



Sorin Antohi

Professor of History

Central European University, Budapest

Born in 1957 in Targu-Ocna, Romania;
Studied English, French, and History at the University of Iasi and at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris

PROJECT

Ethnic Ontologies: the Metaphysics of Nationalism

Scholars of nationalism have routinely discarded or disregarded authors and discourses that aim at the indigenization of universals such as space, time, and being. Typically entangled in speculations about history, language, culture, religion, and/or simply the cosmos, such complex efforts to construct what I call ethnic ontologies shape and constitute the core of both nationalist ideologies and high-cultural national canons. Two English-language books in progress (one a shorter version, *ad usum delphini*, of the other) will be completed during the year at Wiko. They will offer a theoretical model of ethnic ontology in a comparative, intercultural, global perspective and will be based on empirical research focusing on European (including Russian) examples, from Leo Frobenius and Martin Heidegger to Mircea Eliade and Lucian Blaga, Roman Jakobson, Piotr Savicky, and others.

Mapping Romania: Symbolic Geographies and Collective Identities

This book in progress, based on long-term empirical research and its associated theoretical model, will be completed at the Wiko. It is an English-language monograph on the "mapping" of Romania, or on the "invention" of Romania as a discursive category, over the last three centuries. The book will offer a critical synthesis of the international, interdisciplinary literature on symbolic geography, as well as an "application" on the imaginary or discursive "fabrication" of Romania.

Recommended Reading

Antohi, Sorin. *Imaginaire culturel et réalité politique dans la Roumanie moderne: Le stigmaté et l'utopie*. Paris and Montreal: L'Harmattan, 1999.

Antohi, Sorin and Vladimir Tismaneanu, eds. *Between Past and Future: The Revolutions of 1989 and Their Aftermath*. Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2000.

Antohi, Sorin. "Romania and the Balkans: From Geocultural Bovarism to Ethnic Ontology." *Transit-Virtuelles Forum* 21, 2002.

Logolatry in Ethnic Ontology. Radical Visions of National Language

Over the last ten years or so, while working on various other projects, I have been trying to develop a consistent theory of nationalism, with an emphasis on its intellectual core and origins.

Thus, in a series of book chapters, articles, and courses (one available online: "Romania and the Balkans: From Geocultural Bovarism to Ethnic Ontology", Tr@nsit-Virtuelles Forum, 21, 2002), I have argued that scholars in nationalism studies have routinely disregarded or discarded (as being reactionary, delirious, and/or potentially or directly murderous) authors and discourses that aim at the indigenization of universals such as space, time, and Being, and/or at the universalization of local categories or phenomena such as ethnic/national languages, historical experiences, events, etc. Authors - philosophers, poets, publicists, demagogues, etc. - of diverse backgrounds, great and small, canonized or forgotten, have contributed what I call ethnic ontologies, endowing their ethnies/ethnic nation with a specific Being (not merely national character), time (not merely national history), space (not just territory and landscape), and discourse (not just language). These categories constitute the interactive building blocks of an idiosyncratic, resilient Weltanschauung, usually placed at the core of both ideological-political nationalisms and high-cultural national canons. This deep connection, the occasional intellectual sophistication of such discourses (some requiring interpretive skills that are hard to master, rooted in fields ranging from linguistics to metaphysics, from theology to literary theory, from hermeneutics to human geography, etc.), and the ideological-political stigma associated with many of them, have made it difficult to address them effectively and to 'deconstruct' or at least 'unpack' them persuasively. One of my 2004-2005 Wiko projects is my second book covering this area, "Ethnic Ontologies: The Metaphysics of Nationalism", The first, based on a course I taught at Central European University (Budapest) in Fall 2003, is now ready as a full draft and will target a wider audience. Its provisional title is "Symbolic Foundations of Nationalism: From Sacred Geography to Ethnic Ontology".

My Tuesday Colloquium presentation is based on the chapters on language in these two books and deals with logolatry, i.e., the radical visions of ethnic/national language as original or/and perfect language. My talk will have the following sections: (a) a brief introduction to ethnic ontology; (b) a cursory review of the secondary literature dealing with original or/and perfect languages, aiming at a comprehensive perspective on logolatry; (c) a selection of highly entertaining case studies and examples; (d) an attempt to locate logolatry on the 'mental map' of radical nationalism.

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOWS' LIBRARY

Antohei, Sorin (Cluj, 2005)

Utopica : studii asupra imaginarului social

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=669192872>

Colectia Panopticon

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=669192872>

Antohei, Sorin (2000)

Habits of the mind : Europe's post-1989 symbolic geographies

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=670698075>

Antohei, Sorin (Budapest [u.a.], 2000)

Between past and future : the revolutions of 1989 and their aftermath ; [... conference, held in Budapest at the Central European University from 26 to 29 March 1999]

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=30225689X>

Antohei, Sorin (Paris [u.a.], 1999)

Imaginaire culturel et réalité politique dans la Roumanie moderne : Le stigmaté et l'utopie, essais

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=329309501>

Aujourd'hui l'Europe

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=329309501>