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"Transnational History of the Far Right" Series

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At a time when global political dynamics seem to be moving in favor of illiberal regimes around the world, this research project seeks to fill in some of the blank pages in the contemporary history of the far right, with a particular focus on the transnational dimensions of far-right movements in the broader Europe/Eurasia region.

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The history of the short Romanian fascist manifesto known as *Fenomenul Legionar* (*The Legionary Phenomenon*) is a complex one. It is said to have originated as a transcription of a series of four impromptu lectures given by fascist philosopher and ideologue, Nae Ionescu, in May 1938 to members of the Iron Guard while they were incarcerated together in a makeshift detention center in central Romania, about ten kilometers outside of Miercurea Ciuc. The text was first published serially in Berlin two years later, in 1940, in the weekly *Buletinul Informativ* (*Informative Bulletin*) for circulation among Romanian Legionaries in exile in Germany.¹ It appeared next in Rome, Italy in 1963 as a single volume under the Romanian-language imprint “Armatolii” with a substantial introduction by Constantin Papanace, a former Legionary who had also been involved in the publication of the Berlin *Buletinul*.² Subsequent publications appear to be reproductions of the 1963 edition. According to Papanace’s introduction, the original transcription was made by Ștefan Palaghiță, a Romanian Orthodox priest and fellow Legionary, who was among those present for Ionescu’s lectures at Miercurea Ciuc. Papanace relays Palaghiță’s assurances that the transcriptions were nearly word-for-word and also claims that they were checked against the notes of other Legionaries, who had been in attendance at the conferences, so that any omissions could be corrected.³

Yet the provenance of the text is not completely uncontested. Although there seems to have been no disagreement among the exiled Legionaries themselves, and the majority of scholars confidently attribute *The Legionary Phenomenon* to Nae Ionescu, one significant contemporary voice has disputed the idea of Ionescu’s authorship of at least specific parts of the text. Dora Mezdrea, author of a four-volume biography of Ionescu and editor of his collected works, tries to dissociate the philosopher from Legionarism. In volume four of her biography of Ionescu, Mezdrea hypothesizes that a group of Legionaries composed the text themselves based on a number of themes and ideas, which Ionescu did indeed expound to them in Miercurea Ciuc, but to which they added references to Legionarism:

In their desire to conscript Nae Ionescu at least posthumously, those who dared to attribute these texts to him did not shy away from anything: they made a mixture—easily detectable by the way—of some of Nae Ionescu’s ideas, which he undoubtedly uttered to them in the camp, with illiterate formulas that do not fail to include occasionally the term “legionary.” The discrepancy between that which would have belonged to Nae Ionescu and these additions immediately catches the eye.⁴

¹ Nae Ionescu, *Fenomenul Legionar* (Rome: Editura Armatolii, 1963), 3 ff.

² *Istoria Mișcării Legionare* includes an epilogue to *Fenomenul* written by Papanace upon the death of Ionescu in which Papanace closes with his name as well as the location, and date, “Berlin–Amalienhof, 24 March 1940.” See: Ștefan Palaghiță, *Istoria Mișcării Legionare Scrisă de un Legionar: Garda de Fier spre Reînvierea României; Cronologie Privind Istoria Mișcării Legionare*, ed. Alexandru V. Diță, pref. Dan Zamfirescu (Editura Roza Vânturilor: 1993), 364.

³ Palaghiță, *Istoria Mișcării Legionare*, 341; Ionescu, *Fenomenul Legionar*.

⁴ Dora Mezdrea, *Biografia* Vol. IV (Brăila: Editura Istros, 2005), 426.

It is noteworthy that Mezdrea's argument assumes the importance of Ionescu—and, presumably, his ideas—to the Legionary movement, whence her concern with his “posthumous conscription” arises. It is also significant that she has no trouble attributing the main ideas presented in *The Legionary Phenomenon* to Ionescu. Indeed, she herself recognizes the theme of collectives and collectivity from the university course “The Logic of Collectives,” which Ionescu had offered in 1934–35.⁵ The main thrust of her argument seems to deal with whether or not Ionescu ever actually gave the Legionary Movement his approbation by joining it or actively contributing to its ideology.

The nature of the text and its publication history make Mezdrea's claim about the insertion of the word “Legionary” impossible to falsify, in the strictest sense. Since the text is believed to be no more or less than notes taken by an attendee at a series of four “conferences” delivered to a group of Legionaries by Ionescu while he was detained with them, and since it was not published until after his death, there is no way to know for certain. However, this objection is ill-founded and ultimately serves as a misdirection. The salient question is not whether the transcription is word-for-word, but rather whether any additions or corruptions could have altered Ionescu's meaning. In fact, the possible insertion of the word “Legionarism” before publication could hardly have rendered the text more Legionary than do the ideas themselves. Moreover, the four conferences published as *The Legionary Phenomenon* are not the “collection of nonsense, which not even Ionescu's enemies would stoop to attributing to him” as Mezdrea would have it.⁶ Far from it. They are a coherent—if convoluted—theory of Orthodoxist fascism based on a philosophy of history and theory of “collectivity,” which Ionescu had begun to expound long before his internment with a group of Legionaries at Miercurea Ciuc.

The absence of Ionescu's signature cannot exculpate Ionescu for the content of *The Legionary Phenomenon* and, indeed, circumstances provide no real occasion for doubt. There is no question that Ionescu was detained with several Legionaries at Miercurea Ciuc, and he had a long-standing reputation for extemporaneous lectures and complicated metaphysical arguments. According to his friend and former student, Mircea Eliade, who joined the Legionaries in detention after the conferences in question, Ionescu had delivered lectures on metaphysics shortly before Eliade's own arrival.⁷ *The Legionary Phenomenon* certainly fits that description. What is at stake in the question of Ionescu's authorship of this particular text is his direct involvement with the Legionary movement, its ideology, and its actions. Ionescu's nationalist Orthodoxist ideas remain popular among the Romanian far-right, and confirmation of his authorship of a Legionary manifesto would further undermine the already tenuous efforts of apologists to rehabilitate his philosophy as something distinct from Legionary fascism.

While Ionescu's signature may be missing from *The Legionary Phenomenon*, it is nevertheless covered in his “fingerprints” in the form of references, turns of phrase, and critical philosophical concepts that can absolutely be connected back to him. The first conference, for instance, cites Ionescu's grandfather Ivașcu as an example of someone dispensing moral justice without juridical authority—a distinction critical to the larger argument of the text. More substantively, the entire argument of *The Legionary Phenomenon* hinges on an idea that valid existence is possible for the individual only in and through the collective—an idea that Ionescu had been elaborating some time before his detention at Miercurea Ciuc. He introduces the idea in the third conference, stating, “[The] collective is an entity in itself, not just in the number of people. [...] A collective has its own law. [...] The individual will have more precise contours only when he comports himself according to the law of

⁵ Mezdrea, *Biografia* Vol. IV, 427–29.

⁶ Mezdrea, *Biografia* Vol. IV, 426.

⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Memorii: 1907–1960* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2003), 352.

the collective of which he is a part.” In the fourth conference, he instrumentalizes the idea of the collective by describing what it means to break from it:

Treason is breaking from the community. An individual defines himself through collectivity, community. No individual absolute truth exists except one: the truth of the community (of destiny, of love, etc.). To break yourself from the community means to no longer speak, feel, think, work with it, that is to no longer recognize the single absolute and natural truth, like the heretics. [...and later] The nation’s natural laws are imposed as they are, according to the state, not however we want. The truth regarding these laws is not with us—individuals—but in the collective consensus, in that which the nation thinks.

One’s status outside of the collective is that of anathema—of non-entity.

Yet Ionescu had begun elaborating this damningly fascist idea of collectivity at least four years earlier, and it can easily be connected to him through his interactions with his student, the novelist and playwright, Mihail Sebastian. In 1934, Sebastian had published an autobiographical novel entitled *De Două Mii de Ani* (*For Two Thousand Years*). The novel reflects the experience of Sebastian (born Iosif Mendel Hechter), as a young Jewish student in interwar Romania, where the tide of antisemitism had been steadily rising since the enactment of the 1923 constitution which granted equal rights to Romania’s Jewish population. In anticipation of the publication of his novel, Sebastian invited his professor and friend, Nae Ionescu, to contribute a preface. What Ionescu delivered was a lengthy and vicious antisemitic diatribe, including personal attacks on Sebastian such as the following:

In a sense, antisemitism is for [the Jews] nothing other than a call to order: remember that you are a Jew! I know, Iosif Hechter will protest; he will say: call me what you will, I nonetheless know that I am a man of the Danube and that the Brâila Danube is part of my essence. Is it? That is not contested. But to what degree? There exist in the constitutive elements of human essence moments that are essential and ones that are accidental; deep ones and superficial ones. Are you, Iosif Hechter, a man from the Brâila Danube? No. You are a Jew from the Brâila Danube.⁸

Astonishingly, Sebastian published the novel with Ionescu’s preface intact. It is unclear as to why he willingly endured such abuse.⁹ Yet endure he did, and so, when Sebastian recorded Ionescu’s thoughts from a lecture on collectivity the following year in 1935, the practical implications of “collectivity” were already painfully clear to him. In an entry in his *Journal*, dated Saturday, March 30, 1935, Sebastian writes:

Nae’s class yesterday was suffocating. Iron Guardism pure and simple—no nuances, no complications, no excuses. “A state of combat is what we call politics. One party contains in its very beginning an obligation to wipe out all the others. The final conclusion is that “internal politics” is an absurdity. There can only be a conquest or seizure of power and a merging of the party with the whole collective. From that moment all that exists is household management, since all possibility of reaction has

⁸ Nae Ionescu, “Prefața,” Mihail Sebastian, *De Două Mii de Ani* (București: Cartext, 2021), 10.

⁹ For more on the relationship between Sebastian and Ionescu, see: Marta Petreu, *Diavolul și Ucenicul Său* (Iași: Editura Polirom, 2016). For more on the controversy surrounding the preface Ionescu’s preface specifically, see: Moshe Idel, “A Controversy over a Preface: Mihail Sebastian and Nae Ionescu,” *Modern Judaism* 35, no. 1 (2015), 42-65, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mj/kju023>.

been eliminated. A collective that contains within itself the idea of war is called a nation. A nation is defined by the friend-foe equation." [...] His whole heresy stems from a wild and terrifying abstraction: the collective.¹⁰

Sebastian's journal includes other references to Ionescu's thoughts on collectives and collectivity that support Ionescu's authorship of *The Legionary Phenomenon*; they have been footnoted below to those parts of the translation which they most closely resemble.

Yet one need not rely on Sebastian for such evidence. Similar parallels can be found in Mircea Eliade's *Memorii* and even the many journal articles of Nae Ionescu himself. Furthermore, comparison can be made between the idiosyncratic approach to phenomenology in Ionescu's larger philosophical output, as analyzed and summarized by Viorel Cernica, for example, and the phenomenology of the prison lectures which comprise *The Legionary Phenomenon*.¹¹ Although a comprehensive argument for Ionescu's authorship falls outside the scope of this project, representative examples have been included and relevant points of comparison indicated.

This brief manifesto is important to our understanding of interwar Romanian fascism for the same reason that it is important to our understanding of Ionescu himself: its philosophical argument is an example of Legionary political theology. Interestingly, the argument logic of the text also closely resembles the Traditionalism of Italian philosopher, Julius Evola, who met with Ionescu in Romania in 1937, a year before his detention, and perhaps even more so, the Orthodoxist Traditionalism of Russian philosopher, Aleksandr Dugin.¹² The publication history of *The Legionary Phenomenon* demonstrates its importance to Legionaries in exile and their sympathizers, but it also raises questions about how early and how thoroughly the Iron Guard may have absorbed ideas of this sort of Orthodoxist Traditionalism. To what extent—if any—should the Iron Guard be thought of as a Traditionalist political movement? If Ionescu is its author, then the answer to that question should be, to some extent, discoverable in his earlier thought and the extent of his intellectual influence among the Legionaries. If he is not, then the question about the significance of Orthodoxist Traditionalism in the Iron Guard remains, while another question is raised: Who is the Legionary philosopher who combined Eastern Orthodoxy and accelerationist Tradition in 1938 more than half a century before Dugin?

To the best of our knowledge, the present effort represents the first translation of *The Legionary Phenomenon* into English. However, an Italian translation was published by Claudio Mutti in 1998.¹³

¹⁰ Mihail Sebastian. *Journal 1935–1944: The Fascist Years*, trans. Patrick Camiller. (Chicago: I. R. Dee, 2000), 9, <https://doi.org/10.1093/hgs/16.3.451>.

¹¹ Cernica's analysis of Ionescu's philosophical output does not include *The Legionary Phenomenon*. However, his omission thus makes his study ideal for approaching the question of continuity of thought between Ionescu's earlier, uncontested university courses and *The Legionary Phenomenon*. See: Viorel Cernica "Nae Ionescu and the Origins of Romanian Phenomenology," in *Early phenomenology in Central and Eastern Europe: Main Figures, Ideas, and Problems*, eds. Witold Płotka and Patrick Eldridge (Cham: Springer, 2020), 127–144, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-39623-7_8. See especially: "2.2 Image, Object, Thing; About a Kind of Eidetic Reduction," 134–137. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=6162771>.

¹² The chronology of Dugin's relationship with Mutti makes it likely that Dugin was familiar with *The Legionary Phenomenon* through Mutti's 1998 Italian translation when he wrote his *Fourth Political Theory* (2009). Regarding Dugin's relationship with Mutti, see: Anton Shekhovtsov, "Alexander Dugin and the West European New Right, 1989–1994," in *Eurasianism and the European far right: Reshaping the Europe-Russia Relationship*, ed. Marlène Laruelle (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 38–48, <https://u1lib.org/ireader/11760024>.

¹³ Nae Ionescu, *Il Fenomeno Legionario* (Parma: Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, 1998).

We hope that this introduction, critical commentary, and translation will aid scholars who wish to address these questions.

The Legion of the Archangel Michael (1927–1941)

The Romanian political party and fascist movement known as The Legion of the Archangel Michael, was founded in 1927 by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. It shared a number of characteristics with contemporaneous Italian and German fascist movements. Indeed, just as Mussolini was known as “il Duce” and Hitler as “der Führer,” Codreanu adopted “Căpitanul” (“the Captain”) as his title and identity within the movement. Despite the similarities, Legionarism differed in that it placed religion—specifically Romanian Orthodoxy—at the center of its ideology. In fact, the founding myth of the Legion is that Codreanu was visited by the Archangel Michael, who told him that he was to be the savior of Romania. As Raul Cârstocea has clarified, Codreanu also founded Iron Guard in 1930 as an umbrella organization “to combat Judaic communism, in which the Legion of the Archangel Michael and any other youth organizations could enter, across party affiliations.”¹⁴ “Since no other organization joined,” Cârstocea concludes, “the two denominations came to designate the same group.”¹⁵

The Legion of the Archangel Michael was certainly the most notorious far-right Christian nationalist movement to come out of 1920s Romania, but it was not the first. Antisemitism was already widespread following Romanian independence in 1878,¹⁶ and after the unification of Romania with Transylvania in 1918, numerous antisemitic student movements became active. At university in Iași, Codreanu himself had belonged to the National Christian Defense League (*Liga Apărării Național-Creștine*, LANC) led by his mentor, the far-right politician and law professor, Alexandru C. Cuza. The unification had significantly increased the country’s Jewish minority, which disproportionately affected the number of university seats available to ethnic Romanian students. As a result, in 1922 Romanian students across the country staged a general strike demanding a *numerus clausus* to limit the number of university seats granted to Jewish students.¹⁷ The act was no doubt inspired by Hungary, which had recently imposed limits on university admissions in proportion to the ethnic makeup of the country. At the time, Codreanu was abroad in Jena, Germany, but when he learned of the strike, he returned to Iași to be a part of the agitation.¹⁸ In 1923, the following year, the parliament drafted a constitution. Not only did the new constitution fail to impose limits on the number of Jewish students admitted to Romanian universities, it granted full citizenship to Romanian Jews.¹⁹ The liberal tendencies of the government eventually caused Codreanu to become disillusioned with Cuza’s commitment to parliamentary politics, so he broke with the National Christian Defense League

¹⁴ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru Legionari* (Sibiu: Totul pentru Țară, 1936), 337.

¹⁵ Raul. M. Cârstocea, “The Role of Anti-Semitism in the Ideology of the ‘Legion of the Archangel Michael’ (1927-1938),” Doctoral thesis, (University College London, 2011), 13.

¹⁶ Raul Cârstocea, “Students Don the Green Shirt. The Roots of Romanian Fascism in the Anti-Semitic Student Movements of the 1920s,” in *Alma Mater Antisemitica. Akademisches Milieu, Juden und Antisemitismus an den Universitäten Europas zwischen 1918 und 1939*, eds. Regina Fritz, Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, and Jana Starek (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2016), 40.

¹⁷ Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania* (Iași: Center for Romanian Studies, 2001), 355.

¹⁸ Săndulescu, “Fascism and its Quest for the ‘New Man,’” 353; Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts*, 353–5; Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015), 28.

¹⁹ For a detailed analysis, see: Raul Cârstocea, “Students Don the Green Shirt,” 39–66.

in favor of concrete, paramilitary, and revolutionary action largely directed at Romania's Jewish population.²⁰ Thus, as Raul Cârstocea writes, "it was, more than any previous or contemporary antisemitic political organization, the Legion that introduced to Romanian antisemitism the ideological, abstract counterpart of the NSDAP's projection of the 'Jew' as archenemy."²¹

During the roughly fourteen years between its founding by Codreanu, and its final destruction by Ion Antonescu in 1941, the Legionary Movement engaged both in domestic terrorism and in electoral campaigns. When liberal Prime Minister, Ion Gheorghe Duca, attempted to crush the movement in November and December of 1933, the Guard quickly retaliated, assassinating him on December 29th. Officially banned as a political party, the Legion later reorganized as *Partidul Totul pentru Ţară* (the Everything for the Country Party) and came in third in the parliamentary elections of 1937 with approximately sixteen percent of the vote. The Movement even overcame Carol II's royal dictatorship and survived the death of Codreanu. In February of 1938, the King seized control of the country, banning all political parties. Later, in November, after Codreanu had been convicted of treason and sentenced to ten years of hard labor he was killed by royal authorities in a staged escape attempt. Nevertheless, in 1940, Marshal Antonescu forced the king to abdicate, and the Iron Guard—under the leadership of Horia Sima after Codreanu's death—rose to power in a military-Legionary coalition government with Antonescu, who became the new head of state. Yet the Legion was not satisfied with a coalition government and, on January 21–23 of 1941, attempted a coup against Antonescu and carried out a vicious pogrom in Bucharest. Antonescu responded by using the military to destroy the Iron Guard. The surviving Legionnaires went into hiding or exiled themselves to sympathetic Nazi Germany. Thus, the five months from September 14, 1940, to February 14, 1941, represent the brief life of the National Legionary State (*Statul Legionar-Național*) of Romania.

The Legion of the Archangel Michael, the Iron Guard, and Codreanu are of increasing interest to contemporary far-right movements outside of Romania. As its ethnonationalist and Christofascist literature has become more widely available in recent years, through translations and publications, both its ideology and its symbolism have been embraced by modern fascists. In particular, the symbol known as the Cross of the Archangel Michael, which was the electoral symbol of the Legionary Movement, has begun to appear in association with acts of white nationalist terrorism. For example, in the aftermath of the August 2017 Charlottesville riots, American neo-Nazi, Matthew Heimbach, was photographed wearing a T-shirt bearing images of Codreanu and the Cross of the Archangel Michael. Likewise, the firearms used by 2019 Christchurch mosque shooter, Brenton Tarrant, were decorated with, among other symbols, the Cross of the Archangel Michael. The symbol was also seen at the site of the 2019 arson of the social justice-oriented Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market, Tennessee.²²

²⁰ Valentin Săndulescu, "Fascism and its Quest for the 'New Man': The Case of the Romanian Legionary Movement," *Studia Hebraica* 4 (2004), 352, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267325235_Fascism_and_its_Quest_for_the_'New_Man'_The_Case_of_the_Romanian_Legionary_Movement.

²¹ Raul Cârstocea, "The Path to the Holocaust-Fascism and Antisemitism in Interwar Romania." *S: I.M.O.N. Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation* 1, no. 1 (2014): 48, http://simon-previous-issues.vwi.ac.at/images/Documents/Articles/2014-1/2014-1_ART_Carstocea/ART_Carstocea.pdf.

²² "St. Michael's Cross," Anti-Defamation League, www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/st-michaels-cross.

Nae Ionescu (1890–1940)

The philosopher, professor, and newspaper editor Nae Ionescu was born in 1890 in the Romanian Danube port city of Brăila. His family had recently been raised from the peasantry to the status of minor landowners. The king gifted Ionescu's grandfather, Stroe Ivașcu, agricultural terrain as a reward for his participation as an *ad-hoc* delegate from Brăila in the 1856 campaign to unite the principalities of Wallachia and Moldova under Alexandru Ioan Cuza.²³ In 1878, after Romania gained independence from the Ottoman Empire following the Russo-Turkish War, Ivașcu was also awarded the title of Knight of the Order of the Star of Romania.²⁴ Nae's father, Cristache Ionescu, held a number of positions of local authority in Brăila, including chief of police. The family's status as landowners allowed Nae to pursue higher education and eventually, a doctoral degree in Germany. From early on, he showed an interest in radical and revolutionary ideology. According to Ionescu's recent biographer, Tatiana Niculescu, while still in Brăila, he was introduced to the thought of Russian left anarchist Peter Kropotkin through a Romanian translation of *An Appeal to the Young*, and to that of post-Hegelian and individualist anarchist philosopher, Max Stirner, in *The Ego and its Own*.²⁵ Both texts made an impression on the young Ionescu. Stirner's preoccupation with alienation and self-consciousness seems to have been particularly formative. According to Petre Pandrea, an early historian of the Iron Guard, Ionescu departed Brăila in 1909 for the University of Bucharest as "a Stirnerian anarchist."²⁶

At the University of Bucharest, Ionescu met the professor of philosophy and psychology, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, who became his mentor and protector.²⁷ It was at Rădulescu-Motru's journal, *Noua Revistă Română* (*The New Romanian Journal*), that Ionescu began his publishing career starting with an article on the nineteenth-century Moldovan poet, Mihai Eminescu, whom the Legionary intelligentsia would later adopt as a forerunner of their movement for his antisemitism, and an article on the geometry of French mathematician and philosopher, Henri Poincaré.²⁸ During his time as a student in Bucharest, when he was otherwise facing poverty and housing instability, the offices of the journal were effectively Ionescu's home. He would continue publishing in *Noua Revistă Română* until 1916, three years into his graduate studies in Germany. As a student at the University of Bucharest, Ionescu was particularly influenced by the works of Scottish philosopher and historian, Thomas Carlyle, as well as those of Catholic theologian and founder of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius of Loyola. Ionescu was introduced to the "great man" philosophy of Carlyle through Romanian translations of the philosopher's best-known works, most notably *On Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History*. His interest in *Spiritual Exercises* seems to have verged on obsession. Ionescu practiced the Ignatian exercises constantly for years, and his attachment to them even entered folklore. He is supposed to have claimed that "this little book has saved the Romanian Church, and maybe Europe, and maybe civilization."²⁹ In 1912, Ionescu completed his studies at the University of Bucharest with a thesis on the history of the ontological argument for the existence of God from Anselm of Canterbury to Kant—

²³ Tatiana Niculescu, *Seducătorul Domn Nae: Viața lui Nae Ionescu* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2020), 15.

²⁴ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 15. Regarding the unification, see: "The Union of the Principalities, 1850–1859," in Keith Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania* (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 100–111, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139033954>.

²⁵ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 28.

²⁶ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 29; Petre Pandrea, *Garda de Fier: Jurnal de Filosofie Politică: Memorii Penitenciare* (Bucharest: Vremea, 2001), 570.

²⁷ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 33.

²⁸ Ionescu, *Filosofia Religiei*, 188 f. Regarding Eminescu's antisemitism and status as "forerunner" of Legionarism, see: Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts*, 348.

²⁹ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 36.

a theme which would later appear in his 1925 university course, *Filosofia Religiei (The Philosophy of Religion)*. The thesis was awarded a *magna cum laude* distinction and helped Ionescu secure a stipend to continue his education in Germany.

Ionescu's graduate studies began in 1913 at the University of Göttingen, where he attended lectures on phenomenology by Edmund Husserl during his first semester, yet he soon found himself disillusioned with both Husserl and the University of Göttingen. Although Husserl's phenomenology made a lasting impression on him, he transferred to the University of Munich the following year. In Munich, Ionescu studied under Professor Clemens Baeumker, a specialist in patristics, medieval philosophy, and the Scholastic theology of Thomas Aquinas. During this time, Ionescu became engrossed in the works of the British racialist philosopher, Houston Chamberlain, whose book, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, was highly influential throughout Germany and central to the *völkisch* movement.³⁰ While in Munich, Ionescu was also exposed to the writings of Anglo-Catholic mystic, Evelyn Underhill, some of whose ideas he has since been accused of plagiarizing.³¹

On August 14, 1916, Ionescu's studies were interrupted by the politics of World War I, when Romania abandoned its neutrality and joined the war on the side of the Entente. Because of this, Romanian citizens living in Germany were declared prisoners of war and transported to internment camps. Ionescu was arrested and sent to Schloss Celle in Lower Saxony. There, he befriended a Belgian Carmelite monk, Père Jérôme, with whom he would spend a significant amount of his detainment reading the theology of Augustine of Hippo. In Germany, Ionescu witnessed first-hand the civil unrest of the war and its aftermath, including the rise and fall of the short-lived Bavarian Soviet Republic. During that time, he became involved with an Austrian reactionary journal, called the *Tyrolia Verlag*, contributing articles for publication.³² The journal promoted conservative, monarchist values to a rural base. Ionescu would eventually employ similar editorial tactics during his tenure as editor of the Romanian antiliberal newspaper, *Cuvântul*. In April of 1919, he completed his dissertation, entitled *Die Logistik als Versuch einer neuen Begründung der Mathematik (Metamathematics as an Attempt at a New Foundation of Mathematics)*, under Baeumker, and then returned to Romania.

Upon returning to Bucharest, Ionescu was appointed director of studies and instructor of German at Mănăstirea Dealu, an elite military high school for the education of the upper class and the *alma mater* of the founder of the Iron Guard, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. In October of 1919, he became assistant professor in the Department of Letters and Philosophy at the University of Bucharest. On January 1, 1920, he was granted an appointment in Rădulescu-Motru's Department of Logic and Theory of Knowledge (Epistemology), and remained at the university until 1939. As a professor, Ionescu was extremely popular. His virtuosic and improvisational lectures won the adoration of a generation of students, particularly the so-called "Young Generation," which included such important figures as Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Eugène Ionesco (Eugen Ionescu), Mihail Sebastian, and Mircea Vulcănescu. He offered a variety of courses at the University, including, "The Epistemological Function of Love" (1919),³³ "The Uniformity of the Laws of Nature" (1922),³⁴ "The Philosophy of

³⁰ Nazi ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg, intended his *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* as a sequel to *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*.

³¹ See: Marta Petreu, 'Istoria unui plagiat: Nae Ionescu - Evelyn Underhill,' *România Literară* 27, no. 49-50 (1994). See also: Marta Petreu, "Modelul și Oglinda: Evelyn Underhill - Nae Ionescu," ed. Iordan Chimet in *Momentul Adevărului*, 337-382.

³² Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 98.

³³ This course was typed up in 1942 and printed as a part of *Metaphysical Disquietude* in 1993. See: Nae Ionescu, *Neliniștea Metafizică* (București: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1993).

³⁴ No lithograph.

Religion” (1925),³⁵ and “The Problem of Salvation in Goethe’s Faust” (1926).³⁶ Some of these courses survive as lithographed course notes and have been published. These publications reveal how Ionescu’s courses anticipated much of the metaphysics and ideology of *The Legionary Phenomenon*. His philosophy and politics were likewise already discernable in the readings he recommended to his students, which included the works of racialists, Houston Chamberlain and Arthur de Gobineau, the antisemitic essays of composer Richard Wagner, orientalist and Semitic studies scholar, Ernest Renan, as well as the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.³⁷

In the spring of 1926, Ionescu was given a weekly Sunday column in the antiliberal, Bucharest-based newspaper, *Cuvântul*, by then-editor, Nichifor Crainic, due to the latter’s appointment as secretary of state (undersecretary) of the Ministry of Cults and Arts.³⁸ In May of 1928, the founder of the paper, Titus Enacovici, died and Ionescu became its owner and director.³⁹ Ionescu himself authored a prodigious number of the journal’s articles, many under pseudonyms.⁴⁰ He also brought on a number of his former students, including Eliade, Vulcănescu, and Sebastian.⁴¹ The many articles Ionescu wrote for *Cuvântul* are the only documents he himself both penned and published as he refused to write a book at any point in his life.⁴² Books attributed to Ionescu, such as the 1937 *Roza Vânturilor* (*The Compass Rose*) and the 1957 *Îndreptar Ortodox* (*Orthodox Enchiridion*), are, in fact, themed collections of his articles for *Cuvântul* prepared by his former students, Mircea Eliade and Romanian Heideggerian philosopher Dumitru Cristian Amzăr, respectively. As previously mentioned, the courses that have appeared as books were published later by others from lithographed course notes.

Ionescu’s position at *Cuvântul* gave him visibility and influence during a vulnerable time in Romanian democracy following the death of King Ferdinand in July of 1927. Carol II had initially been ineligible to succeed his father because the late king had removed him from succession following a series of scandals. Thus, Carol’s own young son, Michael I (Ferdinand’s grandson), succeeded his grandfather at the age of five under a regency council. During that time, Ionescu pushed conservative peasant politics and advocated for a stronger monarchy from the offices of the newspaper. In 1928, he involved *Cuvântul* in the parliamentary elections by publishing antiliberal articles supporting the National Peasants’ Party (*Partidul Național Țărănesc*), which took seventy-seven percent of the vote.⁴³ By June of 1930, in response to a popular campaign, the regency was dissolved, and Carol II was allowed to assume the throne. Carol II seemed to be the kind of king Ionescu had hoped for.

³⁵ Lithographed; published in 1991, 1993, 1994, and 1998.

³⁶ Lithographed; published by Dora Mezdrea in 1996.

³⁷ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 138.

³⁸ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 127.

³⁹ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 136; Ionescu, *Filosofia Religiei*, 194.

⁴⁰ Niculescu claims that Ionescu was writing approximately 100 articles a year. See: Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 135. To date, Dora Mezdrea has published seventeen total volumes of his collected works (including correspondence both sent and received). For a complete list, see Mezdrea’s website, <http://doramezdrea.freeweb.ro/>.

⁴¹ The author Mihail Sebastian (Iosif Hechter) is a complex case. He has been accused of actively propagating Ionescu’s antisemitism despite himself being a Jew. When Sebastian asked Ionescu to write a preface to his 1934 novel *De Două Mii de Ani* (*For Two Thousand Years*) about a Jewish student’s experience during interwar Romania, Ionescu obliged with a notoriously antisemitic tirade, which Sebastian included! Later, however, Sebastian renounced his relationship with Ionescu. See: Marta Petreu, *Diavolul și Ucenicul Său* (Iași: Editura Polirom, 2016).

⁴² See: Zigu, Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right: The Nineteen Thirties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 202 f. Ornea points out that Ionescu’s refusal to publish a book and the multiple accusations of plagiarism may have been related.

⁴³ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 166.

Shortly after the coronation, Ionescu published an article entitled “Long Live King Carol II.”⁴⁴ For a time, he was a dedicated Carlist and enjoyed the company and attention of many of the king’s closest friends and confidants. In another article from 1930, Ionescu wrote, “The King and the Nation are not polarizing elements, but one and the same reality, in two hypostases: the King is the Nation.”⁴⁵ By early 1933, *Cuvântul* was regarded as the king’s newspaper.⁴⁶ Despite his reputation as “the playboy king” and his status as a constitutional monarch, Carol had authoritarian ambitions which appealed to Ionescu. Nevertheless, by the end of the year, Ionescu’s sympathies had begun to shift toward the Iron Guard.⁴⁷

The circumstances of Ionescu’s introduction to the Iron Guard are not entirely clear. Niculescu sees significance in the beginning of his extramarital affair with Lucia Popovici-Lupa, the daughter of Nicolae O. Popovici-Lupa, who was a member of the Iron Guard as well as a fellow professor at the University of Bucharest.⁴⁸ Ionescu travelled to Germany in July of 1933, likely in the company of Lucia Popovici, where he supposedly met Nazi ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg, and Hitler’s vice-chancellor, Franz von Papen, at the Adlon Hotel in Berlin and with whom he was supposed to have discussed the developing political situation in Germany.⁴⁹ Upon returning from this 1933 trip to Germany, Ionescu visited the construction site of the Iron Guard’s headquarters, the so-called *Casa Verde* (Green House), which was then being built in Bucharest and was modeled after the Nazi *Braunes Haus* in Munich. It was there that Ionescu first met Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. According to Eliade, Ionescu praised Codreanu for “doing something,” and Codreanu returned the compliment.⁵⁰ Eliade recorded Ionescu’s response as, “No, all I have made so far are two boys. It is not much, but it is still something. The rest, I did not do. In politics, I was only gardening. I plucked the weeds and watered the trees, the flowers, the vegetables. But I did not make the fruits. I merely helped them grow, I protected them from the weeds.”⁵¹ Codreanu later publicly thanked *Cuvântul* for the support it provided.⁵² In fall of 1933, only a few months later, Ionescu met Codreanu for a second time.

Niculescu suggests that Ionescu was effectively an agent of the crown among the Legionaries. Since Ionescu had ingratiated himself to Codreanu, the king allegedly instructed Ionescu to “place yourself amongst them for the moment.”⁵³ These claims lead Niculescu to speculate that the king was to “discretely keep the Iron Guard under control through Nae Ionescu,” at least for a time.⁵⁴ However, when the government of liberal Prime Minister Duca attempted to remove the Legionary party from the ballot and to dissolve the organization entirely in late November and December of 1933, Ionescu’s allegiance shifted. Niculescu believes that the king, whose relationship with Duca’s liberal party was deeply antagonistic, had hoped to transform the Iron Guard into his own political party as part of a

⁴⁴ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 172.

⁴⁵ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 177.

⁴⁶ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 183.

⁴⁷ Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, 207; Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 189; Eliade, *Memorii*, I, 285 f.

⁴⁸ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 186; Pandrea, *Garda de Fier*, 293.

⁴⁹ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 187 f; Pandrea, *Garda de Fier*, 293.

⁵⁰ Eliade, *Memorii*, 283.

⁵¹ Eliade, *Memorii*, 283.

⁵² Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 192; Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Circulări și Manifeste (1927–1938)* (München: Colecția “Europa”, 1981), 18, <https://archive.org/details/CirculariSiManifeste/page/n3/mode/2up>; Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, 209.

⁵³ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 190; Șerban Milcoveanu, *Memorii: Mici Contribuții la Istoria Politică a României Contemporane: Relatări ale Unui Martor al Epocilor și Participant la Evenimente (1929–1989)* (Bucharest: Pământul, 2008), 183 f.

⁵⁴ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 179.

move toward a more authoritarian regime.⁵⁵ She writes, “the professor would later brag that he was given the mission to turn the Legionary Movement into ‘The Single State Party of the Royal Dictatorship.’” Yet as Niculescu also writes, “the abusive actions of the government directed *Cuvântul* and Nae Ionescu towards a campaign of defending the revolutionary, legionary youth.”⁵⁶ In fact, on Christmas Eve of 1933, *Cuvântul* published a memorandum signed by thirty-nine Legionaries who were then on a hunger strike in the Jilava prison along with a letter by Codreanu, entitled “A Word Regarding the Dissolution of the Iron Guard.” Five days later, on December 29, Prime Minister Duca was assassinated by Legionaries in retribution for his government’s attempt to destroy the Iron Guard. On January 2, 1934, *Cuvântul* was banned and Ionescu was arrested as a “moral instigator” of the assassination, only to be released and allowed to continue teaching at the university four months later.⁵⁷ According to Mihail Sebastian’s published journal, after his release, Ionescu declared that “not all assassinations are prohibited by religion.”⁵⁸ *Cuvântul* would remain banned until January 1938.

Deprived of his platform at *Cuvântul*, Ionescu continued to write anonymously for various religious journals, such as *Iconar* (Iconographer), *Vestitorii* (Heralds), and *Predania* (Tradition).⁵⁹ In one of these articles, he argued that God can make history through a people (*popor*); Niculescu summarizes the article, “In this case [. . .] a strong leader is chosen from the people who is himself the people (like Carol II had been in the earlier articles)”⁶⁰ and explains how this was a transparent way of saying that Codreanu was “the chosen one of God, of the people, and [Ionescu’s] own chosen one.”⁶¹ During this time, Ionescu also delivered a series of lectures throughout the country “with an obvious Legionary substratum.”⁶² In 1936, Codreanu published his *Pentru Legionari* (translated as *For My Legionaries*), an autobiographical book modeled after Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. As Niculescu relates, “[i]t is unknown what Nae Ionescu’s contribution to the composition of the book was, but for contemporaries there was no doubt that the Iron Guard doctrine is inspired in a natural way by his articles and conferences.”⁶³ Furthermore, Niculescu agrees with Petre Pandrea, who states in his *Garda de Fier* (*Iron Guard*), that some contemporaries even believed that Ionescu “controlled the battle of the Iron Guard from the shadows with money, plans, and ideas.”⁶⁴ On the 20th of December, 1937, the night of that year’s elections, Ionescu and Codreanu met at the house of Legionary commandant, Virgil Ionescu, to await the official results, in which Codreanu’s party—reorganized in 1935 as Partidul Total Pentru Țară (the Everything for the Country Party) after Duca’s 1933 ban of the Iron Guard Party—won approximately sixteen percent of the vote.⁶⁵

Sometime during the spring of 1938, Ionescu and Eliade met Italian fascist and occultist, Julius Evola, at Ionescu’s home.⁶⁶ Few details of this meeting are available; however, Evola did publish several articles about his observations regarding the Legionary Movement and his interview with

⁵⁵ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 191.

⁵⁶ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 191.

⁵⁷ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 195.

⁵⁸ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 197; Sebastian, *Journal*, 50.

⁵⁹ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 209.

⁶⁰ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 210.

⁶¹ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 210.

⁶² Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 205.

⁶³ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 211.

⁶⁴ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 211; Pandrea, *Garda de Fier*, 295.

⁶⁵ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 215.

⁶⁶ Eliade, *Memorii*, 440. The exact date of the meeting does not seem to have been recorded. However, an article Evola published on March 22, 1938, in *Il Regime Fascista* about his interview of Codreanu, which was allegedly the same day as his meeting with Ionescu, provides a terminus ante quem.

Codreanu.⁶⁷ In June of 1937, Eliade, Ionescu's most influential disciple, took it upon himself to collect dozens of articles Ionescu penned for *Cuvântul* and publish them together in one volume, entitled *Roza Vânturilor (The Compass Rose)*. The articles that comprised Eliade's effective reissue of Ionescu's contributions to *Cuvântul* were chosen, according to Niculescu, "to show once again to the young generation the road towards politics of the peasants, of the masses, based on political realism, organicism, and the Orthodox faith."⁶⁸ It bears mentioning that Eliade's anthology of Ionescu's earlier *Cuvântul* articles not only allowed Ionescu to circumvent the publication ban imposed on the journal, but also obviously implicates Eliade in that act.

The following year was even more politically tumultuous. On February 20, 1938, King Carol II established a royal dictatorship, dissolving the 1923 constitution and all political parties. He heavily censored all newspapers, and cancelled all elections indefinitely.⁶⁹ During the night of April 16, Codreanu was arrested on charges of preparing a civil war with the aid of a foreign country (i.e., Germany).⁷⁰ Additionally, during the process of arresting Codreanu and confiscating Iron Guard archives and documents, the royal secret police evidently discovered a host of new information regarding the financing of the Iron Guard, including a list with Nae Ionescu's name at the top together with a figure of multiple millions of *lei*.⁷¹ On May 7, Ionescu was arrested at his villa in Bucharest, where the secret police found twenty-two million lei in his safe, worth an estimated \$200,000 at the time.⁷² According to Niculescu, Ionescu was at this point considered the outright ideologue of the Iron Guard, and his arrest was made largely in preparation for the forthcoming trial against Codreanu, in which Ionescu would in fact serve as a witness.⁷³ Codreanu was sentenced to ten years hard labor in a show trial, but was killed on November 29 by gendarmes under the pretext of an attempted escape. The cause of death was strangulation.⁷⁴

Along with various Iron Guard leaders, Ionescu was put into forced domicile at the detainment camp outside of Miercurea Ciuc in May of 1938, where he delivered the four conferences which were subsequently published as *The Legionary Phenomenon*. Mircea Eliade joined them, shortly after his own arrest, on July 14, 1938.⁷⁵ Ionescu was released in November only to be re-arrested and sent back in January of 1939. During this second period of incarceration, he developed heart problems and, after being sent to a military hospital, was released from confinement in June of 1939 and placed under house arrest. This time, he was not permitted to teach. According to Legionary doctor, Șerban Milcoveanu, after Codreanu's death on November 30, 1938, "the unanimous opinion of Legionaries both incarcerated and free was that Prof. Nae Ionescu should be chosen as the proper new leader of the Legionary Movement" despite his poor health.⁷⁶

Regardless of whether such plans were true or even feasible, they would never come to pass. In March 1940, Ionescu attended a dinner at the house of Romanian industrialist, Nicolae Malaxa, his friend and sponsor. Although Ionescu had quit smoking a year before, he accepted a cigarette offered to him

⁶⁷ Claudio Mutti has collected and published these articles. See: Julius Evola, *La Tragedia della Guardia di Ferro*, ed. Claudio Mutti (Roma: Fondazione Julius Evola, 1996).

⁶⁸ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 213.

⁶⁹ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 218.

⁷⁰ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 229.

⁷¹ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 228; Nicolae Iorga and Andrei Pippidi. *Jurnalul Ultimilor ani: 1938–1940: Inedit* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2019), 73.

⁷² Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 229; Pandrea, *Garda de Fier*, 158.

⁷³ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 229; Ionescu, *Filosofia Religiei*, 200.

⁷⁴ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 231.

⁷⁵ Eliade, *Memorii*, 346.

⁷⁶ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 237; Milcoveanu, *Memorii*, 195.

by Malaxa's secretary, and then another. After smoking a second, Ionescu suffered a heart attack and collapsed, later inviting suspicion of poisoning.⁷⁷ Instead of being taken to the hospital, he was brought home by Nicolae Terianu, a Legionary journalist who was also possibly a police informant.⁷⁸ He remained in bed for several days and was visited by many of his former students, including Eliade. Nae Ionescu died on March 15, 1940.

Critical Commentary

The Legionary Phenomenon is a difficult read. Ionescu's terminology is frequently inconsistent, and his implications sometimes precede the arguments intended to support them. His logic is often demonstrably fallacious or made up of a string of metaphysically incompatible propositions. Moreover, he frequently argues from correlation (*cum hoc, ergo propter hoc*). As a result of its many difficulties, the text has perhaps received less attention than its historical and ideological significance warrants.

The first obstacle to a clear understanding of *The Legionary Phenomenon* is probably Ionescu's cascading equivocation. Throughout the text, he replaces one term with another as he works toward his conclusion. For example, "historical forms" are synonymous with "historical moments," by which he seems to be referring *pars pro toto* to civilizations. These in turn are defined by groups of conditions or characteristics, which he redefines as "historical facts." Yet, since "historical facts" are immutable constellations of conditions that define a civilization, they too become indistinguishable from "historical forms" and "historical moments." The difficulties of Ionescu's terminology may be part of an effort to obscure the origin of plagiarized ideas. He was often accused of taking credit for the ideas of other thinkers during his life including, notably, Oswald Spengler.⁷⁹ Thus, it is quite possible that Ionescu's "historical forms," etc., may be heavily influenced by Julius Evola's Traditionalist treatment of the Indo-Aryan concept of *yugas* (ages of the world) and that his idiosyncratic terminology was meant to obscure that influence.

The order of Ionescu's argument seems to have a rhetorical purpose as well. In order to arrive at the final conclusion that Romanians require an imperialist Orthodox ethnostate, he begins by claiming abstract universals, like the aforementioned historical forms, historical moments, and historical facts, as part of his theory of history. In this way, Ionescu is able to work back to front, as it were, assuming the abstract category rather than inducing it. This central problem of his argument also accounts for his confusing amalgam of metaphysics. On the one hand, Ionescu argues deductively from his first principles (i.e., forms) toward his conclusion (i.e., Legionary Romania), but simultaneously attempts to demonstrate the validity of those principles by passing off select examples of correlation as

⁷⁷ Dr. Milcoveanu, a Legionary doctor/medic, thought at the time that the decision to take Ionescu home instead of to the hospital also indicated assassination. See: Milcoveanu, *Memorii*, 197–198.

⁷⁸ Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 238.

⁷⁹ See, for example: Sebastian. *Journal*, 49 f. In an entry from Thursday, May 14, 1936, Ionescu's student Sebastian writes, "I am reading Oswald Spengler's *Années décisives*: I don't know why it is only now that I do it, because it has been on my bookshelf for ages. A surprise to find whole sentences, formulations, ideas, and paradoxes from Nae's course. The whole of last year's course (domestic and foreign policy, peace, war, the definition of the nation), all his "bold strokes" (Singapore, France in its death throes, Russia as an Asiatic power, Britain in liquidation): it is all there in Spengler, with an astounding similarity of vocabulary. And I haven't even finished it yet..." Ornea also comments upon Ionescu's reputation for a lack of originality and "using sources much too liberally, without quoting." See: Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right*, 202.

induction. That is, Legionary Romania is a particular example of a historical form, and historical forms exist because Romania is an example of one.

Given Ionescu's training and position as a philosopher, he would of course have known that arguing causation from correlation is considered a logical fallacy. For this reason, his use of correlative arguments in *The Legionary Phenomenon* should not be dismissed as mere ignorance or lazy philosophizing. Just as induction is associated with Aristotle, and deduction with Plato, the correlative argument, "as above; so below," is associated with the mythical Hermes Trismegistus. Moreover, Hermetic philosophy and Hermetic logic are also foundational to the accelerationist Traditionalism(s) of Italian philosopher, Julius Evola, with whom Ionescu had met in spring of 1938, and of Russian philosopher, Aleksandr Dugin. On that point, Lutheran bishop and scholar of Hermetic philosophy, James Heiser, has demonstrated how the correlative logic of Hermeticism was used to create the appearance of a reconciliation between Aristotelian inductive reasoning and Platonic deductive reasoning, beginning in the Italian Renaissance with Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola.⁸⁰ Heiser also later argued that Dugin's Eurasianism represents a continuation of the same logical deception in the particular way the Russian ideologue claims to reconcile the fundamental differences among the religions of the Russian Federation in his presentation of "Tradition."⁸¹

Ionescu makes no pretenses of any sort of inter-religious or inter-racial harmony in his vision for a Legionary Romania. However, Hermetic correlative logic nevertheless serves his argument for a monoethnic Romania just as well as it serves Dugin's argument for multiethnic Eurasia. The reason for this is straightforward to explain. When correlation is used to imply (adduce) a common cause, it makes no difference whether that cause is a shared antecedent Eurasian culture or a "pure" Romanian race. Correlative logic can be manipulated either to include or to exclude depending upon the examples one correlates. As Heiser also points out, "Traditionalism offers a fictionalized account of the prehistoric past as a means of imposing a fictionalized view of the course of history on the present."⁸² Just as efforts to syncretize two religions inevitably result in a third, attempts like those of Ionescu to "purify" a race or religion are usually intended to create a new one.

Moreover, and crucially, the common "cause" implied by correlative logic need not be antecedent. For example, in the logic of prophecy, signs and omens correlate to a previously "revealed" template as confirmation of a future cause. As they come to pass, signs of the End Times portend their cause in the approaching eschaton. Neither Platonic deduction nor Aristotelian induction support such prophetic arguments. Immanentizing the eschaton, as do Evola, Dugin, and Ionescu, can only be managed with such correlative logic. Thus, the similarities of Ionescu's Legionary philosophy invite comparison with the accelerationist Traditionalism of Evola and Dugin, particularly. However, they also suggest that the so-called "soft Traditionalism" of Mircea Eliade, who was Ionescu's student, friend, and intellectual collaborator, may be traced back at least partially to the thought of Ionescu. Eliade's notion of the "terror of history" cleverly describes not the eschaton itself, but rather the motivating effect of its approach when immanentized.⁸³ Likewise, his concept of "hierophanies" as

⁸⁰ See especially, James D. Heiser "Conclusion" in *Prisci Theologi and the Hermetic Reformation in the Fifteenth Century* (Malone, Tex: Repristination Press, 2011), 229-39.

⁸¹ James D. Heiser, "*The American empire should be destroyed*": Alexander Dugin and the Perils of Immanentized Eschatology (Malone, Texas: Repristination Press, 2014), 15-34.

⁸² Heiser, "*The American empire*," 20.

⁸³ See: Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 151 f.

manifestations of the sacred easily encompasses harbingers of the End, which correlate to prophecy.⁸⁴

The following four sections, labeled I-IV, correspond with the four conferences of *The Legionary Phenomenon*. Each section attempts to indicate likely relationships between the text and outside ideas (Traditionalism, Orthodoxy, etc.), as well as to reveal the logic of a given conference and its function within the larger argument. Because Ionescu's argument is itself not linear, the commentary frequently refers ahead (and occasionally back) in order to help the reader anticipate where Ionescu's many axioms are meant to lead.

⁸⁴ See: Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, 21. For additional remarks concerning the hierophany, see: 12, 14, 26, 36, 63-4, 117, 115-58; See also: Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 23-33, 446-8.

I.

In the first conference, Ionescu lays the groundwork for his Legionary ideology with a philosophy of history that centers on what he calls “historical forms.” He uses the term to refer to transcendental realities that emerge in time and space—within history. The concept is a variation of the theory of forms attributed to Plato. However, where the Platonic theory of forms describes all of physical reality as imperfect projections of perfect realities existing in the Realm of Forms, Ionescu’s theory is primarily concerned with civilizations, and suggests the possibility that perfection can be realized in the physical world. The active realization of this perfection is the object of *The Legionary Phenomenon*. It also functions as the palingenetic myth of Romanian Legionarism.

According to Ionescu, the emergence of historical forms is “relative.” That is, they occur in relative position before or after other forms. However, the relationship between such events is not causal. A given historical form does not influence the nature of the next one, and so on. The characteristics of a given historical form are also relative, in that they (cor)relate to the historical and geographical conditions in which they emerge. They represent an ontological necessity of the form’s existence in a given time, which is to say a civilizational era or age of the world. In other words, a form’s characteristics are understood not as the effects of its development, but as the conditions of its emergence. The ontological necessity and inherent correlation of the characteristics mean that their defining constellation cannot be altered without jeopardizing the continued existence of a historical form—the age-as-civilization. Thus, Ionescu’s argument is a tautology: a historical form is the way it is because it could be no other way in the time and place in which it exists. For the same reason, changes to defining characteristics represent a decadence, not an evolution of the form. Finally, at the beginning of the second conference, Ionescu makes a subtle but consequential clarification regarding historical forms, stating that they tend to emerge when and where conditions are most favorable to the full realization of the form. This seemingly slight change is, in fact, critical because it both enables and implies accelerationist thinking. That is, if forms emerge under favorable conditions, then actively creating favorable conditions should hasten the full emergence of a form (e.g., Legionarism).

The tautological nature of Ionescu’s theory of historical forms allows him to present a philosophy of history that is not only non-dialectical, non-evolutionary, and correlative, but also normative. The emergence of a historical form when and where it is most likely to be fully realized sets up Ionescu’s argument about “normality.” By effectively “choosing” the time and place of its emergence, a historical form validates—*cum hoc ergo propter hoc*—the characteristics or conditions of its environment. According to Ionescu, these characteristics or conditions constitute “historical facts,” which tend to correlate as “families” in certain times and places. Thus, the emergence of Legionarism as a historical form would be understood as an almost messianic validation of the historical facts (characteristics or conditions) of interwar Romania. These historical facts, in turn, are distinguishable by the criterion of normality.

To cite an example from the text, the fact that most Romanians are somewhere between blond and brunette means that all Romanians should be somewhere between blond and brunette. Thus, Ionescu’s criterion of normality is no more than a thinly veiled appeal to stereotypes, but functionally, it is how he derives his philosophical “is” from a populist “ought.” Knowledge of historical facts (normality) is key to the full realization of an emergent historical form because it provides for the maximizing of those conditions that are favorable to the form’s realization and the minimizing of unfavorable conditions—those which deviate from the norm. Using this logic, he sets up certain marked incompatibilities between the different historical forms (civilizations) in a given time (historical moment). The most thoroughgoing example of such incompatibility is the fundamental

opposition Ionescu establishes between Orthodoxy and Protestantism and so, by extension, between Romania and the West.

The critical logical move in the first conference is to distinguish history from time. According to Ionescu, time flows, but man does not experience time directly. Rather, he experiences only the “historical form” (civilization) or “historical moment” (age) in which he lives. Moreover, while the sequence and characteristics of historical moments, including the Renaissance, feudal Europe, the Hellenic world, etc., is inherently relative, the conditions of these historical forms are absolute to the man who exists within history. Ionescu’s philosophy of history thus resembles the Traditionalist philosophy of Julius Evola in its presentation of Ages of the world, though it differs in that it does not incorporate the epochal cycle of *yugas* (ages) of the Hindu mythology. Where Evola seeks to accelerate a return of the pure and ideal Satya Yuga by hastening the end of the current degenerate and sinful Kali Yuga, Ionescu means to hasten the full realization of the Legionary Romanian Orthodox Golden Age, which he proposes.

The relative, but non-dialectical and non-evolutionary, progression of ages of the world in Ionescu’s philosophy of history presents a challenge for his accelerationist Legionarism which is similar to that present in Julius Evola’s accelerationist Traditionalism: How does one accelerate time non-dialectically and non-evolutionarily? In Evola’s Traditionalism, the transgression of prescribed social order speeds up the decline of the already corrupt Kali Yuga by destabilizing the conditions of the present yuga. According to the borrowed Indo-Aryan mythos from which Evola takes the yugas, the Kali Yuga is inevitably followed by a cyclical return of the halcyon Satya Yuga in an epochal cycle. However, Ionescu strives to arrange a specific, novel Legionary Romania without the benefit of an existing mythos. In Ionescu’s theory of history, the full emergence of the historical form of Legionarism is not inevitable as the impending return of the Satya Yuga is for Evola. It remains a potential unless and until it is fully realized by altering the historical conditions to make them more accommodating.

According to Ionescu’s argument, while it is possible to hasten the realization of a historical form once it has emerged, there is nothing one can do to cause a new historical form to emerge. Furthermore, as he will argue in conference two, exogenous forms are impure and harmful. Thus, the only legitimate option left for Romania is to midwife its own indigenous historical form—the Legionarism that Ionescu proposes—and embrace its correlative totalitarian conditions. As an analogy, he offers the example of a man wearing “shorts”⁸⁵ in winter to argue that a non-authoritarian form of government during an authoritarian time would be absurd. By implication, the occurrence, or even the existence, of wintertime within history is relative and possibly arbitrary, but the circumstances of a man in shorts in wintertime are absolute: he will freeze. He harms himself by failing to do what is required (wearing long pants) since, by his actions, he can neither force the arrival of spring nor the return of summer. The intended conclusion is that a man living in a totalitarian time (historical moment) has no reasonable choice but to embrace totalitarian conditions.

Yet the analogy of shorts in winter betrays Ionescu’s rhetorical strategy of conflating social and natural phenomena in order to undermine dialectical and evolutionary reasoning. It also demonstrates how he uses this conflation to force an absolute correlation between social conditions and historical time. Thus laid bare, the logic is once again correlative: since cold correlates to winter absolutely, interwar Romania must also have absolute correlative conditions—historical facts. According to Ionescu, historical facts (like the “normal” range of hair color he mentions) are

⁸⁵ The Romanian word *chiloți* may be translated as shorts, underwear, bathing trunks, etc.

discernable as norms or “normality” within the collective. Yet, his norms are not inductions from material evidence, but rather stereotypes toward which he reasons teleologically.

II.

In the second conference, Ionescu continues to develop his theory of historical forms, adding the above-mentioned geographical component. Significantly, since historical forms are civilizational, “geography” necessarily includes its human inhabitants *pars pro toto*. His logic thus invites comparison with the Eurasianism of Aleksandr Dugin’s *Fourth Political Theory*. Furthermore, the addition serves to create a critical distinction between pure and impure historical forms. According to Ionescu, pure forms are possible only when they emerge “where the historical conditions are superimposed on the geographical.” Conversely, any attempt to realize a historical form where historical and geographical conditions are not aligned with it will, most likely, result in an impure and harmful form. In an attempt to argue this, Ionescu makes a distinction between juridical right (*drept*) and moral right (*dreptate*) and correlates the former with the West and the latter with Romania. According to his reasoning, the legal justice of western liberal democracy is incompatible with Romanians because they are governed by moral right, not justice. For Ionescu, the utility of this argument is that it amounts to ontological nationalism because historical forms are geographically—and thus completely—mutually exclusive. For example, a historical form like liberalism, which emerged in the West, may be pure and useful where the appropriate historical and geographical conditions exist (e.g., Protestantism), but it is therefore also definitionally impure in Romania under its historical and geographical conditions (e.g., Orthodoxy). In this way, Ionescu is able to blame whatever political strife and economic hardship that Romanians experience on liberalism, democracy, etc. As historical forms that emerged in the West, they can only be monstrous hybrids in the Romanian context and are therefore the most likely reasons for Romania’s failure to thrive. Effectively, then, Ionescu argues that societies that limit themselves to nationalist ideas are rewarded with the indigenous emergence of pure and useful forms, whereas societies that attempt to realize geographically alien forms usually suffer painful consequences.

By specifying that historical forms tend to emerge where historical and geographical conditions are favorable, Ionescu sets up three operatively significant features of his philosophy. First, as mentioned above, it enables accelerationist thinking. In Ionescu’s own words, “We require a certain acceleration of time in order for us to be able to identify the historical form of which we make up a part.”⁸⁶ The sooner the conditions are favorable, the sooner a pure historical form emerges. Moreover, the sooner a historical form emerges, the sooner it can be fully realized. Thus, by arranging (i.e., accelerating) historical conditions within a given geography (civilization), desirable emergent forms can be realized more quickly. Second, it renders Ionescu’s philosophy apocalyptic and therefore prophetic. If the succession of forms were completely unpredictable, Ionescu’s philosophical paradigm would not require the figure of a prophet-augurer to read the signs of emergent forms. However, as a paradigm of *apokalypsis* (i.e., revelation), it both requires and creates prophets. Ionescu himself alluded to this possibility in the first conference, stating that “a dying epoch is coexistent with one that is beginning. How can we identify that epoch which is dying and that which is beginning? The appreciation of the defining elements is a matter of personal art. There also exist objective elements.”

In this conference, he clarifies that a historical form is an “organic unity,” and as such, is subject to crises. According to Ionescu, these crises result from radical changes in the constitutive elements of a historical form. Such crises, in turn, can give rise to new historical forms, not causally, by ending

⁸⁶ Conf. I.

the previous form with changes to its requisite conditions. These crises may be passing or fatal for the historical form in which they occur and thus represent opportunities that can be either seized or squandered. In conference four, he applies this “axiom” to the example of the historical form of the Romanian nation and the crisis of non-Romanian minorities. On the one hand, this is an essentialist argument according to which changing any major element of a civilization destroys it. On the other hand, the crisis in question serves as the eschaton of Ionescu’s apocalypticism. Ionescu predicts both the End and the means of surviving it in a variation of the biblical formula, “Repent, the end is nigh.” Thus, because Ionescu’s emergent forms can be discerned by those who know how to recognize them, and insofar as his philosophical paradigm makes him into an aperture for transcendental truth, it invites comparison with the apocalyptic Traditionalism(s) of Julius Evola and Aleksandr Dugin. Moreover, the function of the prophet-augurer as locus and master of ontophany in Ionescu’s philosophy also invites comparison with the concept of “hierophanies” later put forward by his student, friend, and intellectual collaborator, Mircea Eliade.⁸⁷

Finally, the particular function of accelerationism in Ionescu’s philosophy reveals a similarity to the Eastern Orthodox theological concept of salvation: theosis. Also known as deification, theosis is the transformative process by which the individual achieves a likeness to or union with God. It forms the core of Orthodox soteriology (i.e., theology of salvation) in the way that original sin and redemption do in Western Christianity. Through the process of theosis, the individual is saved from the state of unholiness (*hamartía*, which should not be confused with *hamártēma*, “sin”) so that he can participate in the everlasting life of the Trinity (*zōe*, as opposed to *bíos*).⁸⁸ There are multiple reasons to believe the similarity is intentional. For example, in the fourth conference, Ionescu expounds the process by which a people (*popor*) becomes a nation (*națiune*), recapitulating the distinction between transcendent and merely biological existence by tracing the process of individual deification at the level of the collective.

Moreover, the parallel between individual theosis and the realization of the historical form of Legionarism as collective deification—transformation from people into nation by what Ionescu later describes as achieving “self-consciousness”—is further underscored by his use of the metaphor of sickness to describe the alternative to self-consciousness and nationhood. Whereas Western Christianity generally follows a more legalistic soteriological metaphor of transgression and atonement following the theology of original sin laid out by Augustine of Hippo, Byzantine Christianity does not accord Augustine the same authority and thus uses instead the metaphor of an illness that requires treatment. The accelerationist possibility of making conditions favorable for the emergence of the historical form of Legionarism reflects the metaphorical treatment of a sickness which describes the process of theosis. In other words, acceleration equals theosis. It is a political call to action expressed in religious terms.

⁸⁷ See: Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), 11. “Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane. To designate the act of manifestation of the sacred, we have proposed the term hierophany. [...] it expresses no more than is implicit in its etymological content, i.e., that something sacred shows itself to us. [...] From the most elementary hierophany—e.g., manifestation of the sacred in some stone or a tree—to the supreme hierophany (which, for a Christian, is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ) there is no solution of continuity.” See also: Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958), 7 ff.

⁸⁸ OrthodoxWiki, “Theosis.” 9 April, 2012. <https://orthodoxwiki.org/index.php?title=Theosis&oldid=108505>. See also: Hilarion Alfeyev Metropolitan, *Orthodox Christianity* Vol. 2, trans. Andrew Smith (Yonkers, N.Y: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 371 ff.

III.

In the third conference, Ionescu assumes the role of prophet-augurer that his apocalyptic philosophy creates for him by reading the signs of his own historical moment. This function was seeded already in the first conference, where he refers to the “personal art” of determining which historical form is dying and which one is emerging. Having previously argued that man has no real option but to embrace the historical facts of his historical moment, Ionescu attempts, in this conference, to validate Legionarism as Romania’s only legitimate form of government by demonstrating that the defining characteristic of his historical moment is totalitarianism. To do this, he employs the stereotype fallacy—yet another correlative argument. Ionescu asserts, “Starting from the affirmation that any given historical moment, concerning an organic unity, can be defined through a single constitutive element; this means that we can reveal the profile of the entire historical moment of today.” In other words, if Romanians are fundamentally totalitarian in the particular historical moment in which he and the Legionaries find themselves, then the moment itself must be totalitarian. As such, it remains to Ionescu only to demonstrate that all Romanians are totalitarian. Yet, he does not argue the point directly. Rather, he attempts to show that normality for Romanians is collectivity and that the correlative form of government for the condition of collectivity is totalitarianism.

Ionescu’s strategy in this conference is as much rhetorical as it is logical. The covert move of his argument is to invalidate material and historical evidence, which could contradict his metaphysical claims about “historical forms” and “historical facts.” To do this, he forces a dichotomous distinction between the “experimental” and the “statistical” scientific methods and correlates individualism with the former and collectivism with the latter. While the two methods are indeed distinct, they are not mutually exclusive. To the contrary, they are often used complementarily. Yet not only does Ionescu introduce a false dichotomy between the two methods, he also fundamentally mischaracterizes them. According to Ionescu, “The experimental method takes a representative fact and this fact imposes the law. In the statistical method, a collective imposes the law on the individual.” The fact of the matter is that, in the legitimate experimental method, the individual does not impose laws. Rather, it simply holds that that which is universally true is as true in one individual as in any other. Ionescu himself recognizes the problem that this logic poses for his argument. In an effort to get around it, he cites the familiar example of how the discovery of black swans falsified the old belief that all swans were white. However, he twists the problem of the black swan to falsify his misrepresentation of the experimental method. Since a “law” based on either a white or a black swan would necessarily be false, the experimental method must only be valid for qualities that are “characteristic.” By concluding that the experimental method is only valid for “characteristic” rather than universal qualities, he undermines the value of scientific experiment and observation and sets up his tautological appeal to stereotype that some truths exist only in the collective. Selective correlation thus allows him to curate any “collective” for which he can find examples. That is exactly what Ionescu does. He never demonstrates his claims about the statistical method with actual statistics, but merely asserts various stereotypes. Thus, according to Ionescu’s argument, the experimental method can only uphold stereotypes, not falsify them, and his earlier conflation of *is* and *ought* still stands. Ultimately, he dismisses his caricature of “experimental method” as an incompatible historical fact of the individualist, Protestant West and insists that his correlative “statistical method” is more appropriate to the Romanian Orthodox collective.

Despite his initial pretensions to Aristotelian inductive reasoning in the “statistical method,” Ionescu soon appeals directly to Plato’s deductive theory of forms, stating that, “The degree to which the thing or fact participates in an idea is the degree to which this thing or fact exists.” For Ionescu, collectives therefore represent transcendental realities, and his intention of apotheosizing racial and nationalist

stereotypes into prescriptive laws becomes clear. Ionescu’s “statistical method” is no more than a generator of Platonic forms. Simply—if paradoxically—put, he induces a Platonic form of his ideal collective from an aggregate of preconceived notions and then excludes outliers from valid existence. Yet, however logically problematic, this move makes possible two operative additions to his philosophy. First, by making the Romanian national collective into a Platonic reality in the third conference, Ionescu enables himself to merge it with the more familiar transcendental collective of the Orthodox Church in the fourth. As he states there, “With us, the Orthodox, the nation and the church are superimposed.” Second, it creates another tautology: because there is no existence outside the (now transcendental) collective, Romanians who do not participate in the normality of collectivity are definitionally not Romanians. Following Ionescu’s tortuous logic, if Romanians who do not participate in collectivity (i.e., stereotype) do not have valid existence, then all true Romanians are a collective. Thus, the historical moment must be totalitarian because collectivity correlates to totalitarianism in a family of “historical facts.”

Through a metaphysical bait-and-switch of a feigned statistical Romanian normality with Platonic-Orthodox transcendental reality, Ionescu reframes populist norms as *sine qua non* criteria for legitimate existence and thus, finally transforms all of his historical, geographical, racial, religious, and ideological desiderata into absolute law. He himself states, “The individual must fit himself into the laws of the collective, for otherwise we have an abnormal state, imbalanced, of sickness, in the collective.”⁸⁹ The comparison with the Orthodox soteriological concept of theosis is thus once again apt. Deviation equals sickness, and sickness is the primary obstacle to salvation. Healthy normality equals theosis, and theosis equals salvation. True life is only possible in and through the collective, which requires obedience to its populist norms as ontological truths. As Ionescu states, “The truth regarding these laws is not with us—individuals—but in the collective consensus, in that which the nation thinks.”⁹⁰

Finally, his reference here to “nation” anticipates what he makes explicit in the final conference. Namely, what the nation (*națiune*) “thinks” is definitionally true because the nation is the people (*popor*) transcended, and transcendence is participation in Truth. Nation is the apotheosis (or more precisely, “theosis”) of the collective. Thus, insofar as Ionescu’s philosophy describes a collective deification from people to nation through the act of living according to valorized populist norms of the collective, it invites additional comparison with the philosophy of Aleksandr Dugin, particularly in his *Fourth Political Theory*.⁹¹ Both philosophies offer salvation from some imminent non-existence only in and through the collective. Where Ionescu summarizes his soteriology in the fourth conference by saying, “God made the races each with a single duty, to realize the natural law that God placed in them,” Dugin offers a nominally agnostic, but functionally identical explanation of living one’s Civilization in a formulation that relies on his presentation of Heidegger’s Dasein rather than God.

IV.

The fourth and final conference of *The Legionary Phenomenon* is divided into three labeled subsections: “treason,” “the nation,” and “regarding the constitution.” The first section collapses the

⁸⁹ Conf. IV.

⁹⁰ Conf. IV.

⁹¹ For analysis of the *Fourth Political Theory* specifically, see: Charles Robert Sullivan and Amy Fisher-Smith, “The Extremist Construction of Identity in the Historical Narratives of Alexander Dugin’s Fourth Political Theory,” in *Far-Right Revisionism and the End of History: Alt / Histories*, ed. Louie Dean Valencia-García, (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 144–147, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003026433>.

political concept of treason with the religious concepts of apostasy and heresy, as well as with Ionescu's earlier idea of "abnormality." The second, as mentioned above, superimposes nation and Church in order to racialize the transcendence (theosis) from people to nation and thus, preclude the possibility of any Romanian's individual salvation outside of the Romanian nation. The third returns to the question of the difference between juridical and moral right (*drept* and *dreptate*), which he introduces in the first conference, in order to confirm the illegitimacy of the constitutional monarchy provided for by the previous, 1923 constitution and possibly Carol II's recently declared royal dictatorship (February 10, 1938). Thus, the final conference is the most practically "Legionary" of the four. Unsurprisingly, its logic is decidedly more straight-forward than that of the previous three. With his various metaphysical first principles (i.e., historical forms, historical moments, historical facts, normality, collectives, and nation) all established in the previous conferences, in the final conference, Ionescu makes a series of straight ultranationalist deductions.

The first argument—*Treason*—is a brief sketch in three points. In the first point, Ionescu reiterates that absolute (transcendental) truth exists only within the collective and concludes that an individual who breaks with his collective no longer has access to that truth. He is an "abnormality," which does not participate in the (Platonic) idea of the collective and thus, does not have valid existence. Like the heretics, he is anathema.

The second point is a clarification of the first. Ionescu stresses, deliberately, that the effective excommunication is not *de jure*, but simply *de facto*. It is not a punishment imposed by the collective, but rather, a self-effectuating ontological consequence of the act of treason. His point here is not a regression into metaphysical speculation, but rather, an altogether practical piece of community management. Where there is no judgment, there can be no mercy. The consequences of treason are something that traitors—Romanians generally and Legionaries especially—bring upon themselves, like the man who wears shorts in winter. They are absolute and inescapable.

The third point, however, distinguishes treason from conversion. Ionescu states, "The convert leaves one community, crossing into another, while the traitor remains isolated, suspended." At first, this explanation seems contrary to his larger argument, yet his subsequent insistence that "With us the Orthodox, the nation and the Church are superimposed," offers a clue to his intentions. Presumably, the option remains open to non-Orthodox Romanians to convert to Legionary Orthodox nationhood, especially the many ethnically Romanian "Greek Catholics" whose liturgy and religious culture was virtually identical to that of the Orthodox. However, for those who were already Romanian and Orthodox, there is only the possibility of treason (apostasy).

The second argument—*The nation*—racializes the Romanian state by limiting salvation-theosis to the self-actualization of an ethnic group into a nation. Ionescu states, "The nationalism of the 20th century starts from the people and crosses over to the nation in order to reach God." It is worth noting that he claims this is the case with Italian fascism and "Hitlerism" as well. The demagogic instrumentalization of salvation is the function of this apocalyptic discourse. Through his access to transcendental truth (i.e., ontophany), the prophet-augurer reveals both an impending doom and the means of overcoming it (i.e., soteriology). Proof of the prophecy is offered *cum hoc ergo propter hoc* in the form of signs and omens that "confirm" the prediction not causally, but simply by coming to pass. The catastrophe of Ionescu's prophetic philosophy is thus like that of the biblical *Apocalypse of John* which rewards the righteous and damns the faithless. For the chosen, it is a eucatastrophe, a sudden and unexpected turn for the better. For the damned, it is only the End—the eschaton.

As with the Traditionalism of Evola and Dugin, Ionescu immanentizes the eschaton by introducing an impending catastrophe. For Ionescu, it is the emergence of a new historical form. If it is Legionarism,

the Romanian people become the Romanian nation and are saved. If the new historical form is anything else, any one of the incompatible exogenous forms, the Romanian people will fall into serfdom, hybridized and subordinated by some other people's ascendent nationhood. Thus, Ionescu's soteriology is literally conquer or be conquered, kill or be killed. It leaves no room for doubt, "The character of the nation: *offensive and imperialist* par excellence, that is an organism that cannot live besides in expansion, life, dynamism. It could be objected, what is the position in the face of other peoples? The irreducibility of the nation." Ionescu continues, "It is not about me, a living nation in the offensive, but it is about them. Let them accommodate themselves however they can with me." If the Romanian people achieve self-consciousness, they will transcend into nationhood. If not, they will fall into serfdom and lose their identity. Yet, it also reflects Orthodox soteriology. The possibility of serfdom is not a punishment for sin, but rather, the inevitable consequence of a failure of theosis, an abortive deification.

The metaphysical discourse that Ionescu elaborates over the first three conferences functions to limit the conceivable outcomes to salvation and perdition—(re)birth and death. Thus, by immanentizing the eschaton as prophet-augurer, Ionescu can commodify salvation by defining the means of achieving it. There are two important implications to this use of apocalypticism. First, it not only threatens to deny transcendence to the individual dissident in and through the Romanian nation, but it also attempts, on theological grounds, to preclude the possibility of transcendence in and through any other collective. As such, it bears a conspicuous resemblance to the logic of *Unam sanctam*, the 1302 papal bull of Boniface VIII, which infamously declared, "*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*," (No salvation outside the Church).⁹²

Because Ionescu has already superimposed nation and Church, he is now able to collapse heresy and treason as the basis for exclusion. No salvation for Romanians outside the Romanian nation. When he states, "For the individual then, that is in history, the nation is absolute," he means that the nation is an ethnic reality. Since the nation is both transcendental and coextensive with race, race is also a transcendental reality. Salvation is only possible within one's race because, as he states, "Each nation represents a kind of *irreducibility of existence*. For example: crossing over from one people to another is possible, *but from one nation to another is impossible*."⁹³ Biological life (comp. *bíos*) is possible in an ethnically mixed state, but transcendence (comp. *zōē*) is only possible in and through the ethnic nation. As such, Legionary soteriology—the means of salvation—is necessarily ultranationalist. The second implication of Ionescu's apocalypticism is that it divorces the Legionary call to action from the constraints of causal logic. Salvation from an emergent, non-dialectical and non-evolutionary, revealed apocalypse could consist of literally anything. Ionescu seizes the opportunity to make the means of salvation both ultranationalist and imperialist. He states that, "he who wants to realize God cannot do so except by conquering externally, by grabbing the other by the throat. Thus, the nation is dynamic; it is offensive and imperialist life." In the absence of causal logic, ethnic cleansing is no more or less logical than anything else.

The final section of the conference—*Regarding the constitution*—lays out the implications of the superimposition of Church and nation regarding the matter of coercive power and authority. Ionescu returns to his earlier distinction between juridical and moral right and correlates moral right (*dreptate*) with the transcendental nation (*națiune*) and justice (*justiție*) and juridical right (*drept*) with the temporal state in order to invalidate the authority of the constitution and thus the constitutional monarchy whenever they are at odds with the "natural laws" of the nation. According

⁹² Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, 8 Nov. 1302. Papal Encyclicals Online. The Holy See. <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/bon08/b8unam.htm>.

⁹³ Emphasis original.

to his logic, the only valid constitution is one which enshrines the normality (historical facts) of the collective (*națiune*), and the only legitimate head of state is one who enforces them.

Moreover, “juridical norms,” the temporal counterparts to natural moral laws, do not have autonomous existence (i.e., are not transcendental Platonic forms). As such juridical norms may place illegitimate constraints on the nation, which does have autonomous existence. Counterposing state and nation, he clarifies, “[T]he state is not an organic reality, but is composed of the individuals that reside in a certain country, without having the same origins, having the same rights stabilized by the laws conferred by the state.” The juridical norms with which Ionescu is concerned are the full rights of citizenship granted to the ethnic minorities (Jews, Hungarians, etc.) who made up thirty percent of the country’s population after the unification of Romania in 1918.⁹⁴ He leaves no room for doubt, “the constitution is the factual state of a certain race [*neam*] and not an agreement between different parts.”

Ionescu’s final move in *The Legionary Phenomenon* is thus a turn against the the liberal state that preceded the royal dictatorship and possibly against Carol II himself, but decidedly not against totalitarianism. Any force or idea that inhibits the emergence of Legionarism threatens to deny the Romanian people salvation-theosis in and through the nation. The superimposition of the Orthodox Church and the nation not only allows Ionescu to racialize the idea of the state and anathematize otherwise Romanian Orthodox dissidents, but also to direct his argument for deriving an ontological “is” from a populist “ought” to the constitution and the monarchy.

The Translation

The present translation was prepared from the 1963 publication of *Fenomenul Legionar*, which appeared as a single volume under the Romanian language imprint, *Editura Armatoilii*, in Rome, Italy with a substantial introduction by former Legionary and editor, Constantin Papanace. This translation does not include Papanace’s introduction. An identical version was reproduced as an appendix in *Istoria Mișcării Legionare: Scrisă de un Legionar*. A copy of the earlier 1940 serialized Berlin publication in *Buletinul Informativ* could not be located for comparison.

Ionescu’s rhetorical style was famously improvisatory, with many of his courses allegedly (or seemingly) delivered off-the-cuff.⁹⁵ Thus, especially considering the circumstances under which these conferences were given, the many recursions and abrupt shifts in direction of *The Legionary Phenomenon* are not surprising. Such idiosyncrasies do, however, present certain translational and editorial challenges. Where direct translation was unclear or cumbersome, we have attempted to preserve the colloquial affect of the text and provide the original Romanian in a footnote. Additionally, given that the document we have today was compiled from Palaghiță’s lecture notes, it is to be expected that some parts of the translation should still reflect his note-taking style. This seems to be the case, for example, in the occasional incomplete sentence or insertion of a parenthetical. Consequently, throughout the translation, parentheses should be understood as original. By contrast, brackets have been used for translators’ clarifications, such as the insertion or alteration of punctuation and the completion of sentence fragments.

⁹⁴ Cârstocea, *Students Don the Green Shirt*, 50.

⁹⁵ Mircea Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu: Așa cum l-am cunoscut* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1992), 27.

We have chosen to translate the original Romanian *conferință* directly as “conference” rather than “lecture,” although Ionescu delivered these so-called conferences in the detainment camp at Miercurea Ciuc. The subheadings that appear throughout the document are either Palaghiță’s own organizational device or an editorial choice on the part of the publishers of the earlier serialized *Buletin Informativ*. All italics present in the 1963 Romanian version have been preserved in this translation. Finally, the original text includes the Romanian antisemitic slur, *jidani*. In order not to obscure the overt antisemitism of the text where it occurs, we have rendered this as “kikes.” Similarly, the inoffensive term *iudei*, which also appears in the text, has been translated simply as “Jews.”

First Conference

Legionary Romania is not a simple fact, but a complex one.

That is, the legionary vision of reality is a formula that contains the entire manifestation of life, as it fits into history. Legionary Romania will be a political, economic, spiritual form of life different than that of today. The point of departure is history. Everything that happens, happens in time and space, that is in history, theologians say in *eternity*.⁹⁶ Events flow in history, that is history itself flows, for history lives under a particular coordinate of time, which is a constant flowing. Philosophers of history think that history flows towards something, that it has a direction, a sense. This is not to be believed, as life also does not lead towards something, but leads towards the end, to death[;] beginning and end.

History does not organize itself evolutionarily (evolution is a non-Christian idea—not an anti-Christian one—introduced to our thinking in the nineteenth-century). It sought to find a meaning of life starting from one man, not from God. History is a necessary reality, but also a changing one, for the facts that constitute it change. This means that everything that happens in history—that is in time and space—is relative. Events, then, are also relative, in the understanding that they do not represent a meaning in themselves, they are not produced per a particular law. The Christian mentality is a realist mentality, insofar as it accepts everything as it normally appears. The world that exists, exists how it is normally, not how we want it to be. There is thus a criterion of appraising, of measuring facts, even in this relativity of history: normality.

For example, a grain of wheat placed into the ground produces wheat—this is normal—not a chicken: abnormal. Abnormality means the imbalance in the natural arrangement of things. How are normality and abnormality stabilized? Normal means that which is most common. The Romanian type is between blonde and brunette; this is normal. Normality is itself approximate. The concepts with which we measure normality are approximate instruments. In order for us to be able to say that a fact is normal or abnormal it must first exist as fact. Historical facts group themselves in a particular place and time—they have a kind of common air; [they are] a kind of family. There are multiple facts, and this also gives the collective character. Facts change in relation with the time, and herein lies the relativity. For example, there exists an absolutist form of governing facts, but also a democratic one. Because of the fact that there are multiple forms of governance, people think they can choose. False, because these forms do not exist in-themselves, they exist in function of a certain time, of certain

⁹⁶ This appears to be a reference to the Latin phrase *sub specie aeternitatis*, which is used to describe that which is universally and eternally true. It also bears mention that Eliade makes a very similar appeal in his description of his palingenetic “eternal return.” See: Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 123: “If all moments and all situations of the cosmos are repeated *ad infinitum*, their evanescence is, in the last analysis, patent; *sub specie infinitatis*, all moments and all situations remain stationary and thus acquire the ontological order of the archetype.”

historical conditions. Here is the relativity. For example: in order for you to walk around in shorts it must be summer, because if it were winter, people would think you mad; so it is also with forms of governance.

When the world was led by democratic principles, he who is absolutist is mad (that is, he walks around in winter wearing shorts). Forms of life are bound to a certain time and place. For example, when the masses actively participate in political life, it means I cannot [individually] choose between the political forms according to my preference.⁹⁷ The king realizes that the country wants an authoritarian principle. Yet, the authoritarian principle from the time of Charlemagne is different from that of today. The authoritarian principle of our king is not that of Charlemagne. And, namely, the authoritarian principle of today is different. Today, the participation of the masses is direct, not delegated as in the system of democracy.⁹⁸ An example: a voter is asked for whom he is voting, and responds: it is not about who [I choose], but rather, what is said by the one I choose.

Every historical moment has its own form of life, and certain people are bound to it. History is relative in the face of time, but not for the people who live in a given moment. Each historical moment represents a historical form that is obligatory for those who participate in it.

What constitutes a historical form?

The Renaissance and Classicism are names that characterize historical forms. A historical form contains within it all of human life, which has different aspects, different constitutive elements[:] feudal, Renaissance, the Greek world, the Roman one...

All of these taken together constitute history in a given moment, but all of these aspects have between themselves a particular difference. Between all of these there exists, normally, a connection. For example: I cannot be Orthodox if I am capitalist, idealist or nominalist in philosophy, individualist in ethics, [or] democratic in politics. If I am Protestant, I can only be thus. There exists, then, a correlation between constitutive elements in a given moment. This correlation gives the diagram—the profile of the historical forms. Thus, a historical form is an organic unity, for the different parts are not placed by happenstance, but are bound together in a way.

A historical epoch can be identified from a constitutive element, that is the whole through the part, with the condition, though, that the historical epoch be well defined and have reached normality.⁹⁹ Historical forms are successive—they are born and they die. Between beginning and end there exists an optimal moment. We require a certain acceleration¹⁰⁰ of time in order for us to be able to identify the historical form of which we make up a part.

But yet another thing happens: a dying epoch is coexistent with one that is beginning. How can we identify that epoch which is dying and that which is beginning? The appreciation of the defining elements is a matter of personal art. There also exist objective elements.

May 17, 1938

⁹⁷ “În momentul, de exemplu, în care masele participă activ la viața politică, după placul meu, adică eu nu pot alege printre formele politice.”

⁹⁸ “Astăzi participă masele, adică, nu delegă ca în sistemul democrației.”

⁹⁹ Ionescu seems to use “epoch” interchangeably with the concept of an age. This is inconsistent with the meaning of epoch as a complete cycle of the ages of the world.

¹⁰⁰ “...o înaintare de timp.”

Second conference

Historical facts

Historical facts organize themselves in time, they group themselves into certain unities inside which different constitutive elements exist in a tight correlation. For every constitutive element and every individual that makes up part of a historical form, this is obligatory, while historical forms succeed one another, but do not condition one another, there does not exist causality and direction in history. There exist historical forms that are pure and impure. The pure ones are born where the historical conditions are superimposed on the geographical. A historical form usually appears in the most appropriate place. But it does not live only there, instead tending to take into its dominion other places that are not its own. For example: the form of life of ancient Greece took into its dominion other domains like Italy, Asia Minor, the Danube delta, etc. Here it found other conditions and other possibilities of valorizing existence.

Nominalism is a philosophical school that places words or names at the basis of our conception about names.¹⁰¹ These concepts replace reality. For the notions “to enter,” “to exit,” “to descend,” “to climb,” as we see, the Romanian has certain terms, while the German says “*untergehen*,” “*auf*,” etc. Nominalism has been at the basis of our culture from the Renaissance to today. This is a scientific epoch, a technical one, with applications, etc. Nominalism was born in England, and namely with the Franciscans, and only there could it have been born, insofar as there existed a tendency towards abstraction. Then it began to know other domains as well, and with them grafted itself onto a material that was not its own. In this case, there appear monstrous forms, hybrids. This is what happened with liberalism and democracy with us. Democracy is a historical form. It is in-itself neither good nor bad. We must keep in mind first where it appeared. It did not catch on with us. The fact that it was born in Southwestern Europe and that from there it stretched out to other places proves that they [i.e., liberalism and democracy] are viable forms. Can we, though, offer the elements, the conditions [for it] to yield results? No, because we do not have the conditions. Democracy was good there, but not with us. Not everything that is good for them is good for us. In England, for example, the merchants of London walk around between the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. wearing top hats, which would give rise to ridicule here.

What does liberalism presuppose?

An individualist mentality. Forms of life reduced to the individual. Where individualism was born, Protestantism, which is an individualist form of living God, was also born. Property in the West was individual. In the West there was a formula: *jus utendi, fruendi et abutendi* [right of use, right of enjoyment, right of abuse]. With us it is not like that. For example, rural property increases and decreases in function with the population—with the number of family members. This means that for us property is not an individual good, but familial, tied to the working force of the family. The relationship between goods and owner is different for us. With us, the peasant is not the owner of the land in the sense of the Roman formulation, but he is a servant of the soil. There does not exist an individualist conception in Romania. In 1933, when there was a crisis,¹⁰² the peasant was buying agricultural land as if there had been no crisis. Here, liberalism did not find the necessary material. This explains why our state is bad. For the peasants the state was felt to be an adversary because it

¹⁰¹ “Nominalismul este o școală filosofică care pune cuvintele sau numele la baza concepției noastre nume.”

¹⁰² This seems to be a reference to the agricultural and banking crisis that enveloped Romania as a result of the 1929 New York Stock Exchange crash and the subsequent 1931 European financial crisis.

unscrupulously imposed many things and in turn gave nothing. For example, the liberal state has justice [*justiție*]. At its base is the idea of right [*drept*], which is an abstract idea. For us, people did not take heed of the justice system, but rather of moral right [*dreptate*].¹⁰³ Example: Ivașcu from Tătaru, despite not having been named a judge by anyone, still determined moral right for the peasantry.¹⁰⁴

And a few years ago, the newspapers wrote about a priest from Tulcea county who was arrested because he was delivering verdicts of moral right. Why did the peasants go to these people? Because they represented a prestige and a conscience. Right and wrong is a psychological element, not an abstract one. The peasant also needs to have faith in right and wrong. For us, instead of right and wrong, there is the law, which is a foreign apparatus added on top. This is why the peasant considers the law to be something inimical. The example with the logothete who said he was right, yet the paragraph ate his head.¹⁰⁵

As follows, the liberal state in Romania must work in extremely difficult conditions. It was forced to borrow. The critique of the liberal state made by the *Junimiști*,¹⁰⁶ that we do not have to accept it [the liberal state], is puerile, for even the *Junimiști* were obligated to borrow liberal elements. An example: the mine laws of Carp¹⁰⁷ and the profession laws of Nenițescu,¹⁰⁸ who were conservatives.

Why? Because they were obligated by the necessities of time. The whole world was liberal, and with everyone being capitalist, we also had to be the same. Otherwise, we would have become a colony. We entered into the liberal formula in 1829, when the Romanian Principalities entered into the international arena, thus they borrowed the liberal formula from the English who were working through Levantines (merchants from Constantinople).

Then come the Germans, who substitute Levantines for kikes.¹⁰⁹ That we did not flourish under this formula is a different matter. We cannot isolate ourselves. Not even Germany was able to withdraw, even though it had a better-defined culture, one expressed more fully than ours. Before the war, there

¹⁰³ In a similar rhetorical juxtaposition, which occurs in the Fourth Conference, Ionescu compares “right” (*drept*) with “morality” (*morală*) rather than *dreptate*, suggesting that *dreptate* may be read here as something like “moral right” and *drept* should be understood as juridical right.

¹⁰⁴ The reference here is to Ionescu’s grandfather. See Niculescu, *Seducătorul*, 16.

¹⁰⁵ This sentence fragment seems to refer to an example Ionescu presumably gave about a logothete and a paragraph of the law that went contrary to the logothete’s position.

¹⁰⁶ A nineteenth-century conservative political and cultural movement based around the Junimea Society in Iași. Of the Junimea Society, Balázs Trencsényi, Hungarian historian of East Central European political and cultural thought, writes, “[o]n the whole, they asserted that the rise of modern lifestyles and institutions triggered the dissolution of the normative national character.” See: Balázs Trencsényi, “History and Character,” in *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*, ed. Diana Mishkova, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), , <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7829/j.ctt1cgf96h.7>.

¹⁰⁷ Among other things, the 1895 law intimately involved the state in mining, granting the state a right to intervene if the above-ground landowner was not exploiting underground resources. The law was promulgated by Petre Carp (b. 1837), a Romanian statesman from Iași who co-founded the Junimea Society together with Titu Maiorescu.

¹⁰⁸ These profession laws of 1912 represented a comprehensive labor code. The law is noteworthy for extending equal labor rights to foreign workers provided that Romanian workers would be treated reciprocally in respective foreign countries. The law also provided for basic health and safety standards for workers, including minors. The law was frequently called the “Nenițescu Law,” for Dimitrie Nenițescu (b. 1861), a leading Romanian conservative politician.

¹⁰⁹ Ionescu (or the notetaker, Palaghiță,) uses the highly derogatory *jidani* (kikes) in this conference but uses *iudei* (Jews) in the fourth conference.

existed a capitalist and liberal Germany. A historical form, then, can extend itself into countries where it does not find its own conditions, giving birth to hybrid forms that are improper, impure. This is how things went with liberalism in Southeastern Europe, even though it was good in the Occident. A historical form utilizes the elements that are its own in the countries where it extends itself, just as it does at home. The liberal, Protestant, capitalist, individualist form is advantageous to the Judaic spirit. This is how one explains the rise of Judaism in the 19th century through banking capitalism. Banking capitalism means the possibility of measuring any good through money. Money is the characteristic of the capitalist economy, which does not consider a good in-itself, just its exchange value. A Romanian says: I have five *pogoane*;¹¹⁰ the kike says: I have two million. The kikes lived all over the place in forms of life that were their own. They were being born in the historical forms in which we were supposed to have accommodated ourselves. Herein lies their success in the nineteenth century!

Historical forms succeed one another without causing one another. The place where they appear and the manner in which they appear are mysteries. We do not know what will happen after an historical form. We adopt an attitude of waiting. An historical form is an organic unity. Just as with an organism, cases of sickness intervene that are called crises. By what means do crises, which are [either] passing or fatal, distinguish themselves? Crisis means the change of relations between constitutive elements. We have an epoch that is Protestant. If it is Protestant, it must be capitalist in economics, democratic in politics, individualist in ethics (democratic, parliamentary), rationalist and idealist in philosophy, etc. In a given moment there appears in this world a philosopher, who, instead of being rationalist and idealist, is a realist and mystic. He acquires a kind of fame, adepts, a school. His conception does not fit in organically with the historical reality that it represents. If he and the school disappear after a few years, the crisis was passing. If he wins adherents from different sectors of life and if there exists a tendency towards correlation, it means we are dealing with a new historical form. For example: there appears an antidemocratic current in politics and an economic principle of command economy: we have a total (fatal) crisis. These are the objective elements through which we can recognize the historical form.

Around the year 1870, impressionistic painting appeared in France. It is also in France that Russian literature situated itself. Why? Because it found ground there. Both French impressionism and the Russian novel represent the dissociation. These things are very simple. In Romania people do not understand them. Up until 1933 we were blaming the crisis on the war, that is how the Liberal Party's rise to power is explained. But the crisis was graver still. It had its beginnings before the war, but it was aggravated after the war.

May 19, 1938

Third Conference

The Historical Profile of the Epoch

Let us attempt to determine the historical profile of the epoch in which we find ourselves. Starting from the affirmation that any given historical moment, concerning an organic unity, can be defined through a single constitutive element; this means that we can reveal the profile of the entire historical moment of today. The epoch that began with the Renaissance, from the point of view of the method of scientific analysis, is stamped with the experimental method. That is, I study a single fact and from

¹¹⁰ A pogon is an archaic unit of measurement for agricultural terrain equivalent to approximately 5,000m².

this fact I can formulate a general law. Example: an apple fell and Newton came up with a law, universal gravity. This law is valid for all bodies that fall. So, you start from a single fact and formulate a law viable for a series of facts. With a condition, though: the fact according to which I determine a universal law must be characteristic. I see a group of people whom I measure. I find 1.65, 1.75, 1.82 meters. I find that height varies. I cannot say that all humans vary between 1.65-1.82 meters in height. I see multiple roosters of different colors. I cannot say that all roosters have multiple colors. There can be roosters that are of a single color. Thus, with the falling of the apple we determined a law viable for an enormous number of facts, although it was a single fact, and thus, in the other cases, starting from multiple facts, I cannot determine a law. Another example: all swans were thought to be white, hence the expression “white swan” was a pleonasm. Notwithstanding, black swans were also found. The explanation: there are characteristic or essential facts, or uncharacteristic, non-essential facts. From one characteristic fact a law can be pulled out, but not from an uncharacteristic one. What do we want to prove with this?

The experimental method works with characteristic, representative facts. It is the same thing as the ethical preoccupation from that time that was *searching for the characteristic man* who created the law, that is history. Since around the end of the nineteenth century, the experimental method is no longer worked with, only the statistical one. There exists a theory that wants to explain that there is a gas. It is said that inside a gas molecule, there exist particles that move themselves on arbitrary lines, without regularity, anarchically. All of these movements, considered in their *media*, produce the molecule.

Another example: we have in a vase, small balls of identical form, some white, others black. We first put the black ones in, then the white ones, and we mix them. We do not know how or where they move around, but after we mix them a lot, we see that the white ones are mixed evenly with the black ones. Thus, at the end a kind of equilibrium was stabilized. Theoretically it can be said that there exists the possibility that, moving constantly, the white balls will separate themselves from the black ones. What the ball does, where it’s moving, is not of interest. The fact is that they mix.

Another example: we toss a coin heads or tails. It falls once on heads, another time on tails. The more times we toss [it], the smaller the difference between heads and tails. And, continuing constantly, the difference between heads and tails will keep falling to nullity. When it will fall on heads or tails, we do not know. But it is certain that the difference will be small. These are characteristic instances, which no longer tie themselves to a single fact, but rather to a sum of identical facts. The sum of identical facts is called in science [a] *collective*.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ See: Mihail Sebastian, *Journal 1935–1944: The Fascist Years* trans. Patrick Camiller (Lanham, Md: Rowan & Littlefield, 2012), 41, 51. Compare with the following entries: Monday, June 17, 1935. “I saw Nae on Friday: A completely nonpolitical discussion. He spoke about his last lecture at the faculty, which I missed but which seems to have been exceptional. A revolution in logic, a complete revision of the discipline. Something epochal... The logic of collectives becomes to formal logic what Einstein’s physics is to Newton! // It was a beautiful afternoon and I was glad that at least toward the end he moved away from politics and Iron Guardism.” Sunday, March 29, 1936. “You don’t understand,’ he told me, ‘my theory of collectives is an escape from solitude, a tragic attempt to break out of loneliness.’ // Yes, I do understand, But then let him stop speaking of the absolute rights of the collective and insist on the absolute importance of the individual. // I also wonder whether this sense of tragedy is not a little suspect, since it comes down to various theories in justification of the metaphysical value of the term ‘Captain’ and its superiority to the terms ‘Duce’ or ‘Führer.’” Tuesday, May 26, 1936: “On the way out of the hall, Nae said to me: “I gave that lecture for you. For two years you have been giving me funny looks. Well, what do you say now?” // For the moment I said nothing. The lecture really was remarkable—and its solution to the problem of the individual and the collective certainly was interesting (though I can feel the

There are facts that tie themselves not to individual happenings but to the collective, that is the sum of identical facts. For example: each ball follows its own course that we do not know, but we do know and it does interest us that at the end the whole takes on a gray aspect, which is not a quality of each one, that is in part, but is [a quality] of all of them [together] in one place. In a city that keeps a record of suicides, it can be determined how many suicides will occur in the next year. How is this explained, as suicide is an act of individual will! Suicide is an individual element of the collective called Bucharest. The same thing can be determined with births, weddings, etc., which are functions of the collective Bucharest.

This Bucharest collective is an entity in itself, not just in the number of people. Our individual action is not relevant to the collective of which I make up a part. I want to get married, for example. Later, I change my mind. Another is found in my place who will get married, and so my fact is not relevant. These facts are studied through statistics. It [i.e., statistics] is applied not just in politics [and] sociology, but also in physics, mechanics, mathematics, etc.

What is a physical fact? In general, [it is] any fact that can be measured. What does measuring mean? I take a length that I determine to be the unity of the measurement and I see how many times this length is contained in the object that I measured. If I measure it multiple times, the results differ.

In physics, speaking theoretically and practically, the measuring device is the median value of a number of infinite measurements.

The difference between the statistical method and the experimental method

The experimental method takes a representative fact, and this fact imposes the law. In the statistical method, a collective imposes the law on the individual. This was known also to Plato, who said that a thing from the sensible world does not exist except insofar as it participates in the idea, which was, per Plato, an existence with true reality, while the objects, the facts, that we live were of lesser reality. The degree to which the thing or fact participates in an idea is the degree to which this thing or fact exists.

A collective has its own law. Jews operate per their own law. The individual will have more precise contours only when he comports himself according to the law of the collective of which he is a part. Example: it is said that Zaharia is Romanian. When is he Romanian? That is, when he seems very similar to that which we call Romanians. The Romanian is the kind of man that finds himself in the Romanian collective. The individual defines himself today by means of the collective of which he is a part.¹¹² This is the difference between the Renaissance and our time.

Let us see if this change that happens in the domain of the method is applicable in other domains, as well. What was happening during the Renaissance in the domain of religion, when the experimental method was governing, for example: at the same time as the Renaissance appears the Reformation.

sophistry without being able to put my finger on it). None of that, however, prevents Nae from being an Iron Guardist. At least if he were genuinely that—honestly and without ulterior motives.”

¹¹² This passage and others like it offer an important point of comparison with Ionescu’s larger philosophical output. Once again, such comparison seems only to support Ionescu’s authorship of *The Legionary Phenomenon*. Of Ionescu’s philosophy, Cernica writes, “General entities do not exist as things; they have a different “nature” in comparison with the latter. But it is precisely because of them that things exist, and “I” am something, in my own identity. The general is the mark of identity, at least for each of us, Ionescu claims.” See: Cernica, “Nae Ionescu and the Origins of Romanian Phenomenology,” 133 f.

What is it? The Reformation relies on the affirmation that the Bible and human reason are sufficient for giving man truth in the material of Christianity. It renounces the historical religious form from Christ up until then. The Reformation is a return to the origins, to the source. This return must be valorized per human reason, that is not just through the Bible. That which happens in the religious life happens in all of the reforms. The Reformation touches neither the Orthodox countries nor the Catholic ones, but only the Protestant ones. In the Orthodox and Catholic countries, there is a rebirth for religion. With the Protestants there is a religious crisis. The Anglicans came to us a few years ago and asked us to recognize them as Christians, that is for them to also enter the Christian collective, for us to recognize that they also have a priestly hierarchy. But why? What's embarrassing them?¹¹³

What is the difference between our kind of belief and theirs? They say, with the Bible and reason it can be understood what Jesus said and wanted. We say, no, only the Church is in a position to know what Jesus said and wanted. The Church must be understood as the entire community, all believers from Christ to today, united through love in time and space. It is what the Captain [Codreanu] understands through *ecumenism* [*ecumenicitate*].¹¹⁴

Just as how in science the experimental method dictates, so also in religion it is recognized that religious truth is exclusively the truth of the collective. (That is, what happens in religion is the exact same phenomenon that happened in the domain of the scientific method).

What is the political aspect of the mentalities instituted by the Renaissance?

The individual dominates the world, not God. The individual is the center of the world (anthropocentrism, not theocentrism). We, people, are born equal, have a dignity, the same rights. Society is nothing but our creation, our will. A certain kind of contract with rules was formed . . . that is, at the basis of society is the individual. We sealed a contract and we determine that which will happen. Through what? The majority decides. At the basis of the understanding of the world is the individual will and not the will of the nation, in the sense of collectivity, entity, synthesis, sum. Democracy did not speak about the will of the nation, for the nation is a collective being. Democracy spoke about the people [*popor*], in the understanding of a majority of votes, which does not mean the will of the nation [*națiune*].

¹¹³ Ionescu refers here to the Anglican effort at improving relations with the Romanian Orthodox Church (and other Orthodox churches) during the 1920s. His suggestion that the Anglican Church was “embarrassed” is a misrepresentation of the inter-ecclesial dialogue. See: Germanos of Thyatira Metropolitan. Progress Towards the Re-Union of the Orthodox and Anglican Churches, Project Canterbury, <http://anglicanhistory.org/orthodoxy/germanos1929.html>. The article originally appeared in *The Christian East* (Spring 1929): 20–31.

¹¹⁴ Codreanu described “ecumenism” at greater length in an interview with Julius Evola published in *Il Regime Fascista* on March 22, 1938. “From our religion [Orthodoxy] the Iron Guard movement has also derived a fundamental idea: ecumenism. This represents the positive transcendence of all internationalism and abstract, rationalistic universalism. The ecumenical idea envisages society as a unity of life, a living unity, and a way of living together not only with our people, but also with our deceased and God. The implementing of this idea in actual experience lies at the center of our movement; politics, the party, culture, etc. are merely consequences deriving from this. We must rekindle this central element in such a way as to renew the Romanian man first, and then the Romanian nation and state.” See: Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *The Prison Notes* (Helsingborg: Logik Förlag), 67, <https://ia903203.us.archive.org/24/items/docuv/%23Books/The%20Prison%20Notes%20by%20Corneliu%20Zelea%20Codreanu.pdf>. Alternatively, see: Julius Evola, “Legionarismo Ascetico. Colloquio col capo delle ‘Guardie di Ferro’”, *Il Regime Fascista* 13, (March 22, 1938).

Today there have appeared in the world new political forms: fascism, Hitlerism, Legionarism. Both fascism and especially Hitlerism rely only on the nation. The nation taken not in a democratic sense, for fascism and Hitlerism no longer require votes. Votes over there, even when voting is resorted to, are not individual votes. There the people [*poporul*] are considered to be a unity, yet the people who are at the head of the state (the head of the people) are considered emanations from the people, they are like the nation. Their decision is presented as if it were the decision of the entire people. This is why it is called "totalitarian," for the individual is completely melted into the collective. Several things are chosen even over there through the vote, but the vote has multiple functions. [Let us assume] a bridge in a village is broken. The people get together and the village chooses those who should fix it. The decision is a good one. If, though, they brought us from here to the respective village and if they asked us who to pick to repair it, we would not know. The decision is viable when you are voting with consciousness of the cause. This means that things about which I have a knowledge of the cause I live through my own experience, I know them through my mind. In logic this is called concrete and abstract. The state is concrete for us, [but] for the peasants it is abstract. The vote functions even in the totalitarian state, but with different senses than in democracy. In the totalitarian state it is done only on the basis of the concrete. This is why there exists communal autonomy with them [...]. Thus in actual politics the collective decides, which is a being with its own laws, the individual subjecting itself to [it] and fulfilling its laws.

In economic life, in the epoch of the Renaissance and up to the world war, liberalism or capitalism was dominating, that is the understanding of the individual, his work and his battle. But today? In every state there appears the principle of command economy. The state mixes itself up, it does not give the individual the right to do whatever [the individual] wants. The state is the representative of collective interests, deciding the activity of the individual. Therefore, the collective dominates all. Everything is inverted. In the place of the individual, we have the nation. The individual (particular) interest moves per the collective one. The individual must fit himself into the laws of the collective, for otherwise we have an abnormal state, imbalanced, of sickness, in the collective.

May 21, 1938

Fourth Conference

Treason

1. Treason is breaking from the community. An individual defines himself through collectivity, community. No individual absolute truth exists except one: the truth of the community (of destiny, of love, etc.). To break yourself from the community means to no longer speak, feel, think, work with it, that is to no longer recognize the single absolute and natural truth, like the heretics. So, an abnormality.
2. The causes or intentions of the treason are not of interest, nor is its punishment, for the fact defines itself through itself. I am not saying to myself or to another, I am not imposing on myself or on another a certain attitude towards traitors, rather the fact in itself obligates me to break relations with an individual who no longer exists. To make contact with him means to betray the community, to betray your cause. Treason admits only judgments of existence (constitution) not of value.
3. Treason and conversion. The convert leaves one community, crossing into another, while the traitor remains isolated, suspended. Multiple traitors cannot form a community, for at the foundation of their community there does not stand something positive, but rather a negation.

The Nation

The nineteenth century is known as the century of nationalism—of the national state. The nation bases itself on the idea of the state and the citizen, because the state is not an organic reality, but is composed of the individuals that reside in a certain country, without having the same origins, having the same rights stabilized by the laws conferred by the state.

For example: the Constitution of 1923 considered the state a juridical existence. All residents that comprise the Romanian state are Romanians, despite the fact that not all of them are of Romanian [ethnic] origin, [and] the state still confers certain rights, contained in certain laws. The Constitution was, thus, a juridical law, not an organic one.

The twentieth century gives a different interpretation of the nation and of nationalism. Nationalism has an organic support: the people. *What is the people?* Any nation is outlined only relatively (the theory of knowledge),¹¹⁵ and it is the same with the people. The people is an organic reality: it lives, grows, dies. The people is like a dog that knows, sees, understands, but does not have consciousness of itself. The dog is subject in the face of the surrounding world, while man is subject and object, that is it has both knowledge and consciousness. Between man and dog, which are both organic realities, there exists still this fundamental difference.

When a people achieves consciousness of itself, it ceases to be a people and becomes nation, that is a spiritual reality, a self-consciousness hitherto unknown. A nation, as an organic and spiritual collective, has certain natural laws. These need to be realized in the optimum form, for one cannot descend to transaction in their realization. This realization of them in the optimum form is called ideal. A nation lives in time and space, in history, in eternity. The largest collective circle of which man makes up a part is the nation. Man lives in multiple collectivities: family, church, profession, etc. With us, the Orthodox, the nation and the church are superimposed. For the individual, then, that is in history, the nation is an absolute.

The nation's natural laws are imposed as they are, according to the state, not however we want. The truth regarding these laws is not with us—individuals—but in the collective consensus, in that which the nation thinks. For example: the unification of all Romanians was a natural law, not a desire of the people, [not] a political motive. God made the races,¹¹⁶ each with a single duty, to realize the natural law that God placed in them. The parable of the talents—for this is how God is realized, in history, in the eternity of now, not in that of the future—when there will be a flock and a shepherd, realizing the natural law placed by God, like any existence issued by God. Thus, a nation must realize itself in its own natural laws.

Each nation represents a kind of *irreducibility of existence*. For example: the crossing over from one people to another is possible, *but from one nation to another is impossible*. A nation can die, but it cannot change.

¹¹⁵ This parenthetical, which appears in the 1963 edition, may be a reference to Ionescu's 1925–26 course of the same name, "*Curs de Teorie a Cunoștinței*," (*Course on the Theory of Knowledge*).

¹¹⁶ Ionescu's use of *neamuri* (races) as opposed to *popoare* (peoples) is consistent with Victor Neuman's claim that *neam*, "acquired the value-ridden semantic significance of the German *das Volk*, though it would never reflect the complexity of the latter." See Victor Neumann, *Conceptuality Mystified: East-Central Europe Torn Between Ethnicism and Recognition of Multiple Identities* (Encyclopaedică Publishing House: Bucharest, 2004), 169.

The character of the nation: *offensive* and *imperialist* par excellence, that is an organism that cannot live besides in expansion, life, dynamism. It could be objected, what is the position in the face of other peoples? The irreducibility of the nation.

- a) It is not about me, a living nation in the offensive, but it is about them. Let them accommodate themselves however they can with me.
- b) We live in history, where there is sin, ceaseless battle, where we must win our right to exist, through our own might. (If the right to exist does not exist, we would be in that case angels and not subject to sin and in history).¹¹⁷

Here is the true understanding of the world in history. To put the problem otherwise is moronic, those who do so are either stupid or imbeciles. As follows, he who wants to realize God cannot do so except by conquering externally, by grabbing the other by the throat. Thus, the nation is dynamic; it is offensive and imperialist life. There does not exist, in other words, obedience and defensiveness in nationalism, for the races [*neamuri*] that put themselves in that kind of position fall into serfdom. An example: any formula of cultural life, political life, etc., is born in an organic way in a certain place, but it tends in a natural way to take into dominion places and nations that are not of its own.¹¹⁸

The Logical Conclusion: Any formula of life of a living nation, in expansion, has client states (tributaries), in a fatal manner. Client nations are, as such, hybrid forms. An example: the ancient hybrid culture that spread itself throughout Asia, Africa, (Southern) Italy, the Black Sea coast.

Thus, the imperialism of a nation is justified insofar as it realizes a new cultural formula, a new spiritual formula. In other words, imperialism is justified to the degree that it wills to realize God, that is to represent a new spiritual formula of life, not to realize the Devil: Mongolians, Russians, Turks, Austro-Hungarians, Jews, for the ideal of all other peoples opposed to our ideal is opposed to our God.

¹¹⁷ Compare with Mihail Sebastian's comments from Wednesday, November 27, 1935: "I should say a word or two, and even more, about Nae's inaugural lecture. This year he is giving a course on 'political logic.' His introduction was a little testament of the Iron Guard faith. He flattered the students with an electioneer's persistence, praising the 'political generations' as being in the right against the 'bookish generations,' whose great sin is that they are bookish. Politics means action, life, reality, contact with existence. Books are abstract. So you are right to do what you are doing; the truth is with you, rah, rah, rah! [...] poor Nae! How rapid is his descent..." Sebastian, *Journal*, 28 f.

¹¹⁸ In his entry from Saturday, March 30, 1935, Sebastian writes: "Nae's class yesterday was suffocating. Iron Guardism pure and simple—no nuances, no complications, no excuses. 'A state of combat is what we call politics. One party contains in its very beginning an obligation to wipe out all the others. The final conclusion is that 'internal politics' is an absurdity. There can only be a conquest or seizure of power and a merging of the party with the whole collective. From that moment all that exists is household management, since all possibility of reaction has been eliminated. A collective that contains within itself the idea of war is called a nation. A nation is defined by the friend-foe equation." And so on and so forth... // should have liked to tell him how monstrously he contradicted himself, but he was in too much of a hurry and left straight after the lecture. // His whole heresy stems from a wild and terrifying abstraction: the collective. It is colder, more insubstantial, more artificial than the abstraction of the individual.' He forgets that he is speaking of human beings; that they have passions and—whatever one may say—an instinct for freedom, and awareness of their own individual existence. // Even more depressing is the fact that all those theories stem from a vulgar political calculation. I am convinced that if he spoke like that yesterday—with so many political allusions and so painfully Hitler-like—it was because an Iron Guardist dressed in national costume was sitting in the front row of the audience. I could feel that he was speaking for him." Sebastian, *Journal*, 9 f.

Summarizing up to here, the three consequences: [1] through the nationalism of the twentieth century we understand the potentiating of existences in organic realities that have become national realities through self-consciousness; [2] these, in the absolute, tend towards the identification of the nation with God through the complete realization of their natural laws.

[3] Thus, the nationalism of the twentieth century starts from the people and crosses over to the nation¹¹⁹ in order to reach God.

The word of Christ is one in the heavens, on the line of perfection. Yet we humans, who live in history, understand it differently—so, relatively—according to the nation we are a part of, otherwise we would be angels. Therefore, each individual lives the word of God in his own way, in conformity with the absolute supreme collectivity in history, which is the nation.¹²⁰

In the Eastern [Orthodox] world there exists a more developed feeling of reality, a fact that distinguishes us from the West, where the feeling of generalities, of abstractions, dominates. Thus here, in the Orient, there already exist nuances in the living of God. If the nation realizes God on the Earth, then I am only interested in the God that I live, not [the one lived by] Hungarians, French, etc. In Naples, almost every street has its own Madonna, something belonging to the street; this points to the necessity of localizing, individualizing, nationalizing God.

Thus, I am indebted to God only through my nation. Or, as the nation is the most important collective circle in which man lives in history, I have but a single tribute to pay in life in the face of God: through the nation. If God is not only my God, if He is not a singular God, but is also the God of the Hungarians, French, etc., then I would no longer be Romanian and I would not be able to pay my tribute to God through my nation.

Regarding the Constitution

The Constitution presupposes a political regime. The constitutional regime: reciprocal obligations. Two factors: the people and the head of state, between which a relation (a fundamental pact) is stabilized. If it is at peace, the life from within a state is the expression of the will of both parts, and the two are in perfect accord.

This understanding is false, it is not obligatory. Through the constitution of something we understand the manner in which that thing is constituted and how it functions naturally. The word “constitution” expresses a state of natural fact, and this word can be applied when discussing a state.

The law can be understood in two ways:

1. The general manner in which certain things happen.
2. The general manner in which certain things should happen.

¹¹⁹ The 1963 edition includes a note from the editor stating that the original word here was *popor* but was changed to *națiune*. The change is necessary for logical consistency and reflects the translators’ choices regarding *neam* (race), *popor* (people), and *națiune* (nation).

¹²⁰ This passage is reminiscent of a similar passage in Codreanu’s memoirs: “We make a great distinction between the line we walk and the line of the Christian Church. The line of the Church is thousands of meters above us. It reaches perfection and the sublime. [...] We, through our action, through our thoughts and deeds, aspire to this line, we rise towards it, as much as the weight of the sins of our flesh and the damnation to which we were destined by original sin allow it.” *Pentru Legionari*, 420-421.

Thus, an understanding of constitution [i.e., makeup] and one of norms, the rules of happenings. That is, morality [*morală*] and right [*dreptul*] in the case of normative laws and the sciences of nature in the case of laws that constitute factual states. Are law-norms distinct existences or not? Right [*dreptul*] says that there exists an autonomy of norms. Morality says: there exists an autonomy of moral values. If law-norms exist as independent realities, then the constitution can also be an agreement.

The law of right [*drept*] constrains moral content [comp. *dreptate*]. But juridical norms [comp. *justiție*] are not autonomous realities, but are instead conclusions.¹²¹ Thus, there does not exist a science of right, nor a morality as science (but rather only as technique). For a science does not base itself on corollaries—on conclusions. Thus, only natural laws have an autonomous existence, not normative laws. Thus, the constitution, understood as a pact, is of two kinds: [1] an understanding of existence, of natural will, and [2] of how things should be.

With regard to us, when we create a constitution, we are doing something arbitrary, a form that does not fit with reality. For a constitution to be good, for it to be the expression of reality, you start neither from principle nor from norms, but you must study the normal form of the state.

For example: the constitution of the human body, anatomy and physiology. Thus, the constitution is a factual state of a certain race [*neam*] and not an agreement between different parts.¹²²

The constitution must not be, thus, a norm, but the totality of natural forms. Today the juridical mentality needs to be replaced with the organic mentality. From the juridical state to the organic state there exists just as large of a distance as between the Renaissance and today.

¹²¹ Compare to Ionescu's prior use of *dreptate* and *justiție*, respectively, in conference II.

¹²² Ionescu again uses *neam* (race) as opposed to *popor* (people) here.

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