary infection'.[117]

Next, Făcăoaru turned his attention to depopulation, a problem caused by demographic stagnation and even decline in many villages and towns in the south-western counties of Romania, especially in the region of the Banat.[118] On the basis of data provided by the Central Institute of Statistics, Gheorghe Făcăoaru drew attention to the biological decline of the Romanian population. 'Our race is perishing!' he wrote, insisting on the need for demographic growth and for the ethnic renewal of the nation.[119] However, he emphasized that the solution to Romania's demographic problem was a matter not only of promoting the majority Romanian element, but also of removing minority ethnic groups perceived as inassimilable, who 'diminish and distort the national character of the majority'.[120]

116 Gheorghe Făcăoaru, 'Câteva observații de psihologie etnică, cu prilejul unei călătorii în Europa', in *Dare de seamă asupra ședințelor Societății Române de Antropologie din Cluj pe anul 1935–1936*, 92–98. See also Gheorghe Făcăoaru, 'Câteva note de psihologie etnică cu prilejul unei călătorii în America de Nord', *România Eroică* 3, nos. 1–4 (1939): 39–45.

117 Gheorghe Făcăoaru, 'Statul național și minoritățile naționale', *România Eroică* 2, no. 2 (1938): 27–28.

118 See, for example, Emil Pocrean, 'Metode de eugenie, aplicabile în Banat', *Revista Institutului Social Banat–Crişana* 11, no. 1 (1943): 137–142 and Gheorghe Birăescu, *Infiltrațiunile maghiare din secolul XIX și depopularea Banatului* (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial şi Imprimeriile Statului, 1939).

119 Gheorghe Făcăoaru, 'Câteva observații demografice. Ne piere neamul!', *România Eroică* 3, nos. 1–4 (1939): 27–29. See also Gheorghe Făcăoaru, 'Naționalitate și cetățenie', *România Eroică* 5, nos. 9–10 (1942): 192–196; and Gheorghe Făcăoaru, 'Neam, națiune și cetățenie', *România Eroică* 7, no. 6 (1943): 205–211.

120 Gheorghe Făcăoaru, 'Actuale şi viitoare probleme demografice', *România Eroică* 3, nos. 11–12 (1940): 157.

Biopolitics was another of Gheorghe Făcăoaru's favourite themes.[121] In April 1941, he published the first part of an article entitled 'Some Facts about the Family and the Biopolitical State', in which he lamented 'the weakening of the physical and moral force of the nation' and the neglect of biopolitical capital of the Romanian population. From 'racial purity [and] homogeneity', he believed, sprung 'the nation's creative vigour', and this, in its turn, gave 'value and political durability' to the state.[122] In a country like Romania, the minority population was, he believed, not only numerous, but also dangerous. In particular, he attacked the Jewish minority. It was the Jews who had undermined the economy of the state and had financially exploited the Romanian peasant. It was they, too, who made possible 'the development of the microbes' which were weakening the organism of the nation. In these circumstances, Făcăoaru pointed out, only the adoption of national biopolitics, as formulated by Iuliu Moldovan, could save 'the [Romanian] people, gnawed at by every social illness'.[123]

A few months later, the second part of the article appeared in the same newspaper, *România Eroică*. This time, the eugenic message was clear. First, the introduction of certificates of ethnicity was proposed. Together with certificates of health, these were, in Făcăoaru's view, the means by which 'eugenic marriage' could be achieved. He then mentioned his wish that the political elite would rediscover its 'national pride of race and blood', and pass legislation to prevent the 'mixing of blood through marriage, especially with ethnic groups inferior' to the Romanians. To continue to allow racial mixing, constituted, he emphasized, 'a crime against our successors' and 'an unforgivable sin against our race'.[124]

There was a need, he continued, for 'curative measures to isolate and suppress the present evil, on the one hand, and on the other, for preventative measures to preserve the biological capital [of the Romanians] in all its purity and beauty'. Who constituted the 'present evil' had been discussed in the first part of the article, but Făcăoaru was not only talking about the Jews. This time, his attention was directed against the Roma. A section of the article dealt with 'the danger of the assimilation of the Gypsies'. They were considered not only 'primitive and degenerate' but, at the same time,

121 Vezi Gheorghe Făcăoaru, 'Adaptarea sistemului de rechiziții la normele de biopolitică și justiție socială', *România Eroică* 3, nos. 5–8 (1939): 91–93.

122 Gheorghe Făcăoaru, 'Câteva date în jurul familiei şi statului biopolitic', *România Eroică* 4, no. 12 (1940), 168–169.

123 Făcăoaru, 'Câteva date în jurul familiei şi statului biopolitic', 170.

124 Gheorghe Făcăoaru, 'Câteva date în jurul familiei şi statului biopolitic', *România Eroică* 5, nos. 1–4 (1941): 38–39.

'bearers of microbes, of illnesses, of vices, and many other evils'. Like the Jews, to whom Făcăoaru compared them, the Roma were 'a nation apart, microbian and marginal'. In his view, the antisemitic racial laws in existence in Romania at the time were beneficial, as they were an expression of the biopolitical realities of the moment, but the 'Gypsy scourge' should not have been ignored. He considered that the 'Gypsies are like the Yids: without homeland, without army, without culture'. Both were, in short, 'parasitic peoples'.[125]

In contrast to the official statistics, Făcăoaru suggested that the number of Roma was around 600,000, divided into nomads, semi-nomads, and sedentary. In describing them, he used both the idea of racial inferiority and the eugenic stigma associated with so-called anti-social behaviour. According to him 'the greatest robberies and murders [were committed] by Gypsies or by those with such blood, inherited through mixing by marriage'. His sweeping denunciations, based on biological determinism, were meant to invoke fear and stigma, and Făcăoaru did not hesitate to call for the Roma to be 'driven away or terminated'.

A year before the start of the deportations of Roma to Transnistria, Gheorghe Făcăoaru proposed the following 'practical solutions':

> The nomadic and semi-nomadic Gypsies to be interned in forced-labour camps. Upon arrival, their clothes to be changed, their faces shaved, their hair cut and then, they should be sterilized. To cover the costs of maintaining them, they must be put to forced labour. With the first generation we are rid of them. [...] The sedentary Gypsies will be sterilized at home, so that in the course of a generation the place will be cleansed of them too.[126]

Through the application of this eugenic method – also used at the time in other European countries where sterilization was legal –, Făcăoaru hoped for a significant reduction of the fertility of the Roma, but, in his view, through this declared programme of eugenic purification, it would also be possible to achieve a revitalization of the social space that they had occupied for decades. Thus, he suggested, there would be an end to 'the squalor of earth-houses, of people unclothed and covered with syphilitic or cancerous sores. We would have fewer vagabonds, beggars, and probably the number of the candidates for the mental asylums, preventive custody units, and

125 Făcăoaru, 'Câteva date în jurul familiei şi statului biopolitic', 40.
126 Făcăoaru, 'Câteva date în jurul familiei şi statului biopolitic', 41.

hospitals would also be substantially reduced.' The eugenic argument was backed up by an economic one, with the sterilization of the Roma presented as a solution to reduce expenditure in a period of economic crisis: 'The state spends almost a third of its budget on the maintenance of hospitals and all sorts of institutions of social assistance, and on policing morality, and for all that, the social squalor grows every day. There is an explanation and a simple solution: *the evil must be cut at the root and not cultivated*.'[127]

Biopolitics, eugenics, anthropology, and demography were the 'sciences' on the basis of which Gheorghe Făcăoaru conceived his own anti-Roma racial interpretations, in keeping with the cultural and historical particularities of Romania in the early 1940s. He shared with other authors such as Sabin Manuilă and Liviu Stan, an explicit intention of limiting the reproduction of those with 'undesirable hereditary traits', such as the Roma. 'Only the good and valuable', said Făcăoaru, 'have a right to life'.

His article closes with the eugenic metaphor of the gardener (the state) who strives to protect the garden (the nation) from unwanted weeds (dysgenics, the asocial, etc.) and who must clear the tree (the people) of dried branches (unwanted minorities) in order for it to grow and become beautiful and rich in fruit. It was formulated thus:

> From the nest of larvae that nibble the green leaves of the tree of the Romanian people – which had barely come into leaf – nothing will remain tomorrow but a sad page of history [...] and the ashes of a pyre on which all these vermin will flicker.
> Our care must be great, lest too many branches with flowering buds be broken ... when collecting the larvae.
> Science is there to help us. Therefore, it is good to persist in understanding evil and in the timely preparation of the means to suppress it.[128]

Given the advanced stage of assimilation of the Roma in Romanian society, the diagnosis was sombre. What, then, could be done to prevent the further degradation of the race? Gheorghe Făcăoaru's opinion, according to which Romania was a country crippled by the social and biological degeneration caused by Jews and Roma, was extreme, but more moderate eugenicists, too, agreed that the Roma constituted a dysgenic threat to the Romanian national community. Gheorghe Banu, for example, explained in an article published in 1941:

127 Făcăoaru, 'Câteva date în jurul familiei şi statului biopolitic', 42 (emphasis in original).
128 Făcăoaru, 'Câteva date în jurul familiei şi statului biopolitic', 49.

> Due to their heredity and constitution, to which is added the degrading action of environmental factors and working conditions, the Gypsies have long been an element of psycho-physical inferiority, in opposition to the autochthonous population. Regardless of the category to which the Gypsies belonged in the period of slavery (to the prince, the monastery or the boyars), these elements have always engaged in dysgenic actions.[129]

Slavery was thus used by Banu to explain why the Roma population in Romania had developed racial traits that were undesirable in modern society. His interpretation was that the Roma had *become* inferior, but he too argued for the existence of a connection between their 'race' and their asocial and deviant character. And he too agreed with the eugenic intervention of the Romanian state for the protection of the majority 'through a series of biological measures, social measures, medico-social measures; in short, measures to support a eugenic family policy'.[130]

The Racialization of the Roma after the Deportation

The explanations put forward by Sabin Manuilă, Liviu Stan, Gheorghe Făcăoaru, and Gheorghe Banu reflect the acceptance of anti-Roma racism and anti-Roma eugenics in Romanian public life in the early 1940s. The direct contact that Manuilă enjoyed with the head of state, Marshal Ion Antonescu, also helped to normalize the programme of social selection and eugenic improvement of the Romanian nation at the highest political level.

The eugenic arguments regarding the need to protect the majority population from the racial threat posed by the Roma had worked, but the deportation of the 'unassimilable' nomadic Roma to Transnistria, together with those sedentary Roma who were deemed 'asocial' and 'dysgenic' did not completely solve the 'Gypsy problem'.

Attention was repeatedly drawn to the presumed squalid and unhygienic lifestyle of the Roma, and the sanitary and hygienic authorities continued to call for their complete 'evacuation' from cities, even after the deportation to Transnistria was completed. For example, on 12 August 1942, the mayor of the town of Odobești in Putna County was advised by the county's hygiene council to take 'measures to erase the Gypsy quarter' (*țigănia* in

129 Gheorghe Banu, 'Eugenia poporului românesc', *Revista de Igienă Socială* 11, nos. 11–12 (1941): 366.

130 Banu, 'Eugenia poporului românesc', 371.

Romanian) of the town.[131] The living conditions of the Gypsy community of Bucharest were likewise highlighted by the city's hygiene council, which proposed the evacuation of the Roma from the various districts of the city that were affected by their lack of hygiene and cleanliness.[132] The Roma, it was constantly repeated, constituted the group with the most visible 'asocial tendencies', who, by their way of life and as a consequence 'especially of certain hereditary defects, have caused and encouraged the phenomenon of asociality'.[133]

The eugenic attitude of the Romanian authorities was apparent at every contact with the Roma population. It was equally present in the legal and political studies published at the time; these can help us to understand the determining factors in the treatment of the Roma both during the deportations and after. An eloquent example in this respect is offered by Paul Negulescu, general secretary of the Institute of Administrative Studies, and by George Alexianu, professor of constitutional law in the Faculty of Law in Bucharest and governor of Transnistria from 1941 to 1944. The two were the coauthors of a popular treatise of public law, used not only by students but also by lawyers and judges across the country. The second volume of the treatise, published in 1943, dealt, among other matters, with the civil and criminal responsibility of ministers and the rights of human beings and of the citizen in Romania and in other countries, including Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Appropriate topics, one might say, for a study of criminal and constitutional law.

In fact, however, it is something else that makes this study relevant. In the part titled 'Racial Policy', Negulescu and Alexianu deal with the idea of race, with the roles of heredity and environment in historical development, and with sero-anthropology and eugenics. The racist concepts of National-Socialist ideology are also discussed, together with theories of racial degeneration proposed by such writers as Arthur de Gobineau. The state, Negulescu and Alexianu emphasized, was under an obligation to 'improve the race' and to protect it from degeneration. According to them, 'the racial policy followed by almost all states condemns the principle of unbridled promiscuity', promoting instead 'the principle of defending racial purity'. For this reason, 'current European legislations, in general,

131 Primăria orașului Odobești, no. 5092, 20 August 1942, CCNR, Fond 2383, dos. 34, 1942, fila 16.

132 'Razia sanitară din piețele Capitalei', *Evenimentul Zilei* 5, no. 1586 (1943): 3.

133 Gheorghe Banu, *Tratat de medicină socială*, vol. III: *Asistența socială* (Bucharest: Casa Școalelor, 1944), 292.

permit marriages only between people of the same race or closely related races, such as all the peoples of Aryan race, while mixture with inferior or degenerate races is prohibited'.[134]

Who were these 'unhealthy and inferior elements'? On the basis of the legal system adopted by the so-called National Legionary State after 6 September 1940, the ethnic groups in Romania were divided into two categories:

> a) some who would be of similar or related blood [to the Romanians], such as peoples of the Aryan race, [for example] the neo-Latins, the Germans, etc.; [and] b) peoples considered foreign, inferior, or degenerate, such as peoples of the Mongolic race, the Jews having blood foreign to that of the Aryans, or degenerate peoples, such as the Gypsies.

With the explicit aim of 'conserving the purity of the race', there was a ban on marriages between Romanians and members of nationalities in the second category.[135] Thus, not only marriages between Jews and Romanians were forbidden in Romania under Antonescu's regime, but also marriages between Roma and Romanians.

A special chapter was dedicated to the legal situation of the Roma in various European countries, together with a short history of this ethnic group. Slavery was also properly treated, with appropriate historical references. According to Negulescu and Alexianu, the Roma were 'an old Asiatic race, tied to their customs, very difficult to assimilate, a degenerate race'.[136] They were considered 'lazy, without dignity, vagabonds, beggars, thieves, robbers, even murderers'; in other words, 'a harmful and unassimilable element'. On the basis of these 'considerations of racial policy', the authors continued, 'the Government has taken the necessary measures to remove from the country all the nomadic Gypsies'.[137] For those Roma who remained in Romania, sterilization was recommended.

In his capacity as governor of Transnistria, it was Alexianu who had been responsible for the inhuman manner in which the Roma deported there had been treated. We now also know of his anti-Roma racial beliefs and his justification for their elimination by the Romanian state. Both the use

134 Paul Negulescu and George Alexianu, *Tratat de drept public*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Casa Școalelor, 1943), 313.

135 Negulescu and Alexianu, *Tratat de drept public*, 332.

136 Negulescu and Alexianu, *Tratat de drept public*, 353.

137 Negulescu and Alexianu, *Tratat de drept public*, 356–357.

of racial and eugenic arguments, and the justification of their application clearly demonstrates the intention of the political elites to create a Romanian biopolitical state during the early 1940s.

The dominant theme of public discussion about the Roma after the end of the deportations continued to be that of mixing between Roma and Romanians. In a public lecture about the biopolitical importance of future generations delivered in Timișoara in 1944 under the auspices of the General Association of Romanians United with Rome (i.e., Greek Catholics), whose president he was, the renowned botanist Alexandru Borza drew attention to the various forms that the biological decline of a people might take. One of them was 'the disappearance of the somatic specificity of the race, through mixing, degeneration, and abuses (in our case, mixing with Gypsies and with Slavs)'; another was the gradual replacement of the majority population with 'people of other ethnicity (in the Banat and Oltenia, often by Gypsies)'. The situation was becoming dramatic when 'you see your own people soon to be replaced'.[138]

Agreeing with the Nazi anthropologist Adolf Würth, Gheorghe Banu suggested that 'the problem of the Gypsies is in the first place a problem of cross-breeding'. Given that 'neither measures of assistance nor repressive ones' had produced 'satisfactory results', the only 'measure applicable to this group' was 'segregation, their total isolation from the rest of society'.[139] This was also the opinion of Ion Chelcea, who in 1944 published *Țiganii din România: Monografie etnografică* (*The Gypsies of Romania: An Ethnographic Study*) in which he adhered without reservation to the eugenic programme described in this chapter. The '*mixing of blood*' between Romanians and Roma had, he believed, produced a '*definitive rupture in the closed circle of* [Romanian] *community*', which would, in time, '*destroy the circle of iron: the law of blood*',[140] and with it the organic fabric of the Romanian people.

The major problem observed by all those who addressed the so-called 'Gypsy problem' in Romania was the long-shared history of the Romanians and the Roma, as was also emphasized by the American writer of Romanian origin Konrad Bercovici in his book *The Story of the Gypsies*, published in New York in 1928. Chelcea did not agree with Bercovici's opinion that 'Roumania without the Gypsies is as inconceivable as the rainbow without its colours,

138 Alexandru Borza, *O problemă fundamentală pentru Biserică și Neam: Copiii* (Timișoara: Institutul de Arte Grafice G. Matheiu, 1944), 18.

139 Banu, *Tratat de medicină socială*, vol. III, 294.

140 Ion Chelcea, *Țiganii din România. Monografie etnografică* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, 1944), 96 (emphasis in original).

or a forest without birds'.[141] The idea that 'Romanians and Gypsies' shared a long and intertwined history, the threads of their destinies woven together, seemed to him utterly exaggerated. In fact, Chelcea suggested, 'the Romanian people has always received with contempt this race, about which it only has words of *stinging sarcasm*. It goes so far as to define the Gypsy outside the notion of man, as may be seen in some Romanian proverbs, such as "Nici salcia nu-i ca pomu, nici Țiganu nu-i ca omu" ("Neither is the willow like a tree, nor is the Gypsy like a human being").'[142] Chelcea believed that the majority of Romanians were in favour of establishing a clear separation between themselves and the Roma and he called on the state to intervene to prevent further ethnic mixing. 'The Gypsies have long ceased to be an object of law-making in the Romanian state', he observed with regret.[143] In any case, if such legislation had been introduced in 1944, it would have had to make a distinction not only between nomadic and sedentary Roma, but also between Roma who had intermixed with Romanians and those who had not.

It was the nomadic Roma for whom Chelcea proposed radical measures, although a great number of them had already been deported to Transnistria. From a racial point of view, their assimilation was to be avoided at all cost, because 'it would produce a grave disturbance in the constitution of Romanian blood'. Consequently, Chelcea's proposal was 'a total isolation of nomadic Gypsies'. They had to be 'absolutely excluded from the life of our people'. They could, according to an already established plan 'be moved somewhere in Transnistria or beyond the Bug'. In other words, the deportation of the nomadic Roma was to continue. Some Roma, however, especially those whom the anthropologists considered the most 'racially pure', were to be kept and included in a 'park in nature, for the country not to lose a rare species found among us'.[144] These Roma were to be studied and exhibited as part of the flora and fauna of the country, in a sort of human zoo. There was no need to travel to far off regions of the world in order to study 'primitive' populations; Romania had its own 'primitives', and some of them, Chelcea believed, might have a certain value from the point of view of anthropological and ethnological research.

For the sedentary Roma, Chelcea had other proposals. Some of them, who were talented musicians and good tradesmen, were to be spared, but the majority,

141 Konrad Bercovici, *The Story of the Gypsies* (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1928), 74.
142 Chelcea, *Țiganii din România*, 20 (emphasis in original).
143 Chelcea, *Țiganii din România*, 21.
144 Chelcea, *Țiganii din România*, 100.

> the ballast, the great number of village Gypsies, established in the countryside or especially in the towns, will have to be settled in a marginal part of the country, transported across the Dniester, as the case may be, sterilized so as not to reproduce and thus their race, which threatens to stamp out the good qualities that exist in our population, would disappear.[145]

Romanians who had intermixed with Roma were also targeted. According to prevalent eugenic theories 'the half-breed resembles more the inferior than the superior race'. Through 'cross-breeding', the argument continued, 'the inferior dispositions' of the Roma were entering the body of the Romanian people. The eugenic programme he proposed, Chelcea believed, had more chances of success that the attempts so far made, because it was based on a gradual elimination of the Roma, and 'could be carried out progressively and over a relatively long period of time'. Unlike 'other researchers before now who have taken a global view of the Gypsies', Chelcea considered that they had to be understood in their own context and 'group by group: the village Gypsies, the forest Gypsies (*rudari*, *băeși*, *lingurari*), and those permanently nomadic'.[146]

Such suggestions reflect Chelcea's way of thinking, influenced by a local anthropological tradition regarding Romania's ethnic minorities, but also by a colonial tradition that had created a narrative about the European peoples, making them superior to the non-European peoples, who were considered primitive. In Chelcea's view, being of non-European origin, the Roma could not become *Romanian*, their attachment to the Romanian lands notwithstanding. And yet the 'Romanian ethnic environment', Chelcea admitted gravely, was sought after by the Roma. They clung to 'our people like ivy' to a tree: 'Wherever you place the Gypsy, however you turn him round, he remains with his face turned towards this country'.[147]

Transforming Roma into Romanians

The introduction of eugenic and racial measures, Chelcea hoped, would solve 'the Gypsy problem'. At the same time, it should be remembered, these measures were part of a much broader programme of ethnic cleansing, announced already in 1940. The deportations continued sporadically into 1943,

145 Chelcea, *Țiganii din România*, 101.
146 Chelcea, *Țiganii din România*, 101.
147 Chelcea, *Țiganii din România*, 16.

but the problem of the Roma's 'ethnic origin' persisted, as Colonel Dumitru Craiu, prefect of Brașov County, explained in a letter sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 28 April 1943. The prefect asked whether Romanian law recognized the category of 'Gypsy ethnic origin', and if so, which of the inhabitants should be considered 'Gypsies'. The mayors of a number of villages in the county, he continued, were facing difficulties regarding the issuing of 'certificates of ethnic origin' to some of the villagers who were 'presumed Gypsies', although they spoke Romanian and were Orthodox. It was difficult, the prefect explained, to distinguish them from the rest of the villagers on the basis of their physical appearance. Moreover, 'some were farmers and merchants, and some were very good householders and even prosperous'. Without a law to clarify the ethnic origin of the Roma, it was hard to establish whether some of those who requested the certificates were 'Romanians by blood' or not.[148]

Just as it had proceeded with the letter received from the mayor of Tecuci in October 1942, the Ministry of Internal Affairs forwarded the document to the Ministry of Justice, which received it on 1 May 1943. It had become clear that there was a need for laws to clarify the ethnic differences between Romanians and Roma, similar to those introduced for Jews in 1940–1941. Romanian's Legislative Council assumed the mission of preparing such a law. On 12 March 1943, Judge Mihail Măgureanu, president of Section 1 of the Council, informed the Minister of Justice, Ion C. Marinescu, that he and two colleagues had drafted bills for legislation to establish 'Romanian ethnic origin'.[149] One of these bills, deposited on 24 July 1943, has been preserved, and allows us to understand the legal framework that was being prepared for those Roma and Jews who had escaped deportation.

According to the first article, the following were to be considered to be of Romanian ethnic origin: citizens born in Romania or in 'the old Romanian lands' (Oltenia, Muntenia, Moldavia, Transylvania, Bukovina, Bessarabia, Dobrogea, and the Timok Valley), whose parents and grandparents were Romanians, who had Romanian names and spoke Romanian, and who were of the Christian religion, regardless of whether they were Orthodox or Unitates (Greek Catholics).

The second article specified who could not be of 'Romanian ethnic origin': Jews, 'regardless of religion', those who were citizens of other 'states of foreign ethnic origin', Muslims, and, finally, 'Gypsies'. The third article clarified that those whose fathers or grandfathers were ethnic Romanians were

148 Prefectura Județului Brașov, Cabinetul Prefectului, nr. 5109/943. CCNR, Fond 34, file 11.
149 Consiliul Legislativ, Secția 1, no. 112, 13 March 1943, CCNR, Fond 34, file 21.

considered Romanian, even if their mothers or grandmothers were not born Romanian but were 'Christians of related blood' to the Romanians. Who were these 'blood' relations of the Romanians? The fourth article further explained that they were 'those who belong to the European peoples of Latin, German, Slavic, and Hellenic race'. This article, with its accent on the bond of 'blood' existing between the Romanians and other white European races, was a direct reference to the argument advanced by Petit in his 1941 book on ethnic origin, discussed above.

The bill further specified which Romanian citizens were to be accepted as 'assimilated' – for example, some Jews were included in this category if they were descendants of soldiers killed in one of Romania's previous wars – and which of them as 'minorities'. This second category referred to 'Romanian citizens of foreign origin' who 'have kept their origin, language, and religion', and those who were not ethnic Romanians, according to the law. The bill concluded with a ban on marriages between 'ethnic Romanians and foreigners or minorities'.[150]

The 1943 bill was not, however, passed into law, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice continued to receive requests for legal clarification. On 8 February 1944, the new prefect of Brașov, Manole Enescu, expressed his concern regarding Roma who were requesting documents to prove their Romanian ethnic origin. Enescu complained that the current law only specified that Jews could not be 'Romanians by blood'. In many of their requests for certificates, the Roma made use of the fact that they were baptized into the Orthodox faith, but Enescu pointed out that 'religion could not be the sole criterion to determine ethnic origin'.[151]

After receiving Enescu's letter, the Legislative Council prepared another document, whose significance should not be underestimated, with the title 'Report on the issue of legislating on ethnic origin in general and regarding the Gypsies in particular'. Here, 'the ethnic origin of an individual' was defined from the outset as 'their hereditary ethnicity, in other words, acquired naturally, by birth from their parents, who in their turn had acquired it in the same manner from their parents. In this way, climbing in a direct line from generation to generation, we arrive at the trunk of the great family, the ethnic community'. It was also underlined in the document that the establishment of the necessary legal framework for the issue of ethnic origin was a subject of national importance. This was, however, easier said than

150 Proiect Decret–Lege pentru stabilirea originei etnice, 24 July 1943, CCNR, Fond 34, files 12–15.
151 Copy of the report of the Prefecture of Brașov County, no. 1037/944 to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, CCNR, Fond 34, files 19–20.

done. One major area of difficulty was 'researching blood connections, from generation to generation', with the result that 'proving the ethnicity of all the ancestors' often turned into 'a veritable *probatio diabolica*'.[152]

Another problem was that 'the decisive elements of the ethnic community, a common soul, common conceptions of the world and of life, common feelings', were all 'subjective elements' that could not be evaluated objectively and by scientific methods. The bottom line was that the Romanian people occupied a territory that for centuries had been situated at the confluence of three empires – Austrian, Russian, and Ottoman –, and a consequence of this historical reality was intense ethnic mixing. In other words, the Romanians were not a 'pure' race. Thus, it was stated in the document, it was necessary to find 'a formula that would make it possible to research and establish Romanian ethnic origin, but that would not at the same time create ethnic minorities at the heart of the Romanian people'. In other words, there was a risk of discovering that some Romanians, although they had lived on these lands for hundreds of years and had 'the same faith and [spoke] the same language', were not, in fact, of 'Romanian race'. Even the German racial legislation, the document continued, used a 'very inclusive formula' that permitted all those who had 'German blood' or whose blood was 'related to German blood' to become members of the national community. By this criterion, 'the Jew and the Gypsy' were the only people in Europe with 'foreign blood'.

In the case of Romania, it had been noted that 'such a broad definition could not be adopted', because 'the political, social, and historical realities' were different. This did not, however, mean that nothing could be done. On the contrary, it was necessary to restrict the possibility of 'elements that have no connection with our past, or with our soul or our life, or with our aspirations from infiltrating the Romanian ethnic community'. The racial criterion of 'blood' was not sufficient, although there were attempts, as we have seen, to explain the categories of 'Romanian ethnic origin' and 'Romanian by blood'. These had been introduced in 1940 and 1941, and were still in force, but the expressions had generated much confusion, as their lack of conceptual clarity made their application to the Roma population very difficult. Consequently, 'determining the ethnic origin of the Gypsies of Romania' was only possible 'within the framework of the law for the regulation of ethnic origin in general'.[153] This, however, did not yet exist, even if reference was made to the laws introduced in 1940 regarding the Jews.

152 A legal requirement to produce an impossible proof.

153 Referat asupra chestiunii legiferării originei etnice în general și a situațiunii țiganilor în special. CCNR, dos. 34, filele 22–26.

The letter sent on 6 March 1944 by Sabin Manuilă to the Minister of Justice was not of much help. Manuilă reiterated the frustration felt by legal experts regarding the difficult of giving 'an exact definition of ethnic origin, inasmuch as the laws of the country did not give such a definition'. The Census Commission, he pointed out, presided over by Dimitrie Gusti, had established that 'all the criteria for establishing ethnic origin used until the year 1930 lacked any scientific basis'. As a result, a new methodology had since been introduced and applied by the Institute of National Statistics under his directorship, which took into consideration not so much 'the individual's feeling of ethnic belonging' as specifically 'elements of heredity, documentary evidence regarding lineage and heredity'.

This methodology should have been applied in the 1941 census, but, Manuilă continued, unfortunately it was still not 'ethnic origin in the anthropological and racial sense' that was recorded, but rather 'the feeling of belonging' to an ethnic group as before. He accepted that, from a legal point of view, the method used in the 1941 census was not a 'satisfactory' one, adding that 'science has so far not been able to provide a suitable method of ethnic identification'. What was needed, Manuilă suggested, was the creation of a 'commission of experts, in which all the specialists would be represented: jurists, historians, anthropologists, ethnologists, demographers, politicians, sociologists, philologists, to examine the essential documentary material' and then to formulate 'an acceptable definition of ethnic origin'. It was necessary, he added, that this commission should make use of existing 'racist research', consult the legislation relating to various 'problems of an ethnic character', and, overall, speak for 'the racist politics of our age'. Nevertheless, Manuilă admitted that he could not 'suggest any solution to the problem of determining the ethnic origin of the Gypsies'.[154]

The Romanian experts mentioned here agreed that the passing of such 'racial laws' was necessary, but in the meantime a compromise was suggested. A month later, on 28 April 1944, Judge Constantin Mănciulescu from the Ministry of Justice mentioned that Ministry of Internal Affairs had been informed on 7 March by Damian Ștefănescu, head of the Directorate of Judicial Affairs in the Ministry of Justice, that 'the Gypsies cannot be considered of Romanian ethnic origin, in other words, Romanians by blood'.[155] As we have seen, this had already been communicated to the mayor of the town of Tecuci in December 1942. At the same time, Mănciulescu continued, it was true that the legal discussion about ethnic origin had been pursued

154 PCM, Institutul Central de Statistică, no. 35202, 6 March 1944, CCNR, Fond 34, files 29–31.
155 Ministerul Justiției, Direcțiunea Judiciară, no. 31739, 7 March 1944, CCNR, Fond 34, file 32.

especially with reference to the Jews. 'The Romanian lawmaker', he pointed out, had not codified 'ethnic origin, and had not even defined it'. What had been done was the partial definition of 'the excluded group', meaning the Jews. Mănciulescu therefore offered a compromise. Due to the lack of 'a procedure for establishing the ethnic origin of the inhabitants of the Romanian State' and of a generally accepted definition 'of the notion of ethnic origin', it was not legally possible to refuse 'the Gypsies certificates by which their ethnic origin is declared to be Romanian'. As a way out of this impasse, he proposed that 'the Gypsies who request certificates of ethnic nationality be issued with certificates stating the following origin: "Gypsy-Romanian"'.[156]

A new ethno-national category was thus proposed. After decades of assiduous national efforts to 'purify the race', the obvious conclusion had been reached that drawing the boundaries of Romanian ethnic communities according to strict eugenic and racist criteria was almost impossible. Ethnic perfection, based on the elimination of the difference of the Other, could not be achieved. The search for the perfect Romanian from a eugenic and racial point of view had come to an end.

Conclusions

Marshal Ion Antonescu was directly responsible for the deportation of the Roma to Transnistria, but the racial dream of a Romania for the Romanians had begun long before he became leader of the country. Antonescu was not alone at the time in being concerned about the protection of the Romanian nation from enemies both internal (ethnic minorities) and external (Soviet communism). The whole political culture of early 1940s Romania was dominated by ideas of biological purification and social selection that were derived from ethnic nationalism, anti-Semitism, anti-Roma racism, and eugenics. Encouraged by the spectacular expansion of Nazi Germany in Europe after 1938 and by decades of debates about the national specificity and ethnic character of Romania, Ion Antonescu and Mihai A. Antonescu – together with some of the country's most prestigious intellectuals and scientists – believed that the time had come at last to purify Romania of all undesirable ethnic minorities.

156 Referat asupra chestiunii legiferării originei etnice în general și a situațiunii țiganilor în special, CCNR, 1942, Fond 34, file 27.

The practical application of eugenics and the biopolitical nationalist ideology on which it was based were inter-connected and supported one another, even after the end of the deportation of the Roma to Transnistria. Racism biologized Romanian national character, while at the same time seeking to protect the nation eugenically against contact with ethnic minorities such as the Roma. Writing for the Bulletin of the Council of Patronage of Social Works in January 1944, Iordache Făcăoaru emphasized that Ion Antonescu had 'decided to apply' the eugenic measures that he and others in the team of the Institute of Ethno-racial Biology had proposed, including 'a census of the dysgenic elements in the country, by categories'. What was wanted was 'the adaptation of social assistance to eugenic norms and the use of this action with a dual educational purpose: social and eugenic'. In the future, Făcăoaru announced, it would be necessary to make 'a categorical distinction between those families who deserve the assistance of society and those who do not deserve it, for example dysgenics and Gypsies. Assistance for these categories would amplify the danger of a double ballast, bio-ethnic and economic'.[157] What Făcăoaru termed 'selective social assistance' would become one of the eugenic legacies surviving in communist Romania after 1950.

I have suggested in this chapter that the Roma were not seen as Romanians 'by blood', and that their deportation to Transnistria in the early 1940s was both a preventive, eugenic measure, aimed at ensuring the protection of the Romanian majority, and a political one, conceived to establish social order in a country at war. The description of the Roma made by the Romanian scientific and political elites was dominated by racism and deep-rooted beliefs regarding their putative biological 'inferiority' and cultural backwardness.

The criteria used to justify their deportation to Transnistria, often interpreted as social, were in fact imbued with the biopolitical and eugenic thinking and nationalist ideology developed in Romania in the interwar period and the early 1940s. The Roma, especially the nomadic Roma, were not considered a part of the Romanian national community, while in the case of the sedentary Roma, the measures taken against them were those of social selection promoted by the eugenicists. They were described as a threat to the social order, their presence in society racialized as inferior, and their behaviour dehumanized as dysgenic.

After Ion Antonescu's removal from power on 23 August 1944 and the establishment of a new political regime, it seemed that the project of Roma living peacefully alongside Romanians might be fulfilled. The reality

157 Iordache Făcăoaru, 'Educația eugenică prin asistența socială selectivă', *Buletinul Consiliului de Patronaj al Operelor Sociale* 1, no. 5 (1944): 6–7.

soon proved to be much more complicated. The same eugenic metaphors continued to be used by many Romanians after World War II and during the communist period, and they remain embedded in the ways in which the Roma are still perceived today. They continue to be maligned for their ethnic specificity deriving from a supposed racial difference, while this, in its turn, reinforces their recurrent eugenic dehumanization and labelling as 'dysgenic' and 'asocial' individuals.

7. About Heredity, but Without Eugenics

Abstract: At the end of World War II, Romanian eugenicists believed that they would be able to pursue anthropological and eugenic research as long as it distanced itself from racism. But, as shown in this chapter, a new ideological approach to human heredity and to genetics in general was gradually becoming dominant, in accordance with the transformation of Romania into a People's Republic under Soviet control. Racism was officially condemned and eugenics branded a 'fascist' and 'bourgeois science'.

Keywords: heredopathology, ethno-biology, Sovietization, anti-racism, socialist eugenics

As the Red Army advanced from the East, it became clear that Romania's alliance with Nazi Germany was no longer viable. On 23 August 1944, the leader of the state, Marshal Ion Antonescu, was removed from power (he would be executed two years later), and King Michael I signed an armistice with the Allies. At first, there was hope that the country might return to a form of parliamentary democracy similar to that of the 1920s. Initially, the main political parties in Romania – the National Liberal Party, the National Peasant Party, and the Social Democratic Party – tried to cooperate with the Romanian Communist Party, but the latter, having the support of the Soviet Union, became increasingly aggressive and determined to achieve political dominance.

The change of political regime also marked a change of direction in eugenic and anthropological research in Romania. It was not a sudden change, however. In some respects, the end of World War II did not bring major changes for the scientific community in Romania. *Buletinul Eugenic și Biopolitic* continued to appear until 1947, for example, together with important studies on eugenics such as *Introducere în etnobiologie și*

Turda, Marius. *In Search of the Perfect Romanian: National Specificity, Racial Degeneration, and Social Selection in Modern Romania*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press / Central European University Press, 2026.
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biopolitică (*Introduction to Ethnobiology and Biopolitics*) by Iuliu Moldovan and the first of the projected nine volumes of Gheorghe Banu's ambitious *Tratat de medicină socială* (*Treatise on Social Medicine*). We may observe, however, a change of language. Moldovan noted that, for him, 'the concept of eugenics', as formulated by Francis Galton and his disciples, was 'too narrow and too little appropriate to launch and maintain a serious movement for the biological promotion of our successors'. The Romanian eugenic ideal, he considered, had to be the 'improvement of the *people*, not of the *race*'. In this sense, eugenics became 'a hygiene of the [Romanian] people', whose aim was 'maintaining and perfecting our ethnic health'.[1] Two years later 'hygiene of the people' was described as 'the science that deals with the preservation and perfecting of the health of the people in [a state of] becoming, with hereditary roots in the past and with biological obligations and responsibilities for the future'.[2]

Gheorghe Banu too adjusted his interpretation of eugenics. He now defined it as 'the science that deals with the study of the hereditary value of mankind, seen as a bonding factor between generations, and with the improvement – by various means – of the hereditary material'.[3] The concept of race had disappeared, with Banu preserving only the reference to 'measures of biological normalization of the collectivity', i.e., the nation. The change, was, however, rather of tone than of interpretation. Banu continued to identify in

> the interior of each nation [...] three different groups from the point of view of their hereditary value: a small group of the superiorly gifted elements, the group – largest in number – of the medium values, accounting for approximately nine tenths of the nation, and lastly, the group of those elements whose biology is damaged by heredity, that is, the dysgenic elements.

According to Banu, the principal objective of eugenic selection were the promotion of the 'superiorly gifted elements' and the elimination 'from the social organism of the dysgenic elements', both measures considered necessary for 'the perfection of the human race'.[4]

1 Iuliu Moldovan, *Introducere în etnobiologie şi biopolitică* (Sibiu: Institutul de Igienă şi Biopolitică al Universității Cluj–Sibiu, 1944), 103–104.

2 Iuliu Moldovan, 'Concepte din domeniul igienei', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 17, nos. 1–3 (1946): 4.

3 Gheorghe Banu, *Tratat de medicină socială*, vol. 1: *Medicina socială ca ştiinţă. Eugenia. Demografia*, (Bucharest: Casa Şcoalelor, 1944), 48.

4 Banu, *Tratat de medicină socială*, vol. 1, 49.

A certain continuity may also be observed in the activities of Romanian scientific institutions. The Institute of Anthropology was severely affected by the death of its first director, Francisc Rainer, in 1944, but other research institutes based in Bucharest, such as the Romanian Social Institute, the Central Institute of Statistics, and the National Zootechnic Institute, continued their activity, as did the Institute of Hygiene and Biopolitics, directed by Iuliu Moldovan, which moved from Sibiu to Cluj in 1945. The Bioanthropology Section of the Institute of Statistics directed by Iordache Făcăoaru also survived the war and there were attempts to renew pre-war scientific collaborations. In a letter sent to Olga Necrasov on 14 November 1946, Făcăoaru acknowledged her commitment to 'our science' (i.e., anthropology) and praised her 'constant activity' in the field, expressing the hope that a possible meeting in Bucharest might renew the bonds between them.[5]

To a certain extent, the opportunities for research had changed, and in some important respects, they had actually improved. For example, animal genetics benefitted from the establishment of a new department at the National Institute of Zootechnics devoted to the study of heredity, of the origins of domestic breeds of animals, and of genetic illnesses. The department was entrusted to Gheorghe Nichita, professor of Histology and Animal Psychology in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.[6]

In some cases, the appearance of new institutions, such as the Institute of Endocrinology, established in 1946 under the direction of Constantin I. Parhon, opened the possibility of a new direction of biomedical research, which would flourish in the following decades. The involvement of Parhon – who had been for a time chairman of the Union of Eugenics Societies in Romania, and of the International Federation of Latin Eugenics Societies – in the prewar eugenic movement did not impede his public and political ascent after 1944.

The Institute of Endocrinology was home from the start to a Laboratory of Anthropometry, under the direction of Parhon's son-in-law and close collaborator Ștefan-Mariu Milcu. According to Milcu, anthropometry was 'indispensable to any morphological examination in anthropology, biotypology, clinical studies, human anatomy, [and] in the biology and

5 PCM, Scrisoarea lui Iordache Făcăoaru către Olga Necrasov, no. 84576 (14 November 1946). Personal Archive Olga Necrasov, Centrul de Cercetări Antropologice 'Olga Necrasov', Academia Română, Filiala Iaşi.

6 Letter of Traian Săvulescu to Constantin I. Parhon (1 March 1948). Personal Archive C. I. Parhon, no. 1709, Fond IV/3. ANR, Bucharest.

pathology of development'.[7] Anthropological measurements complemented endocrinological examinations and thus contributed to the establishment of diagnosis and of therapy. Milcu had been most directly influenced by Italian biotypology and eugenics, through the research of Nicola Pende, and by the morphological typology proposed by the German psychiatrist Ernst Kretschmer. These scientists, although supporters of eugenics, had had an ambiguous attitude towards racism. The fact that in 1938 Pende had signed the so-called 'Manifesto of Racist Scientists', a text that reproduced many of the themes of Nazi racism, did not disturb Milcu. Biotypology did not have the same negative reputation as eugenics, from which it indeed separated without any difficulty in the late 1940s, and not only in Romania.

New Research Projects

The return to normal political life after August 1944 brought with it a renewal of research on Romanian national specificity. For example, the Romanian Academy's National Council of Scientific Research founded a Committee of Psychometry and Anthropology, directed by Constantin Rădulescu-Motru and Iacob-Marius Nestor and also including Constantin I. Parhon and Dimitrie Gusti. The committee was connected to the University of Bucharest's Laboratory of Experimental Psychology, where 'psychological and anthropological measurements, made for the purpose of knowledge of the spiritual and corporal life of the Romanian people' were centralized. The aim of this research was 'the compilation of a *Romanian Somato-Psychological Anthropology*'[8] an ambitious project of identifying and cataloguing the physical characteristics and intellectual abilities of the Romanians.

Some anthropological measurements had already been made between 1934 and 1940. As mentioned in chapter 4, they were discussed by Constantin Rădulescu-Motru in his 1941 paper 'The Romanian Racial Type according to the Cephalic Index'. On the basis of a sample of 143,856 Romanians, Rădulescu-Motru suggested that the arithmetic mean for the country as a whole was 84.1, meaning that the majority of Romanians were brachycephalic. Thus, the Romanian racial type was established. It remained to

7 Ștefan-Marius Milcu, *Antropometrie*, Arhiva Acad. Șt. Milcu, Fond Lucrări științifice, Grupa Antropologie, vol. III. Dosar X/135, ANR, Bucharest.

8 Constantin Rădulescu-Motru and Iacob-Marius Nestor, *Cercetări experimentale asupra inteligenței la români* (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1948), 5 (emphasis in original).

complete the psychological description of the Romanians and their level of *intelligence*. Was the Romanian more intelligent in the town than in the village? Was the Romanian man more intelligent than the Romanian woman? Was the Transylvanian Romanian really 'slower in the mind' than the Romanian from Oltenia? These were some of the questions that this new study sought to answer.

To this end, the researchers in the team led by Rădulescu-Motru and Nestor subjected to tests of intelligence and logic a total of 59,817 Romanians from all the regions of the country, from both urban and rural environments, of both sexes, and ranging in age from 10 to 44. What interested them was both the quality of the answers to the questions and the speed with which these were given – a methodology considered appropriate as, 'individuals who think *slowly* cannot be considered the same as individuals who think *foolishly*. Basically', the authors continued, 'an individual who thinks slowly but on good grounds (logically) is preferable to an individual who thinks rapidly, but on weak grounds (illogically)'.[9] A hierarchy of intellectual abilities had been created on this occasion, starting from Type A, the category including the individual who was 'exceptionally intelligent and exceptionally quick in thinking', and ending with Type F, dedicated to the individual considered 'very weak and very slow in thinking'.[10] No surprises so far. There were, however, differences between women and men. It was established that only 48.94% of women fitted into category D, a lower percentage than for men, 51.05% of whom were in that category. The same applied to the scores for rapidity of thinking: for men, the average was 56,60%, and for women, 52.77% The conclusion was that Romanian men, 'regardless of environment and of age', were 'on average somewhat more intelligent and somewhat more rapid in thinking than [Romanian] women'.[11] Again, nothing surprising. The belief in the intellectual superiority of men was deep-rooted in the popular and scientific imagination of the time. Throughout the interwar period, eugenicists had repeatedly produced ingenious arguments to demonstrate that the cognitive aptitudes of men were superior to those of women.

The differences between women and men were not the only ones mentioned in this study; it was similarly suggested that men and women from urban environments were more intelligent that men and women from the countryside. These differences of intelligence were constructed

9 Rădulescu-Motru and Nestor, *Cercetări experimentale asupra inteligenței la români*, 10 (emphasis in original).

10 Rădulescu-Motru and Nestor, *Cercetări experimentale asupra inteligenței la români*, 11–13.

11 Rădulescu-Motru and Nestor, *Cercetări experimentale asupra inteligenței la români*, 14.

on the basis of differences between the sexes and modifications of social environment. In connection with the debate on national specificity, it is worth mentioning the results regarding intellectual differences between various regions of Romania. On average, it was suggested, the people of the Banat were the most intelligent and quick-thinking among the Romanians. The last place, 'for intelligence', was assigned to the people of Oltenia, while those of Bukovina came last in terms of their '*tempo* of thought'.[12] This was merely a general framework, not an absolute rule; there were, of course, also very intelligent Romanians in Oltenia, just as there were women far superior in intelligence to men.

Also interesting is the explicitly eugenic dimension of this research on the cognitive abilities of the Romanians. It was a 'problem that interests not only the man of science, but also statesmen, educators, etc.', namely the problem of 'the elite and the inferior'.[13] The results were far from encouraging: 15.23% of the 59,817 Romanians examined on this occasion were described as 'inferior', while only 2.7% were considered to be of 'superior' physical and intellectual quality. The Banat and Bukovina were the provinces with the highest percentage of such 'superior' individuals, while Transylvania and Oltenia had the highest percentage of so-called 'inferior' individuals. From a eugenic point of view, Rădulescu-Motru and Nestor's research confirmed the existence of 'inferior' individuals in the same regions where previous studies had already drawn attention to certain worrying aspects of 'degeneration of the race', such as the spread of endemic goitre and 'cretinism'.[14] The identification of these dysgenic elements would, it was hoped, lead to the introduction of a programme of social selection. Ultimately, this anthropological and psychological research, Rădulescu-Motru and Nestor believed, had to have 'a practical consequence', namely the identification of intellectual 'deficiencies' in order to be able 'to intervene to remove them'.[15]

The debate about the possible degeneration of the Romanian population continued after 1944, even if the interpretations and conceptual clarifications no longer used racial terminology. Rădulescu-Motru and Nestor – and indeed also Banu – continued to apply eugenic reasoning in their scientific activities. Their study was thus considered no more than a preliminary exploration. Further research, they pointed out, would be needed in order to provide a

12 Rădulescu-Motru and Nestor, *Cercetări experimentale asupra inteligenței la români*, 17–18.

13 Rădulescu-Motru and Nestor, *Cercetări experimentale asupra inteligenței la români*, 30.

14 See, for example, Liviu Câmpeanu, *Problema guşei şi cretinismului în România şi cercetări biologice asupra glandei tiroide* (Cluj: Editura Institutului de Arte Grafice 'Ardealul', 1924).

15 Rădulescu-Motru and Nestor, *Cercetări experimentale asupra inteligenței la români*, 45.

convincing answer to the following questions: 'What are the determining factors in the decline of the level [of intelligence] of a specific [human] collectivity?' Could 'physical and moral degeneration' contribute decisively to the nation's intellectual decline, as eugenicists had already been suggesting since the 1880s? Or should the 'geographical environment', 'deficiencies of a hygienic nature', or even 'sociopolitical customs or institutions' be taken into consideration?[16] In fact, the authors emphasized, it was possible for all these factors to contribute to the growth or decline of the intellectual abilities of a population, and future research would have to be based on the interdependence of heredity, environment, and culture rather than on just one of these factors.

One such study that demonstrated that both environmental and hereditary factors contribıuted to the development both of intellectual abilities and of mental deficiencies had been carried out by the psychologist Nicolae Găgescu in the Tei neighbourhood of Bucharest. Găgescu tested 655 children aged between 7 and 14, and concluded that 44 of them were 'mentally feeble', 183 were 'mentally backward', 302 were 'normal', and 126 were intellectually 'well-endowed'.[17] The children considered 'mentally deficient' came from large, poor families with illiterate parents. On the other hand, as was to be expected, the children with 'superior values' came from smaller, well-off families, with intellectual and artistic interests. Găgescu believed that it was thus possible to demonstrate the interaction between environmental and hereditary factors. Man, he suggested, was 'the product of this interaction' between heredity and environment.[18]

These studies demonstrated that it was possible to discuss the biological improvement of the nation without the use of racist terminology. It was a matter of a conceptual strategy that in fact remained faithful to the eugenic approaches of the early 1920s. However, a major change was in the air. The fact that Romania was allied with the Soviet Union contributed decisively to the adoption of a favourable attitude towards Soviet theories of heredity and towards Soviet biological science in general, even if references to German authors did not disappear.[19] Moreover, November 1944 saw the creation of the Romanian Association for Strengthening Links with the Soviet Union (ARLUS). Parhon was one of the founder members, together with other

16 Rădulescu-Motru and Nestor, *Cercetări experimentale asupra inteligenței la români*, 46.

17 Nicolae V. Găgescu, *Omul în funcţie de ereditate şi mediu* (Bucharest: Casa Şcoalelor, 1944), 79.

18 Găgescu, *Omul în funcţie de ereditate şi mediu*, 105–106.

19 Marius Sulică, 'Eredologie şi patologie', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 15, nos. 7–8 (1944): 265–274; and Marius Sulică, 'Diagnosticul eredopatologic', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 18, nos. 1–4 (1947): 38–59.

scientists, including Ștefan-Marius Milcu, Traian Săvulescu, Alexandru Caratzali, Constantin Ionescu-Mihăești, and Grigore Benetato. Although ARLUS considered itself apolitical, through journals such as *Veac Nou* (*New Age*) and *Analele Româno-Sovietice* (*Romanian–Soviet Annals*) and through its publishing house, which made available to the Romanian public numerous translations from Soviet authors, it played an important role in promoting ideological and scientific collaboration with the Soviet Union.

The debate about social selection and eugenics continued in the new political and cultural context. When one of the main promoters of psychoanalysis in Romania, Ion Popescu-Sibiu, published the fourth edition of his book *Concepţia psihanalitică* (*The Theory of Psychoanalyis*) in 1947, he retained the discussion of eugenics in relation to 'abnormal psycho-sexuality' and the importance of parental education about child and adolescent development. Eugenic education was deemed relevant to the understanding of the responsibilities associated with sexual activity.[20]

Heredity was understood to be the dominant factor in determining human behaviour and in causing degenerative and pathological illnesses, but not the only one.[21] An increasing importance was attributed to environmental and educational factors. As the psychologist Gheorghe Oancea-Ursu emphasized, what was sought was a 'relation of forces' between heredity and environment.[22] 'Only after the clarification of this relation', he considered, 'will we know which measures are the most appropriate: therapeutic-hygienic or eugenic?' Applied to the concrete case of individuals with disabilities, understanding the combined impact of hereditary and environmental factors was fundamental for establishing 'which of the various types of psychopathic constitution are susceptible to eugenic measures and which are susceptible to hygienic, curative measures'.[23]

The conceptual reorientation also called for a new terminology, centred less on the use of the term 'eugenics' and more on the use of terms such as 'ethno-biology',[24] 'heredobiology' and 'human heredopathology'.[25] There were

20 Ion Popescu-Sibiu, *Concepţia psihanalitică* (*expunere şi critică*) (Sibiu: Ed. H. Welther, 1947), 120 and 170.

21 Victor Vâlcovici et al., *Materia şi viaţa* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Naţională, 1944).

22 Gheorghe Oncea Ursu, *Ereditatea capacităților intelectuale: metode și directive în cercetările eredopsihologice* (Timişoara: 'Vrerea', 1943).

23 Gheorghe Oncea Ursu, 'Ereditatea constituţiei psihopatice în lumina cercetărilor genealogice', *Revista de Psihologie Teoretică și Aplicată* 7, no. 3 (1944): 216.

24 Petru Râmneanţu, *Problema iradierii românilor din Transilvania în Principatele Române* (Cluj: Tip. 'Cartea Românească', 1946).

25 Salvator P. Cupcea, *Probleme de eredobiologie* (Sibiu: Tip. 'Cartea Românească din Cluj', 1944).

hopes that a lectureship in eugenics and heredopathology might be created at the Institute of Hygiene and Biopolitics in Cluj. In a memorandum written in November 1946, Iuliu Moldovan explained the need for the establishment of such a lectureship by the fact that, at the Faculty of Medicine, too little attention was given to the fact that 'the people of today are, through their heredity, anchored in the past with their potentialities both normal and pathological, and that according to how they manage their biological heritage they decide the qualitative and quantitative fate of the coming generations'.

In other European states, and in the Soviet Union, Moldovan noted, the study of human biology and that of heredity enjoyed 'their own university chairs and institutions, often on a grandiose scale'.[26] There was no chair of eugenics at Romanian universities, but Moldovan continued to hope that one would be founded soon, starting from the idea that the protection of the biological capital of the nation would not be neglected by the new political regime, especially after a devastating war that had depleted the Romanian people, both numerically and physically. The regeneration of the 'biological inheritance'[27] of the family and of the nation remained a priority, Banu emphasized in a lecture delivered at the Academy of Medicine in Bucharest on 5 October 1946. Indeed, this was also the opinion of Traian Herseni, who, in an article published in the middle of 1947, suggested that 'biopolitics, meaning humankind's conscious action to promote life, must direct all its powers towards the regeneration of the family'. A fundamental change of Romanian society was on the horizon, but Herseni's hope was that this would lead to a 'superior form of human life' and that, in its turn, would mean 'a true bio-social progress'.[28]

Conceptual Redefinitions

The discussion about heredity, however, underwent important changes at the end of World War II – and not only as a result of the new ideological and political tendencies. More nuanced understandings of human genetics had already appeared in the 1930s and had acquired consistency and weight in the 1940s. Romanian eugenicists were familiar with these conceptual changes,

26 'Memoriu privind necesitatea de a se înfiinţa pe lângă Institutul de Igienă şi Biopolitică o conferinţă de eugenie şi eredopatologie' (11 Novembre 1946). Cadre medicale: Iuliu Moldovan, Doc. no. 39/ 1946, Arhiva Spitalului Evreiesc, Cluj.

27 Gheorghe Banu, *Biologie du peuple roumain* (Bucharest: Tip. Bucovina, 1947), 5.

28 Traian Herseni, 'Neam şi familie', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 18, nos. 5–8 (1947): 86.

although they articulated their principal arguments within the already existing framework of the debate on social selection and scientific progress.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, as the psychologist Salvator Cupcea explained, the relation between the gene (considered to be the basic unit of heredity) and human character, physical and mental, was simple. It was believed that 'a certain gene produces a single modification of a [hereditary] trait and that the human organism may be considered as a mere sum of [hereditary] traits and its genotype as a sum of genes'.[29] In other words, a single gene could determine a single hereditary trait. Both the gene and the trait that it determined were independent of other genes and other hereditary traits. In reality, however, one gene could determine various hereditary traits, and Cupcea, following in the footsteps of the German psychiatrist and eugenicist Hans Luxenburger, proposed the expression 'hereditary circle', which, he believed, better indicated the interdependence of the genes. This 'hereditary circle' comprised 'not only the forms of illness as such, but also a series of macro and micro symptoms, pathological or non-pathological, that in some form or other have a heredoconstitutional connection with the dispositional basis of the illness'.[30] Cupcea considered that such an interpretation, which also took into account the results obtained by the Soviet geneticist Nikolai Timofeev-Resovski, could provide much more convincing explanations regarding the causes of hereditary illnesses than those based on an elementary Mendelism, adopted by many eugenicists.

The reference to Timofeev-Resovski was not by chance. In the July 1944 issue of *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic*, Cupcea published an article about the most recent debates in Soviet genetics. The article introduced the Romanian reader to a wide range of arguments regarding heredity proposed by such renowned Soviet scientists as Klement A. Timiriazev, Ivan V. Michurin, Nikolai I. Vavilov, and Trofim Lysenko. The psychologist Ivan Pavlov and his school were also included in this presentation. Cupcea seemed genuinely impressed by the theoretical and practical achievements of the Soviets in the fields of plant biology and human genetics. 'How is it to be explained', he asked, that 'those problems of biology, which in most states are restricted to a small circle of researchers, have come to be [so widely] understood and to interest such wide circles in the USSR?'[31]

29 Salvator P. Cupcea, 'Dela "caracter–unitate" la "cerc ereditar" în eredopatologia umană', *Buletin Eugenic şi Biopolitic* 15, nos. 5–6 (1944): 193.

30 Cupcea, 'Dela "caracter–unitate" la "cerc ereditar"', 205.

31 Salvator P. Cupcea, 'Biologia teoretică și aplicată în URSS', *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic*, 15, nos. 7–8 (1944): 299.

In the Soviet Union, Cupcea noted, the application of biological research to social problems was possible because the state had enhanced the authority of scientists and had attached a civic responsibility to their research. In other words, in the USSR, what was known as 'formal science' had become 'applied science. Every scientific finding produced by laboratories and research institutes found an immediate practical application'.[32] Of course, the Romanian researcher welcomed this empowerment of science, even if the excessive politicization of biology and the criticism of Mendelian genetics worried him.

To highlight the practical role of scientists in Soviet society, Salvator Cupcea concentrated his attention on two authors in particular – Vavilov and Lysenko – emphasizing their different approaches to genetics and heredity. Cupcea did not mention that Lysenko rejected Vavilov's Mendelism because he considered that the two were complementary rather than opposed in their scientific convictions. For Cupcea, both Vavilov and Lysenko provided scientific legitimation for one of the most remarkable social experiments in the world: the creation of the 'Soviet New Man' and the 'Soviet New Woman'. Biological research, he observed, was not limited to its own field of study, but significantly influenced the transformation of society, as demonstrated by the numerous development initiatives assumed by the Soviet authorities with the aim of creating and providing better living conditions for the population, along with free access to services of medical assistance and preventive medicine and free access to general education. Thus, Cupcea pointed out, 'Soviet biology, far from being one-sided, has embraced all the fundamental aspects of human nature. Both heredity and environment have been studied in depth, so that through their close relationship, the improvement of man in his entirety may be achieved'.[33]

Cupcea also cited the impressive work carried out at the Maxim Gorky Research Institute of Medical Genetics in Moscow, directed by Solomon G. Levit, saving his final comments for a theme of personal interest, namely eugenics. At the beginning of the Soviet period, he remarked, there had been a strong eugenic movement, but, because 'German biologists tried to deviate the course of eugenics (which in its true scientific form has nothing in common with racism, but seeks to realize the full potential of man wherever he may be), the term "eugenics" was considered compromised and was abandoned' by Soviet researchers. This did not mean that the Soviet state had also given up the promotion of individuals with valuable

32 Cupcea, 'Biologia teoretică și aplicată în URSS', 300.

33 Cupcea, 'Biologia teoretică și aplicată în URSS', 316.

hereditary qualities, as the Stakhanovist cult of physical superiority clearly demonstrated. Eugenics, Cupcea noted, was so well integrated in the Soviet ideology of the 'New Man and New Woman' that there was no more need for a specific direction of research devoted to it. Thus,

> through the creation of equal opportunities for individual fulfilment, and through the elimination of the social and economic counter-selective factors that often prevent the development of true values, the Soviet state seems to us so eugenic as a whole that it has not felt the need to single out eugenics as a distinct area of expertise, as in a diffuse manner it has entered all the schools of biology.[34]

Cupcea thought that it was impossible to teach human evolution without reference to heredity, but he recognized that the Russian authorities saw eugenics, particularly in its Mendelian variety, as a threat to their ideological beliefs. In 1944, Cupcea still hoped that eugenics – especially referred to by his preferred term, 'heredobiology' – could distance itself from Nazi racial hygiene. Refusing an ideologically binding definition of eugenics, he provisionally worked with an alternative terminology. Moreover, he believed that once the war was over, the health of the population would become the highest priority of each national government. Thus, he considered, it might be possible to soften the ideological condemnation of those eugenicists who, whether out of necessity or conviction, had been involved in anti-Semitic and racist activities before and during the war. These hopes may explain why Cupcea did not mention the increasingly accentuated hostility towards Mendelian genetics in the Soviet Union or the fact that Vavilov had been condemned to death in 1941 for his scientific views. Considering the powerful influence that Lysenko already had in the Soviet Union and how much Soviet science was to spread in Romania and in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe from the late 1940s onwards, perhaps Cupcea should have attached a warning to his assessment of Soviet biology.

Cupcea was not alone in trying to separate eugenics from racism and anti-Semitism. Writing in the newspaper *Scânteia* (*The Spark*) on 15 August 1945, Octav Mărgărit explained the immense damage done to eugenics and the study of heredity by Nazi racism. He wrote:

> Basing itself on such notions as race and heredity, Hitlerist fascism tried to divide the world into two categories: a minority of supermen, of masters,

34 Cupcea, 'Biologia teoretică și aplicată în URSS', 317.

> made up of members of the 'superior race', which was identified with the German race, and the majority, made up of the members of the other races considered 'inferior', who had to be slaves forever.

Nazi eugenicists and racial ideologues, he continued, had misinterpreted Gregor Mendel's research on genetic inheritance, suggesting 'that the heredity of a being is well established once and for all [...] and is not influenced by external, environmental factors'. According to this conception, which Nazi ideology turned into scientific dogma, 'there have always existed people with an untouched – unblemished – heredity, in other words, "pure races", and others with mixed heredity, degenerate as a consequence of repeated cross-breeding and of the defects caused by it – in other words, "impure races"'. Obviously the 'pure races' were also 'superior races'. Consequently, Mărgărit concluded, Mendelian theories of heredity, such as those known as 'Morganist', put forward by the American biologist Thomas H. Morgan,[35] had to be abandoned, as they were vitiated not only politically but also scientifically, and should be replaced by the theories offered by the Soviet school of biology, especially those popularized by Timiryazev, Michurin, and Lysenko, for whom the decisive factor was not one's hereditary legacy but 'adaptation to the environment, that is, the greater or lesser possibility that a being has of conforming to the circumstances presented by the world around'.[36]

Although he had openly expressed his adherence to the Soviet theories of heredity, Mărgărit continued to believe in the possibility of 'rehabilitating' eugenics. He connected it not only to the programme of improving the health of the population through methods of social selection and the control of reproduction but also to the programme of socialist transformation, which he hoped would soon be underway in Romania.

A few months later, on 1 December 1945, Mărgărit published the article 'For the Rehabilitation of a Science: Eugenics' in the same newspaper. His message was simple. The principles of eugenics 'had been perverted by the Hitlerist practices of unhappy memory'. However, he insisted, eugenics should not be confused with the version of racial hygiene promoted by the Nazi regime. To convince the reader of this argument, Mărgărit invoked

35 See Thomas Hunt Morgan, *The Scientific Basis of Evolution* (London: Faber & Faber, 1932). The book was translated into Romanian in as *Bazele științifice ale evoluției*, trans. Andrei Piescu (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial, 1938).

36 Octav Mărgărit, 'Câteva noțiuni despre ereditate', *Scânteia* 2, no. 301 (1945): 3.

the name of Francis Galton and his countless achievements in such diverse fields as anthropology, demography, statistics, criminology, and meteorology. Galton had envisioned eugenics, Mărgărit explained, as a three-stage programme of human improvement:

> the first, the academic stage, the period of discussions, of establishing the principles [of eugenics]; the second, practical, the stage of establishing its tasks, its mission, eugenics being defined as an eminently utilitarian discipline; finally, the third, the propagandistic stage, when eugenics would penetrate the general masses of the population.

At that historical moment, Mărgărit considered, modern societies were in the third stage, characterized by the wide diffusion of eugenic ideas and practices among their populations and by the promotion of eugenic responsibilities towards future generations. It was also, Mărgărit remarked, important to underline the principal aim of eugenics, namely 'the improvement of the human species by the improvement of the people's health'. The modern state was completely dedicated to the eugenic quest to improve the health of the population by encouraging people with 'desirable traits' to reproduce more.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Mărgărit pointed out, Galton's ideas had been considered 'innovative and progressive', but after the experience of the Nazi regime – during which eugenics had contributed 'to the formation of a so-called scientific basis of German racist theory and later to the justification of the crimes committed over twelve years in its name' – it was very difficult to find a justification for the eugenic programme of improving the biological quality of the population, especially by methods such as preventing the birth of individuals considered to have undesirable heredity. Mărgărit's opinion regarding negative eugenics was categorical: 'Compulsory sterilization was one of the means of extermination of peoples declared inferior, the focal point of Hitlerist Eugenics, the aim of which was to achieve the ideal of Germany's universal domination.'

But was it still possible to return to a *progressive* version of eugenics, as many leftist writers had imagined it in the first decades of the twentieth century? Mărgărit believed that this was possible. 'Eugenics', he remarked at the end of the article, had to 'regain its initial meaning, the meaning given to it by its founder. Using all the means put at its disposition by the new social and political conditions, eugenics must focus on the physical and psychological perfectibility of the individual, on his reintegration in

the true human condition.'[37] Significantly, at the end of 1945 it was still possible to publish an article in the newspaper of the Romanian Communist Party in favour of eugenics and to suggest, as Mărgărit did, that there was a compatibility between the eugenic ideal of protecting the hereditary stock of the population and the ideal of socialist selection.

The same view was also adopted by Alexandru D. Trifu, a disciple of the great interwar educationist George G. Antonescu. In his study of the relation between heredity and education, Trifu suggested that eugenics was necessary in order to facilitate 'family or racial selection with a view to [obtaining] the best offspring', in addition to 'the education of parents with a view to respect for biological and moral hygiene'.[38] However, to achieve their purpose, Trifu considered that the eugenic measures must be integrated into the educational process. In his view, a hereditary deficiency could be corrected by means of education. The expressions of the biological character of the individual would never completely disappear, but they could be controlled. Although he maintained that the character of the individual and of the collectivity could be transformed by means of education, Trifu recognized the importance of heredity and accepted that social selection through eugenics could not be completely disregarded. A change, he believed, was inevitable. A new interpretation was needed of the relationship between heredity and environment. According to Trifu, education was 'neither training, nor natural selection, nor eugenics', but a complex process of 'integration and differentiation, aimed at transforming the human being according to an ideal'.[39]

This ideal was not yet well defined, but the principal components of the new theoretical edifice on which the debate about human perfectibility would be founded in the coming decades are already discernible. Trifu and Mărgărit provided an elastic framework within which eugenic interventions could still be accommodated. Increasingly, however, those who continued to openly advocate eugenics were, if not immediately ostracized, largely marginalized. The Romanian scientific landscape, like its political counterpart, was experiencing a rapid transformation, with moments of uncertainty and ideological ambiguity; the late 1940s was a period in which different scientific paradigms continued to coexist. As was to be expected, compliance with

37 Octav Mărgărit, 'Pentru reabilitarea unei ştiinţe: eugenia', *Scânteia* 16, no. 393 (1944): 2. See also Octav Mărgărit, 'Sir Francis Galton: Părintele eugeniei', radio conference (21 November 1945), ASRR, Bucharest.

38 Alexandru D. Trifu, *Hereditate și educație* (Bucharest: n.p., 1946), 206.

39 Trifu, *Hereditate și educație*, 252.

Soviet science and ideology varied from one discipline to another, and the process unfolded according to a series of specific circumstances and often personal decisions. Human biology in particular was a scientific discipline exposed to intense political control, firstly because of its object of study, which in interwar Romania consisted of ethnic groups, but also because of its close relation with eugenics. In this context, was it still possible to formulate a 'racial conception' of the national character?[40] And if not, how could a different terminology be formulated in order to explain Romania's ethnic diversity and national affiliation?

The anthropologist Olga Necrasov expressed clearly the difficulty in which anthropological research found itself at the time because of its close relation to political ideologies such as racism and German National-Socialism. The first lecture of the open course in anthropology that she taught at the Faculty of Sciences in Iași in January 1944 was evocatively titled 'Modern Anthropology and its Problems'. From the start, Necrasov underlined the fact that the explanation of human diversity was of interest far beyond the realm of anthropology, attracting biologists, doctors, sociologists, historians, and politicians alike. Even some relatively specialized directions of research, such as the study of blood groups, were now put to use for a wide range of purposes.[41] Necrasov proclaimed her belief in monogenism and, although she had not completely abandoned the concept of race, she restricted its significance to an exclusively biological interpretation in order for it not to be confused with nation or people, which were defined culturally, politically, and linguistically. 'Their conflation', she insisted, 'has given birth to confusions so regrettable that their distinctness must be firmly underlined'.[42] The unity of the human species could not be contested, and the differences between the various races were, in her view, 'rather quantitative than qualitative. Humanity is everywhere one and the same'.[43] Necrasov rejected racial determination in its extreme form, preferring an interpretation that allowed the possibility of a certain anthropological relativism, albeit tributary to the physical typology and comparative morphology of the various ethnic groups proposed by influential anthropologists such as Rudolf Martin and Egon von Eickstedt.

No one spoke in the public space about an anthropology of the 'Romanian race', but this did not diminish the important contribution that

40 'Concepția rasială și concepția etnică la poporul român', *Ecoul* 2, no. 31 (1944): 3.

41 Olga C. Necrasov, *Anthropologia modernă și problemele ei* (Iași: Tipografia 'Lupta Moldovei', 1945), 3.

42 Necrasov, *Anthropologia modernă și problemele ei*, 7.

43 Necrasov, *Anthropologia modernă și problemele ei*, 9.

anthropology could make to the debate about national specificity and about the ethnogenesis of the Romanian people. The object of research of anthropology remained the same in 1944 as it had been in 1924: the nation and its specific traits. In tune with the political realities, Necrasov also proposed a new term to describe the rearticulation of the direction of anthropological research in Romania. This term was 'ethno-anthropology', which initially had been used by the Soviet ethnographers Georgii F. Debets, Maxim G. Levin, and Tatiana A. Trofimova.[44] According to them, ethno-anthropology studied 'the similarity or difference, homogeneity or heterogeneity of ethnic groups, according to their physical type'. Equally importantly, there was a close connection between ethno-anthropology and 'investigation of the question of ethnogenesis'.[45] This latter aspect was to be of increasing importance in the course of the next decade, due to the increasing politicization of anthropology in Ceaușescu's Romania.

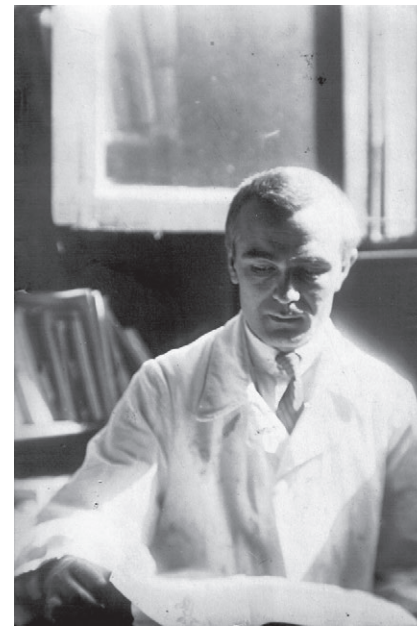


Fig. 13. Grigore T. Popa (Courtesy of Richard Constantinescu)

Distancing science from racism was, however, essential. Grigore T. Popa [figure 13] underlined this in the postscript to his study about 'the reform of the public mind', which he had written in 1941, but was only able to publish in 1945. Was education a matter of race, as claimed by Ernst Kreick, a distinguished specialist in the sciences of education, but also a notorious Nazi? Did 'the norms of education' spring from 'the hereditary dispositions of the racial community in which a person is born and lives'? Popa rejected these suggestions. He did not agree with 'the idea that education should be a matter of race'. It was true, he continued, that education should be a programme of 'human perfection, to be then used by the nation and the state'.[46] However, this programme had no connection to race but rather to

44 See Georgii F. Debets, Maxim G. Levin, and Tatiana A. Trofimova, 'Antropologicheskiy material kak istochnik izucheniya voprosov etnogeneza', *Sovetskaia Etnografia* 1 (1952): 22–35.

45 *Etnoantropologia*. Manuscript (1952), Arhiva Muzeului Universității 'Alexandru Ioan Cuza' Iași.

46 Grigore T. Popa, *Reforma spiritului. Principii de educație și învățământ* (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial şi Imprimeriile Statului, 1945), 61–62.

'eugenics (of which education is a part)'. Consequently, it was unscientific to speak of the 'purification and the perfection of a specific race ("Nordic", "dolicho-blond", "Aryan" etc.)'. What needed to be done, he concluded, was to improve the traits of the individual, but not those of the race. Racism was a political problem, not a scientific one. Popa put it simply and very eloquently: 'The problem of race had to be turned into a political problem in order to arrive at all the exaggerations and errors that we find today everywhere in racist literature'.[47]

Two years later, in 1947, in a study entitled *Tratat elementar de antropobiologie* (*Introduction to Anthropobiology*), Victor Preda also issued a harsh critique of theories of racial purity and superiority. It was, he said, impossible to establish a precise 'racial diagnosis' of human groups. 'Within the same population', he pointed out, 'there are to be found very few individuals who present specific racial elements'. In fact, 'the majority of individuals in a population cannot be assigned to one race in particular'.[48] Preda highlighted the idea of continuity in anthropological studies in relation to pre-war research paradigms both in Romania and abroad, but he proposed a new conceptual framework that, he hoped, was not racist. Likewise, he criticized the vision according to which race occupied a central place in shaping the historical development of the nation, 'Race', he observed, was not a 'biological entity' and did not 'organize social reality'; it was merely another term to describe 'a simple conventional grouping of individuals with similar morphological traits, and these traits have no correlation with the psychological abilities of individuals, with their social evolution, their language and historical origin'.[49] Instead of 'race', the term proposed by Preda was 'etnie' ('ethnic group)', which, he argued, brought heredity together with language and culture.

Also to be rejected was the belief according to which there was a correlation between the cephalic index and intelligence, just as the use of blood groups to demonstrate the origin of different races was open to criticism. There were 'populations separated from one another by enormous distances (indicating a different geographical origin) who nevertheless have identical biochemical indices of race'. On the other hand, Preda noted, 'it has been established that the biochemical indices may be different in peoples with relatively similar morphological characteristics and conversely the same in populations with different morphological characteristics'.[50]

47 Popa, *Reforma spiritului*, 63.

48 Victor Preda, *Tratat elementar de antropobiologie* (Sibiu: 'Dacia Traiană', 1947), 38–39.

49 Preda, *Tratat elementar de antropobiologie*, 40.

50 Preda, *Tratat elementar de antropobiologie*, 42.

The broadening of the theoretical perspective behind anthropological research, and the explicit critique of racism by Popa, Necrasov, and Preda, meant an open rejection of the racial science and eugenic thinking widely practised before and during the war. Nevertheless, none of them embraced the Soviet theory of heredity, and they remained somewhat reserved with regard to the new scientific vocabulary, also of Soviet inspiration, adopted by some of their contemporaries. Until 1947, it was still possible to discuss heredity, human genetics, and anthropology without making obligatory reference to the Soviet authors who were becoming dominant in the scientific and political works published in Romania and elsewhere in East-Central Europe at the time.

A Familiar Case: the Roma

A relevant case was that of the Roma, who, as discussed in the previous chapter, had been direct victims of Romanian racism and eugenics during Antonescu's regime. In a study published in the autumn of 1945, the sociologist George Em. Marica tried to explain the hybrid form of socializing and ethnic mixing that had developed especially on the periphery of towns in the south of Romania, in what is known as the *mahala*. According to Marica, vulgarity was considered one of the specific features of the Romanian periphery, caused, on the one hand, by the 'Balkan-Oriental layer' that predominated in the towns of the south of the country and, on the other, by the presence of the Roma. The *mahala* was often termed *țigănie* (the 'Gypsy quarter'), Marica noted, 'not only because it is home to many Gypsies, but – above all – because it has adopted certain Gypsy manners and habits'.[51] The Romanian peasant who moved to the *mahala* experienced a process of 'degeneration' and moral corruption as a consequence of mixing with the Roma. Clearly, the pre-war eugenic idea that the Roma contaminated the social and ethnic body of the nation had not disappeared. While for the Romanian peasant, the *mahala* was a social environment adverse to social and cultural development, for the Roma, especially for the nomads among them, it had a beneficial role. 'For a Gypsy to be able to reach the city, he must definitely pass through the *mahala*', Marica maintained. Moreover, the *mahala* was the setting for the process of 'civilizing' the Roma. According to Marica, if 'not in the first generation, then in the second or the third', the

51 See George Em. Marica, 'Psihosociologia mahalalei', *Revista de Psihologie Teoretică şi Aplicată* 8, no. 3 (1945): 245.

Roma living there would renounce their 'ancestral bad habits, incompatible with civilized life: laziness, an inclination for theft, lack of self-control, and a tendency towards violence'. Roma gradually became *Romanians*. According to Marica, 'in becoming urbanized, the Gypsies integrate fully in the national community, completely Romanianizing themselves'. The *mahala* was thus 'a significant factor of ethnic assimilation'.[52]

The mixing of Romanians with Roma could be avoided in the villages, where the two groups lived separately, but in the *mahala* this was impossible. Moreover – and again we can see the influence of eugenics on Marica's interpretations – the *mahala* was 'itself a generator of autochthonous asocial elements'. In his view, the Romanians of the *mahala* were 'declassed', lacking 'the consciousness of their superiority', and this indifference had profound effects on the process of socialization and assimilation of the Roma. There were, he explained, certain 'conditions' that a Roma man or woman had to fulfil in order 'to be received into a Romanian family'. For instance, it was preferable 'that their Gypsy origin should be distant, that they themselves should not have the physical characteristics of their race too pronounced (the colour of their skin should not be too black), and that they should be a hard-working and decent person'. The eugenization and racialization of the Roma continued unabated. It was not enough to renounce their ethnic origin, considered problematic: the Roma also had to be accepted as 'white' from a racial point of view and as productive people from a social one. The *mahala* was the urban and cultural space where racial hybridity became normative and thus the site of the active reproduction of the Romanian majority's eugenic anxieties. The *mahala*, Marica concluded, provided the environment for 'the slow, almost imperceptible, but undeniable process of cultural and ethnic Romanianization of the Gypsies'.[53]

In a period in which new ways were sought of conceptualizing the debate about national specificity, the eugenic model of biological and social hierarchies – according to which the Roma were considered 'foreign' and marked out as 'inferior' – remained unchallenged. Their assimilation in the majority culture was encouraged, although the associated eugenic costs for the Romanian population were deemed very high. Reconciling social demands for legal, political, economic, and educational equality with the needs of the majority Romanian population was one of the challenges faced by the new political regime. Ultimately, it was hoped that, as socialism transformed Romanian towns into modern urban centres, all the Roma

52 Marica, 'Psihosociologia mahalalei', 263–264.

53 Marica, 'Psihosociologia mahalalei', 265–266.

would become Romanians, and the *mahala* would eventually disappear. The biologization of national belonging would therefore continue, albeit without any explicit reference to race.

A Non-Racist Eugenics?

By 1946, the contours of the new discourse about heredity had become visible. In accordance with suggestions coming from the Soviet Union, this scientific paradigm sought, in the first place, to reestablish the supremacy of the social over the biological in the human sciences and, secondly, to open the way for criticism of interwar biopolitical and eugenic epistemology by re-affirming the importance of the individual to the detriment of community and race. As regards biology and anthropology, Mendelism continued to be accepted as the dominant theory of heredity, alongside Morganism, as is shown by two books published in 1946: Ion Biberi's *Introducere la studiul eredităţii* (*Introduction to the Study of Heredity*) and Octav Maller's *Ereditate și mediu* (*Heredity and Environment*). Let us briefly consider their arguments.

Biberi was a psychiatrist at the Central Hospital in Bucharest who had made a name for himself as a writer and literary critic. In 1945, he published *Individualitate și destin* (*Individuality and Destiny*), a major contribution to the debate about the formation of human character. On this occasion, he also offered a criticism of racism, which he considered a 'deviation of research' and 'a painful abdication' from the principles of science.[54] A year later appeared *Introducere la studiul eredităţii*, one of the best-written and accessible studies of genetics published in Romania in the immediate post-war years. In it, Biberi offered not only a 'preface to the study of biology in general' and an overview of the research on heredity, but also 'a testament to an intellectual orientation characteristic of the scientific thinking of the present time'.[55]

Biberi used Mendelian vocabulary and had impressive knowledge of human genetics, and in a period when criticism of Mendelism was already widespread, he had no hesitation in 'allying' himself with August Weissmann, Gregor Mendel, and T. H. Morgan. 'The chromosome theory of heredity', he stated, 'confirmed and verified by numerous observations and experiments', was a 'well-established scientific doctrine, capable of explaining all the

54 Ion Biberi, *Individualitate și destin*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Fundaţia Regele Mihai I, 1945), 173.
55 Ion Biberi, *Introducere la studiul eredităţii* (Bucharest: Fundaţia Regele Mihai I, 1946), 17.

phenomena of heredity'.[56] Nevertheless, Biberi did not unconditionally accept biological determinism and genetic essentialism, acknowledging that certain environmental factors, such as climate and nutrition, played an important role in modelling the 'the genetic inheritance' of the individual. Consequently, the individuality of each human being was the result of the coexistence of heredity and environment and the interaction between them. In Biberi,'s view this interaction was 'the vital natural condition of the formation and development of the individual'.[57] Nevertheless, Biberi categorically rejected the theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics. The individual, he insisted, 'does not transmit to his descendants any of the results of his experiences of life, any of his skills or of the effects of training, from conditional reflexes, and still less any of his moral and intellectual improvements'.[58]

Another interesting aspect of Biberi's analysis is his criticism of Francis Galton's scientific method. Galton's work he describes as 'pure statistics', with little impact 'and of very limited biological interest'.[59] He made no mention, however, of Galton's eugenic ideas. It was thus possible to write about modern genetics without mentioning any eugenic theories of racial and social improvement. Likewise, in Biberi's view, a discussion of human heredity was possible without having to invoke the Soviet theories that criticized Mendelism and eugenics.

Despite his admiration for genetics, Biberi was exceedingly cautious when it came to eugenics. Other authors, however, were not. Some continued to believe that eugenics still had something to offer in the reconstruction of post-war Romania. Octav Mărgărit was not the only leftist physician who thought eugenics was suffering from a mistaken interpretation and who tried to 'rehabilitate' it by distancing it from racism and nationalism. The psychiatrist Octav Maller attempted the same thing in his book *Ereditate și mediu*.

Maller had studied medicine in Bucharest, Paris, and Kharkiv. He spent the Second World War in the Soviet Union. After returning to Romania in 1945, he began to work as an assistant at the psychiatry clinic of the Medical-Pharmaceutical Institute in Bucharest, while, at the same time, contributing translations for the newly founded State Publishing House.[60] As

56 Biberi, *Introducere la studiul eredității*, 95.

57 Biberi, *Introducere la studiul eredității*, 155.

58 Biberi, *Introducere la studiul eredității*, 159.

59 Biberi, *Introducere la studiul eredității*, 186.

60 Personal File Maller Octav, Dos. no. 48556, vol. I, 405396. Arhiva Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, Bucharest.

he underlined in the subtitle of his book, *Contribuțiuni la o biologie dialectică* (*Contributions to a Dialectical Biology*), Maller was trying to discuss not only the relation between heredity and environment, but, equally importantly, the new methodology based on Soviet science and Marxist materialism. The existing literature on heredity in Romania, he maintained, was deficient both from a conceptual and from an ideological point of view. In the interwar period, Maller argued, 'the construction of an autochthonous racism' had been attempted 'from the heights of professorial chairs and under the authority of the established academic sciences'. How was it possible, however, he wondered, that two years after the 'political emancipation' of the country, i.e., after the coup d'état of 23 August 1944, there had been no attempt at 'the extirpation of the remains of racist science, artificially implanted in the soil of our culture'? Likewise, he continued, it was worrying that the Romanian public was not informed 'about the true bases of the racist "science" of heredity, and about the advances made by heredobiology in the USSR'.[61] (The case of Cupcea shows that there had in fact been such attempts, even if Maller did not take them into consideration)

After this introduction, Maller embarked on a vehement critique of the theories of heredity proposed by Weismann, Mendel, and Morgan. For example, Weismann's theory of the continuity of germinative plasma he described as an 'attempt at scientific justification of the Prussian imperialism of the age of Bismarck',[62] while the Mendelian laws of heredity were rejected because 'in reality they are a matter of a mere statistical effort'.[63] There followed a number of chapters dedicated to T. H. Morgan's theory and his achievements. What Maller wanted to demonstrate was Morgan's 'eugenicist-racist' position, which provided 'the arguments for the ill-fated eugenic practices of-sterilization and which, in turn, served the purifying mission of Hitlerist medicine'.[64]

In contrast with the Mendelian and Morganist theories of heredity, which placed the emphasis on hereditary determinism, Maller maintained that Soviet-inspired neo-Lamarckism demonstrated that human beings were becoming more and more adaptable to social life and the natural environment. What had to be understood was that the Soviet theories about heredity had rehabilitated Lamarckism, offering environment an

61 Octav Maller, *Ereditate și mediu. Contribuțiuni la o biologie dialectică* (Bucharest: Editura de Stat, 1946), 6.

62 Maller, *Ereditate și mediu*, 25.

63 Maller, *Ereditate și mediu*, 33.

64 Maller, *Ereditate și mediu*, 96.

equally, if not more important, role compared to heredity. According to Maller, Romanian scientists too should reject Mendelism and Morganism as untenable theories of heredity.

Next came the turn of 'racist eugenics', which was based on certain 'conceptions about heredity', inspired by Mendel's laws of inheritance and Morgan's chromosome theory. To remove the influence of these conceptions, Maller considered, not only scientific arguments were necessary, but also a change of mentality. What he termed the 'chromosomic mentality' had to be 'replaced with the more complex mentality of the influence between organism and environment'. This change of mentality, Maller anticipated, 'will mark the beginning of a new era for all the sciences'. In the particular case of medicine, it would mean the transition from an 'eliminationist eugenics to medical humanism'.[65]

The berating of Mendelism and Morganism did not, however, presuppose the compete rejection of modern genetics. For example, Maller wrote approvingly about the contributions of Nikolai K. Koltsov, director of the Institute of Experimental Biology in Moscow and chair of the Russian Eugenics Society. Koltsov's book, *Physiologie du développement et génétique* (*The Physiology of Development and Genetics*), published in 1935, provided Maller with an alternative theory of genetics, about which he wrongly stated that it was an attempt to adapt 'the chromosome theory to a dialectical conception of living matter'.[66] Genetics, Maller believed, had to be re-evaluated in accordance with Soviet materialism, and this process of re-evaluation was now the responsibility of Romanian biologists and physicians. Finally, just as Cupcea had made no reference to the attacks directed at Nikolai Vavilov by Lysenko's supports, neither did Maller mention the same attacks directed at Koltsov.

It is important to underline that Maller was not completely against eugenics, but rejected only the racist and Mendelian versions, as he termed them. Like Mărgărit, he acknowledged that a certain form of eugenics was compatible with Soviet science and with the new political context in Romania. He thus ended his book with a plea in favour of 'rational eugenics', which, he suggested, 'cannot but be prophylactic'. In his view, there was at that moment a more solid scientific theory of heredity, one which explained the importance and dominance of environmental factors, and which worked in favour of self-improvement. It was no longer about the racist eugenics of the past, but rather about the 'progressive eugenics' of the future, whose

65 Maller, *Ereditate și mediu*, 120–121.
66 Maller, *Ereditate și mediu*, 65.

major objective was 'the creation of conditions suitable for the harmonious development of humanity and the pre-marital education of the young'. What Maller proposed was thus *positive* eugenics. He categorically rejected any 'surgical intervention', i.e., sterilization, 'with all the false justifications cited in its support'.[67]

A eugenic vision of biological improvement was still possible in 1946. Maller's view was offered against the background of an unconditional acceptance of Soviet science. Like Mărgărit, Maller believed that, unlike the pre-war eugenics, contaminated by racism, antisemitism, and nationalism, socialist eugenics – based on the improvement of the environment and of society, and on the broader ambition of communism to direct human evolution – could be 'scientific' and even 'democratic'. In short, a new version of eugenics could be formulated that was non-racist but nevertheless guided by the principles of evolutionary biology and genetics.

The Condemnation of Racism

Maller openly called for a condemnation of Romanian racism. The political climate had certainly become favourable for this. In January 1945, 'the pursuit and punishment of war criminals and profiteers' had begun, and a few months later, people's tribunals were set up in Bucharest and Cluj. The publication began of documents about the pogroms of the early 1940s, together with the collection of testimonies of Romanian and Transylvanian Hungarian Jews who had survived the extermination policies implemented by the regimes of Ion Antonescu and Miklós Horthy respectively.[68]

At the same time, information began to appear regarding the inhuman treatment to which the Roma had been subjected in Transnistria. Take, for example, the case of a certain Cușmaru, from Bacău, who in April 1945 had been questioned by public prosecutor Camil Suciu of the Special Court for the Trial of War Criminals. Among other things, Cușmaru had been a gravedigger at the Voitovca camp in Transnistria, to which many Roma had been deported. He told stories about how 'the Gypsies in the camp were the object of the gendarmes' mockery' and how Roma girls were frequently

67 Octav Maller, *Ereditate și mediu*, 125–126.

68 See Miklós Nyiszli, *Dr Mengele boncolóorvosa voltam az Auschwitz–i krematóriumban* (Nagyvárad: Tipografia 'Grafica', 1946); Matatias Carp, *Cartea neagră: fapte și documente. Suferințele evreilor din România, 1940–1944* (Bucharest: Librăria Socec, 1946); and Marius Mircu (pseudonym of Israel Marcus), *Pogromuri din Basarabia și alte câteva întâmplări* (Bucharest: 'Glob', 1947).

raped. He also described how '200 Gypsies were crowded into a pen, without food, where they literally died of hunger'. And he had witnessed cases of cannibalism among the deported Roma, 'when the living devoured the flesh of the dead'.[69]

Such testimonies contributed to the creation of a current of opinion in favour of the antiracist propaganda promoted by those who associated eugenics with the pseudoscientific foundations of Nazism and Fascism. The trial of the Nazi physicians and other war criminals at Nuremberg, which began in December 1946 and ended in August 1947, also became known in Romania. The first book about the human experiments carried out in the concentration camps of Buchenwald, Dachau, and Auschwitz was published in Romania in 1948. In his foreword, Constantin I. Parhon admitted that he had read the materials gathered in the book 'with a painful tightening of the heart-strings and almost with a feeling of distrust and scepticism regarding the future of the human species'. The medical experiments to which those in the Nazi camps had been subjected demonstrated, he said, that human ethics had not yet emerged from 'the stage of savagery or more precisely from its most rudimentary stage'.[70] The whole book provided unquestionable evidence of the Nazi programme of racial and eugenic extermination of those considered 'inferior' and 'unworthy of living'. Under the cover of so-called 'medical purposes', the experiments principally served the regime's racial and eugenic aims.

The book *Die faschistische Rassentheorie* (*The Fascist Theory of Races*) by the Austrian communist Ernst Fischer, which first appeared in Moscow in 1941, was translated into Romanian in 1947. As the publisher's note explained, 'with the military defeat of Fascism, humanity expected to see its so-called theoretical influences shattered. But the reality proved to be otherwise'. Racist theories continued to have 'influence over the ill-informed'. Returning to Houston Stewart Chamberlain and the pan-Germanist ideologues of the later nineteenth century, Fischer demolished their racist and antisemitic fantasies, and with them the whole vocabulary of 'race and blood' that had found expression in the Nazi ideology. He admitted the existence of human races, but these were very mixed. It was impossible to establish that a race had traits and characteristics specific to itself alone, as the European racists had long maintained. And Fischer gave as an example 'the famous Nordic dolichocephalic (long skull) cranial form' which was also encountered 'in

69 'Cercetările acuzatorilor publici', *Universul* 62, no. 99 (1945), 5.

70 Constantin I. Parhon, 'Cuvânt introductiv' to Luigi Luigi, *Experiențe pe oameni* (Bucharest: Editura Socec, 1948), 5–6.

numerous tribes in Africa and in Australian populations'. It was thus not a matter of science. 'Fascism', Fischer suggested, '*needed* a racist theory'[71] in order to secure social cohesion and ideological unity. In his view, the idea of a 'superior' German race and of 'inferior' races represented by Jews, Poles, Czechs, and others had been exploited in association with the myth of 'blood and soil'. These were the ideas that the Nazi ideologues had absorbed from the long tradition of European racism, with a view to territorial expansion and the conquest of other nations.

Another equally important aspect of Fischer's book is his discussion of Soviet biology and rejection of Mendelism. Fischer directly linked the racist theory of superior and inferior races to Mendel's theory of heredity and to the chromosomal theory of heredity proposed by T. H. Morgan. He described both as 'products of scientific fantasy' and as sources of modern racist theories.[72] However, there was another scientific tradition in biology, that of Ivan Michurin and his adepts Trofim D. Lysenko and the botanist N. V. Tsitsin. According to Fischer, Soviet biology stood in direct opposition to Western biology, both from a political and from a scientific point of view. Moreover, the egalitarian Soviet project postulated the unity of the human race, while Western racist theories rejected it. With regard to the latter argument, Fischer further criticized the attempts of racists to efface the distinction between race, people, and nation, and considered that the arguments about 'racial purity' and 'racial continuity' provided no scientific evidence whatsoever. Therefore, to consider the Jews 'a race', as anti-Semites everywhere had done, was not only erroneous – Fischer considered them to be a religious community – but also very dangerous, as it had given even more power to anti-Jewish racism, which was already very widespread in Europe. At the time of the publication of his book, the persecution and the murder of the Jews was soon to intensify, ultimately leading to the Holocaust.

Finally, Fischer was of the opinion that the fascist belief in the central role of race in history and the entire ideological edifice constructed around it could be rejected only by an equally impressive ideology, that of historical materialism and its personification in the socialist project achieved in, and promoted by, the Soviet Union. The transformative power of the Soviet socialist order, Fischer concluded, had emerged both as a defensive reaction to Nazi Germany and as a result of the reordering of the world around new ideological norms of social normativity and scientific knowledge. As such, the Soviet socialist order reflected and conformed perfectly to the

71 Ernst Fischer, *Teoria fascistă a raselor* (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1947), 14–15.

72 Fischer, *Teoria fascistă a raselor*, 19–20.

emerging political orientation in Romania, which was itself defined by the condemnation of scientific racism.

Towards a New Scientific Direction

A new political era was about to begin, followed by the creation of a culture based not only on Marxism-Leninism, but also on 'a new thinking in the science of life'[73] and a new medical ethics.[74] As Mihail Roller, a member of the Propaganda and Agitation Section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party announced in 1949, 'There has never before been seen in Romania such a great thirst for culture as now; never has the country known such a great impetus in all the fields of science, literature, and art, as in the present moment'.[75] This implied the remodelling of Romania's entire academic structure on the Soviet model. Roller, again, described this process. A 'great part of our intellectuals', he pointed out, 'have understood that the study and spreading of Soviet culture, the most advanced culture in the world, is necessary for the fruitful development of science and culture in Romania'.[76] This was, however, no more than well-orchestrated propaganda.[77]

A new cultural strategy was officially decreed in February 1948, when Gheorghe Georghiu-Dej, general secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party, announced in his report to the Central Committee that the only possible future for Romania was to embrace unconditionally 'the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the proletariat', based on the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. The scientific advances in the Soviet Union proved, as always, to be the catalyst. At a heavily promoted plenary session of the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences (VASKhNIL), organized at the beginning of August 1948 in Moscow, Lysenko proclaimed his 'Michurinist theory of heredity' to be the official doctrine of Soviet agriculture. A short time later, a similar position was adopted in Romania. Here is how the impact of this session was described in *Revista Pădurilor* (*Journal of Forestry*):

> The memorable August 1948 session of the V. I. Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences in Moscow marked a veritable revolution in the biological

73 H. Holban, 'O gândire nouă în știința despre viață', *Universul* 65, no. 259 (1948): 4.
74 I. Vintilă, 'Morala medicului sovietic', *Universul* 65, no. 259 (1948): 4.
75 Mihai Roller, 'Cultura nouă în R.P.R.', *Contemporanul* 4, no. 139 (1949): 1.
76 Roller, 'Cultura nouă în R.P.R.', 6.
77 According to Professor Denis Buican, personal communication, Paris, 27 May 2016.

> sciences. Its effects were not limited to agriculture, but echoed almost with the same effect in medicine, psychology, silviculture, etc. In the USSR, the old conceptions based on the philosophical-idealist Weissmann-Morganist theory [of heredity] have been done away with, and replaced with a new, revolutionary science, based on Marxist-Leninist principles and on the version of dialectical materialism applied in biology by Michurin and Lysenko.[78]

The supporters of the new, Soviet-inspired science did not have long to wait before it was embraced by the Romanian authorities. Early in 1949, the Institute of Agronomic Research in Bucharest organized a national session dedicated to the most recent developments of Soviet agriculture and animal crossbreeding, and to the promotion of Lysenkoism. The Congress for Peace and Culture of the Intellectuals of the Romanian People's Republic, organized from 29 to 31 March 1949, reflected the same conformity to Soviet science. On the last day of its proceedings, Traian Săvulescu, who had been appointed president of the newly founded Academy of the Romanian People's Republic, lectured on plant crossing and biology in general, his views mired in Michurinism and Lysenkoism. Adapting to the new scientific and political context, Săvulescu mocked the biology and genetics of the West, considering them to be idealist and speculative, in contrast to Michurin's theories of plant hybridization and Lysenko's 'theory of dialectical heredity' which he described as 'empirical and materialist'. Săvulescu had embraced Soviet agrobiology, which he considered the only official scientific methodology, in accordance with Marxist materialism and expressing the 'incontestable truth' in agronomy and plant physiology.[79]

Under the impact of Soviet ideological pressure, a new global interpretation of the biological and medical sciences was thus proposed.[80] Traian Săvulescu was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of this 'new scientific direction'. In the plenary session of the academy on 28 June 1949, Săvulescu synthesized the ideological aspects of the new scientific directions in Romania.[81] In short, he wanted science to be an instrument that would

78 'Spre o nouă orientare în munca științifică silvică', *Revista Pădurilor* 64, no. 3 (1949): iv. See also 'Două lumi — două ideologii în biologie', *Contemporanul* 2, no. 105 (1948): 7 and 'Două lumi – două ideologii în biologie', *Contemporanul* 2, no. 106 (1948): 9.

79 Traian Săvulescu, *De la practica domesticirii plantelor la principii biologice generale. Reflexiuni pe marginea rapoartelor lui T. D. Lyssenko* (Bucharest: Academia R. P. R., 1949).

80 Octav Maller, 'Aspecte teoretice în psihopatologia sovietică', *Analele Româno–Sovietice, Seria Medicină* 4, nos. 6–7 (1949): 49–58.

81 Traian Săvulescu, *For a Proper Orientation of Scientific Activity in the Rumanian People's Republic* (Bucharest: Rumanian Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, 1949), 19–32.

contribute effectively to the construction of socialism. Of course, socialist scientists were expected to be socially involved and to abandon cultural elitism. In the new socialist Romania, science aspired to be the expression of the 'will of the people'. Moreover, it had to draw its 'inspiration from the reality of life' and to be 'fully connected with the life of the State'.[82]

The argument regarding the social dimension of science was connected to another equally important: its national character. Săvulescu could not accept the idea that science was 'universal' and that it knew no 'limits', existing only in the abstract and seeking 'the transcendent truth'. Science was 'first and foremost national', he maintained, invoking the definition of the nation given by Joseph Stalin in his 1913 volume *Marxism and the National Question*. The suggestion that science had a cosmopolitan character was thus a retrograde conception and served only the political agenda of Western imperialism. The national character of science was much more than a mere question of the transfer of knowledge, but presupposed a wide ideological perspective, acquired through the identification of 'proper' scientific activity with the idea of national liberation. Cosmopolitanism was a political instrument used to subjugate people for the purposes of imperialism and for the enrichment of a particular group of scientists.[83] There was a virtue that marked the difference between national scientists and those who were cosmopolitan: the ability to represent one's own people. According to Săvulescu, 'those who do not plant the roots of their science in the soil of their country, in the aspirations and needs of the people, strengthen the myth of the inferiority of our science and the exclusive value of Western science'.[84]

Socialist science, he believed, needed a new sense of national responsibility on which to base itself and thus be able to flourish. The flame of international idealism and the impulse of personal gratification would be eliminated once and for all. Science was now in the service of the people. Săvulescu asked 'that our scientists should be devoted to the people and loyal to the working class, that their problems and themes should be part of the struggle for doing away with the backward conditions in the country, for carrying out the economic and cultural plan of the people's democracy, for building socialism'.[85]

82 Săvulescu, *For a Proper Orientation of Scientific Activity in the Rumanian People's Republic*, 19–20.

83 Leonte Răutu, *Împotriva cosmopolitismului şi obiectivismului burghez în ştiinţele sociale* (Bucharest: Editura Partidului Muncitoresc Român, 1949).

84 Săvulescu, *For a Proper Orientation of Scientific Activity in the Rumanian People's Republic*, 22.

85 Săvulescu, *For a Proper Orientation of Scientific Activity in the Rumanian People's Republic*, 25.

This was the new language that Romanian scientists learned to use for personal and professional reasons. The 'Medical Days', organized in Brașov in the spring of 1949, were attended by over 330 doctors from all over the country, including Constantin I. Parhon, Ștefan-Marius Milcu, Aurel Moga, professor of cardiology at the Institute of Medicine and Pharmacy in Cluj, and the psychiatrist Leon Ballif. The opening lecture, titled 'New Conceptions in Biology: Michurin's Creative Soviet Darwinism' was delivered by Vasile Mârza, the minister of Health. Michurin, Mârza endeavoured to explain, was the 'proletarian scholar' who had demonstrated the regenerative strength of Soviet biology.[86]

The years 1948–1950 marked the total adaptation of Romanian agriculture, pomiculture, and silviculture to Soviet ideological and political authority.[87] Western – that is, Mendelian – genetics was eliminated from the scientific vocabulary of Romanian researchers working in plant biology, zootechnics, and silviculture. On the other hand, Darwin's theory of evolution continued to be accepted, albeit in a slightly adjusted Soviet version.[88] The medical and biological sciences also came into line with the new ideological paradigm, without, however, fully embracing Lysenkoism. In the early 1950s, the scientific community in Romania was characterized by a 'totalitarian regimentation of thought' – to use the expression which the English biologist Julian Huxley applied to the situation of Soviet biology after 1948.[89]

In the end, the Sovietization of Romania could not be stopped. On 30 December 1947, King Michael I was forced to abdicate, the monarchy was abolished, and Romania became a people's republic and a satellite state of the Soviet Union. In the early 1950s, Marxism-Leninism became the political creed of the new regime of people's democracy. The Sovietization of the country meant at the same time the Sovietization of Romanian culture and science. Like other scientific fields, anthropology, human biology, and medicine saw fierce conflicts, both internal and, often enough, open. Of course, these developments have to be understood in terms of the wider political context in Romania at the end of the 1940s. In comparison with other

86 V. S., 'Peste 300 de medici din Ardeal şi alte judeţe ale ţării s–au întrunit, la Braşov, pentru a desbate subiecte cu caracter ştiinţific, profesional şi politic', *Lupta Sibiului* 1, no. 12 (1949): 2.

87 Alexandru Priadcencu, 'Necesitatea aplicării ştiinţei miciuriniste în R. P. R.', in *Caiet Tehnic. Închinat celei de a 70–a aniversări a tovarăşului I.V. Stalin. 21 Decembrie 1949* (Bucharest: Agir, 1949), 167–169.

88 Vladimir P. Timofeev, 'Darwinismul creator – bază ştiinţifică pentru tăerile de ameliorare', *Revista Pădurilor* 64, no. 4 (1949): 173–178.

89 Julian Huxley, *Soviet Genetics and World Science: Lysenko and the Meaning of Heredity* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1949), 151.

scientific disciplines, such as plant biology, agronomy, and silviculture, the references in anthropology to such Soviet authors as Michurin and Lysenko were often prudent and subtle. Ultimately, the much-praised Lysenkoization of agriculture and plant biology in Romania was only a part, and perhaps not the most significant part, of a more ambitious ideological process, that of completely compromising human genetics based on Mendelism and its connection with eugenics.

For some scientists, such as Traian Săvulescu, embracing the Soviet model served as a springboard for their political careers. Others, such as Octav Maller, used the criticism of Western genetics to achieve the necessary equilibrium between the new Communist ideology and their areas of expertise. Finally, there were also those, such like Ion Biberi, Ștefan-Marius Milcu, and Olga Necrasov, who saw in the new regime established in 1947 an opportunity to reconcile biological with social aspects (as well as scientific with ideological aspects) in their research. Milcu and Necrasov also hoped to find a place for anthropology in the wider context of the cultural practices of Romania's new national politics. The desire for change and social reform also played an important role, however, and initially Communism seduced those who believed that Romania needed a profound transformation. Although some elements of Soviet science were rigid from a doctrinal point of view, they were adopted by Romanian scientists with surprising flexibility. Apart from political opportunism and conformity to Soviet norms, even Săvulescu's text, discussed above, exuded a form of patriotism, as it maintained a certain connection with pre-war Romanian science, particularly regarding the cult of the nation and the distinction between "our" culture and "their" culture.

By the early 1950s, Romanian scientific work was already within the confines of the Soviet ideological straitjacket. Some methodological practices were encouraged, such as the mandatory inclusion of Karl Marx's and Vladimir Lenin's writings in bibliographies, while others, such as references to the Romanian scientific traditions of the interwar period and to Western authors, were demonized as harmful, both for their authors and, more importantly, for the general transformation of Romania into a socialist democracy. As the country's new political leaders had anticipated in the late 1940s, Romanian scientists had set course for a destination, where there would be no nationalism and racism, and where their writing and research would reflect a socialist scientific culture. It thus comes as no surprise to read in *Manual de biostatistică* (*Textbook of Biostatistics*), published by the Ministry of Health in 1951 for use in secondary schools, that eugenics was 'the so-called science of the purity of races, of biological and racial theories and indices, on the basis of which the imperialists created the theories of the

superiority of one race over another'. Even Stalin was mentioned, with his statement that 'eugenics was as far from truth as the sky from the earth'.[90] After all, he was the supreme authority.

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At the end of this book, I want to offer a short presentation of the period immediately after the end of the Second World War, to allow for a better understanding and contextualization not just of the debate about the 'perfect Romanian', but also of the ideological context that was to determine scientific production regarding national specificity in Romania in the following decades. Eugenics would no longer receive the public recognition and support that it had enjoyed in the interwar period, but its memory would not easily disappear. The example that follows may come as a surprise to many readers, especially as it comes from an author considered almost a saint by many in today's Romania. It is a dialogue on the subject of eugenics from the theatre play *Întâmplări obişnuite* (*Ordinary Happenings*), written by Petre Țuțea (in collaboration with the writer Gheorghe Th. Lăpușneanu), and published in the magazine *Familia* (*The Family*) in 1968 and 1969.

The scene is the country house of Cezar Neamțu, a physician and wealthy landowner, on a spring morning. A peasant from his estate comes to ask him to examine his seriously ill child. There follows a discussion between Cezar, his wife Cristina, and Remus Brașoveanu, a visiting agronomic engineer from Bucharest. Cezar's opinion (and we may presume that it is also Țuțea's) is that everything possible must be done to save this peasant's child, not only out of moral and economic considerations (a future workforce), but also for patriotic reasons, as the children of peasants are 'an inexhaustible fountain of national energy'. Cristina, however, is of a different opinion: 'To release a child from suffering is pleasing to God'. Her remark surprises Brașoveanu, who also joins the discussion. Measures should be taken 'to encourage births, to protect mothers, and to help families with many children', he says, adding that 'in the struggle for existence, only the gifted and numerous peoples survive'.

Brașoveanu is of the opinion that the Romanian people needs its own eugenics to save the peasantry from degeneration. Cezar, however, does not seem convinced. Is he not a racist? Brașoveanu asks him, explaining that 'some are racist and seek the strengthening of their people for reasons

90 *Manual de biostatistică* (Bucharest: Editura de Stat pentru Literatură Științifică și Didactică, 1951), 7.

of expansion, hunger for space and wealth justified by the dogma of the chosen people. Others prohibit the right to procreation of degenerates and of the hereditarily ill, for aesthetic and economic reasons'. It is an unfounded accusation, Cezar considers. To be a eugenicist is not the same as to be a racist. 'For me', he replies, 'racial hygiene does not imply a racist conception'.

Brașoveanu accepts that some eugenic methods, such as sterilization, may be necessary, and suggests that 'if we want to improve the race rationally and especially if we are in a hurry to do this, then we are obliged to practise sterilization, or isolation'. There were of course, moral and religious arguments against these 'harsh measures', and Cezar mentions the discussion that he has had with the village priest about sterilization. This 'solution' is 'a sin', the priest considers, 'as man has no right to censure God'.

Cezar hesitates to take a clear position. He is attracted by both eugenic imperatives: 'the need for the purifying and perfecting of the race', but also the elimination of 'the suffering of the ill-fated'. It is difficult however, he says, 'to pick out the cockle from the wheat'.

For Cristina and Braşoveanu, however, things seem clear. The latter makes the following observation:

> If we take harsh measures of racial hygiene, we will pray to God to forgive us, as we have been blinded by love for our race. This love, without intention of censorship, urges us to put aside the imperfections of nature, our vices and weaknesses, within the limits of the wisdom and power available to us. Indeed, our religion obliges its followers to work constantly for the perfecting of humanity. The idea of the absolute creates a state of perpetual dissatisfaction.

And Cristina's response follows the same line of reasoning:

> The elimination of abnormal individuals and the removal of the defective and the ungifted are incomplete measures. They must be complemented by the coupling of the gifted. As it is with animals. It's a strange belief that your friend has. It is true that a nation lives through its valuable individuals. The abnormal are not of value. But if we accept only the historical ranking of values, then nor are the mediocre of value. There is nothing to be done in the present state of science and within our moral order.

For Cezar (and indeed also for Țuțea), the problem of eugenics remains open. Their discussion, however, stops at this point. Brașoveanu's last challenge

remains unanswered. Cezar appears to agree with his complaint 'that the peasants wear tired and sad masks', and that 'They are weak and pallid. It's as if they were faded'. In his view, there needs to be a national eugenic renewal. 'It should not be forgotten', he warns, 'that the biological sources of the nation are here! A vigorous people cannot be bred from such peasants'.[91]

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As discussed in this book, this was the major debate in Romania from the 1880s onwards, reaching maximum intensity during the interwar period when Țuțea and his friends wrote *The Manifesto of National Revolution*, the source of inspiration for the discussion of eugenics in the play. The discrepancy between the *ideal* Romanian and the *real* Romanian remained as acute in the 1960s under socialism, as it had been in the 1930s, and Țuțea continued to believe that it was possible to intervene in the process of social selection to regenerate the body of the nation. Old ideas die hard, and sometimes they never die at all!

91 Petre Țuțea and Gheorghe Lăpuşneanu, 'Întîmplări obişnuite', *Familia* 4 (104), no. 11 (38) (1968): 16.

Conclusions

Abstract: This concluding chapter reiterates the argument that the eugenic ambition of nurturing a healthy Romanian population was placed within a broader biopolitical project of nation-building and national protectionism which began in the last decades of the nineteenth century and continues to this day. Eugenics did not disappear after World War II, but it was inserted into the communist project of the 'new Soviet man and woman' and it informed the nationalist and natalist fantasies of Ceauşescu's Romania.

Keywords: historical memory, communism, anti-racism, anti-eugenics, public awareness

The end of this book is not a conventional one. The search for the *perfect* Romanian from an ethnic, social, cultural, and ideological point of view did not end with the Second World War in 1945, or with the abolition of the monarchy in 1947. If anything, the search intensified during the socialist years, and it continues to this day. During this long period, the debate about race, social selection, and national specificity often took extreme forms, expressed not only in exclusivist perceptions of Romanian ethnicity to support a deep sense of national belonging, but also in transfers of population, pogroms, deportations, and the Holocaust, all aimed at the eugenic and racial purification of the Romanian population.

Antisemitism, racism, and eugenics were officially condemned after 1944, but other themes discussed in this book, such as social selection were gradually integrated in the new socialist system, especially in education and in social and medical assistance. The notion of race was also abandoned, but biopolitical and eugenic ideas continued to play a decisive role not only in the natalist policy introduced in 1966, but also in the ethnonationalist discourse about the protection of the family, of children, and of mothers. The obsession with national specificity has remained ingrained in Romanian

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politics and culture, and it found one of its most powerful expressions in the doctrine of autochthonous nationalism of the 1970s and 1980s.

As has been discussed above, in the interwar period, eugenics was one of the principal elements of a wider biopolitical agenda, focused not only on the control of reproduction, social hygiene, public health, and family planning, but also on racial research on social and ethnic minorities. The Romanian state's main eugenic aims were protection against the biological decline of the nation and improvement of the biological qualities of the majority population. This purposely placed eugenics within a nationalist framework after the creation of Greater Romania in 1918. Maintaining that the state had to intervene through eugenic measures for the improvement of the nation's racial and social body, biopolitics, that is the understanding of national policy through the prism of biology and heredity, was seen as an ideal formula for the creation of a strong and healthy Romanian nation. While eugenicists might agree about the importance of healthy children, there was no consensus on what was meant by *perfect* from a hereditary point of view. Was it about being the best at music, at sport, or at philosophy? Or was it about being the most nationalist of the Romanians? The concept of perfectibility was and is extremely subjective and conditioned by culture, politics, and mentality.

Many of the eugenic ideas continued to make their influence felt on policies introduced in Romania after the Second World War, especially those regarding the health and demography of the population. Their legacies lingered in debates about disadvantaged social groups, in attempts to control the differential fertility rates of various sectors of the population, and in educational programmes for individuals with intellectual deficiencies or growth disorders. In the 1970s and even more in the 1980s, a biological definition of the socialist nation was reinstated as one of the central tenets of Romanian state propaganda. A public discussion is necessary today in order to understand the way in which eugenic ideas were re-introduced into the socialist system and continued to influence the everyday life of all Romanian citizens, 'without distinction of nationality', to use an expression popular at the time. This will, I hope, constitute the object of a future study.

The racial and eugenic arguments on which the debate about national specificity in modern Romania was based were formulated by communities of scientists, religious figures, social reformers, and politicians, but also by a public increasingly involved in the debate about what it meant to be Romanian. The term *român* ('Romanian') itself was used in numerous senses, some biological, others cultural, others legal, constantly being endowed with meaning and legitimacy. The assumption that 'the race' epitomized

by the Romanian peasants was degenerating fed many anti-Semitic, racist, and eugenic obsessions. As is the way with such obsessions, none was supported by credible scientific evidence, but this did not prevent the state and Romanian elites from adopting a biopolitical and eugenic vision of the nation.

Some authors, as we have seen, believed that by marginalizing, rejecting, and even eliminating ethnic minorities such as the Jews and the Roma, the majority Romanian population would be able to avoid racial 'degeneration'; others campaigned for the separation of individuals considered 'dysgenic', believing that in this way, the social problems of Romania, such as poverty, criminality, and prostitution would be brought under control. The groups in question were considered a racial and eugenic 'threat' to society and indeed to the nation and were stigmatized and dehumanized. Unfortunately, in cases such as that of the Roma, the stigmatization largely continues to this day.

If nationalism and racism determined the criteria for belonging to the Romanian ethnic community, eugenics and biopolitics defined the social and biological value of the members of that community. Intellectual and racial qualities mattered. Heredity was essentialized at the level of collectivity and considered a determining factor in social behaviour and intellectual achievement. Some individuals were considered valuable from a biological and social point of view, while others were not. Of course, eugenic speculations about social norms, about cultural, ethnic, and gender differences, and about the intellectual achievements of different social and ethnic groups have influenced policies in countries around the world, not only in interwar Romania.

As eugenics grew in popularity after 1900, it became intertwined with biopolitics and contributed decisively to debates about the protection of race, society, and nation. The attention not only of public health experts, demographers, and physicians, but also of the government was focused on the so-called vital statistics of the country (ranging from the rates of birth and criminality to the spread of venereal diseases and the incidence of mental illnesses). There was constant emphasis, both in specialized publications and in the newspapers of the time, on the need to improve social and economic conditions, which were considered to blame for a whole range of health problems and, consequently, for the 'degeneration' of the nation. Romania's predominantly rural environment, malnutrition, social diseases (such as alcoholism), and venereal diseases (especially syphilis), not to mention the high rate of infant mortality, were determining factors in the elaboration of political strategies of public health and social hygiene. In this respect, the expansion of the social role of the physician reflected the

process of professionalization of medicine in modern Romania, prompting at the same time, the reinterpretation, in an accessible eugenic language, of medical, social, and ethical problems concerning the development of the nation.

In order to fulfil their biopolitical objectives, the eugenicists sought to interact with a wider public through lectures, radio interventions, and, of course, popularizing articles. They were aware of the fact that complex scientific ideas about human heredity and its role in the modelling of human development could be easily disseminated when they were explained in newspapers and magazines of general interest. This was the most efficient manner of arousing public interest in certain problems of eugenics, from marriage and the family to the protection of the 'racial' quality of future generations.

Eugenics societies were also created in Cluj and Bucharest, with branches in Craiova, Chișinău, Sibiu, and Timișoara, headed by such prominent figures in Romanian medicine as Iuliu Moldovan, Iuliu Hațieganu, and Gheorghe Marinescu. These societies promoted the eugenic education of the population through public activities and called for the introduction of eugenic laws devised to encourage the reproduction of healthy Romanians and to prevent the 'degeneration of the race'. Eugenic restrictions on marriage, for example, were considered by many experts to be a possible way of preventing the transmission of hereditary illnesses to future generations and, at the same time, a means of controlling other more general eugenic and social problems, such as criminality, alcoholism, and prostitution.

Romanian eugenicists, like their counterparts elsewhere, maintained that they were acting in the name of the nation's future and speaking for the generations to come, when they promoted measures for the biological continuity of the nation. What mattered was protecting those individuals whom they considered 'healthy from a hereditary point of view'. In the interwar period, not only eugenics societies, but also governmental committees, cultural associations such as ASTRA, and youth organizations such as *Șoimii Carpaților* and *Straja Țării* (*Guardians of the Land*) promoted eugenic research for the purpose of improving the health of the population by social selection of certain groups of individuals identified as 'superior' and by limiting the reproduction of those identified as 'degenerate'. All these actions, together with a number of laws, such as those concerning 'certificates of nationality' and prevention of the spread of venereal diseases, which made the pre-marital medical certificate obligatory, were closely connected to the Romanian state's overall orientation towards the protection 'of the race and of the health of the Romanian people'.

The racial biopolitics that took shape in the late 1930s maintained that ethnic minorities were either 'inferior', and consequently ought to be replaced, as happened in the cases of the Jews and the Roma, or should be re-defined as 'Romanians' from a racial point of view, as was attempted in the cases of the Csángós and the Széklers. These racist theories presupposed the racialization of the social and economic roles attributed to ethnic minorities. The Jews, for example, were accused of undermining the economy of the Romanian state and exploiting the Romanian peasants, while the Roma were described as 'parasites', 'criminals', and 'defectives'. Some eugenicists, such as Toma Petrescu, Sabin Manuilă, Liviu Stan, the Făcăoaru brothers, sought not only a ban on marriages between Romanians and Jews, but also the sterilization of the Roma.

The eugenic dehumanization of the Roma was continually supported by their social representation. It was the Roma who 'robbed' and 'stole'; they were lazy and criminal 'from birth', and so on. This whole construction of the Roma as 'asocial' elements began after their emancipation in the middle of the nineteenth century and took on a racist and eugenic dimension during the interwar period and World War II. At the time, Romanian eugenicists tried to demonstrate that the Roma had 'low intelligence', that they belonged to an 'inferior race', and that, essentially, they posed an existential threat to the Romanian nation.

As in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, so in Romania there appeared various forms of a radical biopolitics that regarded the totalitarian and racial state as the utmost expression of the ethnic superiority of the Romanians. In the context of this political transformation, the terms 'race' and 'blood' were not just symbols of ethnic belonging, but became biopolitical categories, put into effect both through political practices and through the antisemitic legislation introduced after 1938. The notion of the 'degeneration of the race', presumed to be caused by the assimilation of the Jews into Romanian society, had already been popularized in the early twentieth century by radical nationalists such as Aurel C. Popovici and antisemites like A. C. Cuza. However, it acquired a new and powerful impulse with the radicalization of Romanian nationalism in the 1930s, and especially with the Legionary movement's antisemitic propaganda.

We must, however, understand Romanian racism, from a conceptual and contextual point of view, not just as a variant of antisemitism, but as an integral part of the history of the interwar period, and especially in connection with debates about national specificity. Recourse to historical memory is essential in order to understand the racist and eugenic views expressed by leading interwar Romanian scientists. Similarly, the history

of anthropology and eugenics in Romania needs to be discussed taking into account the domestic and international political context of the time. The proposal to sterilize the Roma, for example, was in accordance with the new ideological objectives of Romanian eugenic thinking after 1940, and with the Antonescu regime's political ambitions, including plans for national homogenization and ethnic purification between 1941 and 1944. This radical form of biopolitics was expressed in schemes of population transfer between Romania and neighbouring countries, in the deportation of Jews and Roma to Transnistria, in pogroms, and finally in the Holocaust.

Furthermore, the eugenicists considered themselves guardians of social behaviour in society, promoting sexual morality, the cleanliness and hygiene of the national body, the well-being of future generations, and the ideal of marriage. From its beginnings, the Romanian eugenic movement placed the family at the centre of its programme, proposing protective measures against its social and biological deterioration. Iuliu Moldovan formulated the biopolitical creed of the interwar period thus: 'Led by the command of ethnic interest, I shall fight for the institution of the family to fulfil its ethnic and Christian purposes'. Thus, the improvement of the health of the nation was to begin with choosing the right spouse. In this way, eugenic propaganda popularized idealized versions of masculinity and femininity and assigned them to the majority Romanian population. The *perfect* Romanian peasant family was widely reproduced visually, contributing decisively to the construction of normative visions of eugenic reproduction and marriage. Such representations of the ideal family and nation referred both to the biological endowment which every individual received at birth (ancestors and ethnic origins), and to the social and educational endowment to be achieved through good and moral living. Some eugenicists highlighted the importance of heredity in modelling human character and behaviour, while others considered that education and environment were decisive. It is not at all surprising that they could not agree on the effectiveness of such eugenic measures as sterilization. Some opposed it on scientific grounds, others on moral and religious grounds. Likewise, the widespread notion that all 'men of the cloth' rejected eugenics and racism must be reevaluated. There were cases of Orthodox priests, such as Liviu Stan, who were openly racist and eugenicist.

As I have shown in this book, eugenics and biopolitics should not be treated as 'accidents' of history that had only a minor impact in modern Romanian culture. We cannot separate eugenics from its historical context, from the questions that the eugenicists asked regarding the 'perfect Romanian' from an ethnic point of view, from the interpretations they offered on

the basis of their medical and anthropological research, and from the way in which the state authorities applied their proposals of social selection and ethnic purification. I have also suggested that these eugenic strategies were modelled by cultural attitudes and political affinities, both on the right and on the left, comprising the full range of ideological options, from anarchism to anti-Semitism and racism.

The intricate relationship between science and ethnicity was an essential premise for the appearance and development of Romanian eugenic culture. And to understand this conceptual transformation of scientific knowledge about the nation, we need to unpack the eugenic and biopolitical traditions that had emerged after the creation of modern Romania in the mid-nineteenth century. It must therefore be accepted that the eugenic language and eugenic theories encountered in the works of the authors presented here were not without serious consequences for Romanian political and scientific culture.

Biosocial research was not carried out by chance but formed part of a vast scientific programme and of a nation-wide institutional strategy initially adopted in the 1880s but which expanded significantly after the creation of Greater Romania in 1918. The Romanian nation, it was argued, had to be physically mapped, not merely conceived as a cultural and linguistic community. To achieve this goal, anthropological and serological research sought to identify all the Romanians from a racial point of view, so that the state could then provide the appropriate strategy to educate them with regard to the biological importance of the nation's future.

There are several possible ways to approach the interwar debates about Romanian national specificity. The strategy I have chosen is based on the opinions of authors involved in this debate, authors who have been little discussed in Romanian historiography. I have tried to present their ideas without much interpretation, just as they were expressed and discussed at the time. Political ideologies such as antisemitism, nationalism, and racism were, of course, important in shaping the distinct character of a period covering almost seventy years of Romanian national history. However, like the interpretations provided today through the prism of coloniality, intersectionality, and critical race theory (CRT), these political ideologies need to be connected to the actual story of how the physical body of the nation, like any organism, was expected to grow, both intellectually and physically, and eventually reach the age of historical maturity. This story remains little known even to professional historians of modern Romania.

The authors discussed here who were still alive in the early 1950s were persecuted by the new Communist regime. Some, such as Iuliu Moldovan,

Gheorghe Banu, the Făcăoaru brothers, Gheorghe Stroescu, and Traian Herseni, went to prison, or were sent to labour camps. Others, like Sabin Manuilă, emigrated. But eugenics did not disappear with these individuals. Like dandelion fluff carried on the wind to spawn new plants, eugenics drifted for a time across the cultural and scientific landscape of post–World War II Romania, sometimes under different names, until it could grow again from the receptive soil of the socialist ideology of the 'New Man'. The biopolitical programme of Romanian socialism continued that of the interwar period. For example, the research agenda of a national biology – dealing with the country's ethnic differences, studying cycles of population growth and decline, charting the genetic genealogies of various peasant communities, and the exploring the relation between culture and nature – was reintroduced to the scientific community as soon as the Romanian Academy established a Centre for Anthropological Research in May 1950. The fact that a former legionary like Traian Herseni joined this centre and collaborated in its publications is illustrative. He was one of those experts who promoted racist and eugenic views before 1944, but who managed to make themselves at home, both professionally and ideologically, in socialist Romania. The legionary theologian Liviu Stan, too, enjoyed a remarkable career during the 1950s and 1960s, and is today one of the most respected figures in the modern history of the Orthodox Church.

During the communist period, eugenic ideas reappeared, materializing in a particular form of biopolitics which developed fully after the coming to power of Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1965. The new regime initiated a strict pro-natalist policy, with the state seeking to obtain complete control of reproduction. What was wished for – echoing the aims of interwar eugenics – was demographic growth and a consolidation of Romanian nationalism; what ensued, however, was Romania's most dramatic eugenic project.

There is a need now for a public debate about the legacies of Romanian eugenics and racism. Their roots are buried deep in society, culture, and politics, but, as the first round of the presidential elections held in November 2024 clearly demonstrated, they continue to inspire new generations of political leaders who are committed to ethnic utopias and eugenic models of social engineering. The slogan 'Romania for the Romanians' remains attractive to many Romanian politicians, who continue to argue that those who are not racially Romanian are undesirable from a biological and social point of view.

My ultimate intention with this book is to contribute to the ongoing discussion of Romania's difficult past and, at the same time, to connect the historiographic discussion in Romania to global debates about the history of

eugenics and its present-day legacies. I want to encourage the nurturing of a new paradigm of Romania's national history, hoping for honest discussions about complex but uncomfortable topics. Through education of the general public regarding the history of Romanian eugenics and racism, Romanians will be able to better understand not only the past, but also the present of the society in which they live. They will be able to better understand themselves.

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