ROMANIAN IDENTITY AND CULTURAL POLITICS UNDER CEAUŞESCU: AN EXAMPLE FROM PHILOSOPHY[1]

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Studies of intellectuals, their relation to power, and their role in shaping social ideologies occupy an important place in twentieth-century social science (e.g., Mannheim 1955, Gramsci 1971, Shils 1958, Gouldner 1979, Foucault 1978 and 1980, Bourdieu 1975 and 1988, Konrád and Szelényi 1979, Bauman 1987). While earlier writings (such as Shils 1958 and Coser 1965) treated intellectual activity as "free-floating" and as relatively independent of political interest, the consensus of the 1970s and 1980s emphasizes, rather, that intellectual production is situated, embedded in political and social relations. Different theorists have different views concerning the political character of scientific findings and scholarly debates. Some emphasize the ways in which knowledge develops practices that contribute to subjection (e.g., Bauman 1987, Foucault 1978); others focus on the politics that occur within a field of intellectual activity and on how that field is tied to political and economic processes in the society as a whole (e.g., Abbott 1988, Bourdieu 1975, 1988). Still others examine how the discourses of intellectuals build up ideological premises that either construct or challenge social hegemonies (e.g., Simmonds-Duke 1987).

This essay, and the study of which it forms a part (Verdery 1991), follow the third of these routes. My objective is to investigate how intellectual activity in Romania under Ceauşescu contributed to reproducing an ideology in which "the nation" had pride of place. Much as had occurred in the period between the two World Wars, Romanian intellectuals debating with one another helped to strengthen a national ideology; their actions, and not simply Ceauşescu's much-invoked "manipulation of nationalism to promote legitimacy" (see, e.g., King 1980: 125; Schöpflin 1974: 93, 101; Tismaneanu 1989: 330-31), contributed to fortifying the idea of the nation and undermining the discourse of Marxism-Leninism on which Romania's socialist system supposedly rested. Although this essay does not detail the system-enhancing or system-destroying consequences of such an ideological process, the implications for the Ceauşescu regime of the intellectual arguments described below are fairly apparent. Further evidence of their negative effects for the regime is the fact that in the wake of its collapse, persons described in these pages entered into positions of political influence.

In discussing how intellectual debates constructed a national ideology, I use the term "ideology" in a particular sense. I do not employ the generally pejorative meaning that has

clung to the word since its early days, and in particular I intend neither the "false consciousness" nor the "propaganda" meanings common to fundamentalists of Marxist or sovietological persuasion. Ideological processes are not just a form of blinding, and they are not well exemplified by their official Soviet version (in Fehér's words, "Soviet ideology is not an ideology but a dogma" [Fehér et al. 1983: 188]). Nor do I understand this concept as referring simply to a system of thought, or to ideas or beliefs held. Rather, it means the systemically structured processes and the experienced social relations through which human subjectivities are constituted and through which humans act upon the world. Ideologies--and I employ the plural because there are always more than one, forming ideological and discursive fields--are beliefs or ideas materialized in action, often in political conflict (for which ideology constitutes an arena), and often in discursive form.[2]

To the extent that "ideologies" thus conceived shape consciousness, the emphasis is upon their doing so through <u>experience and action within</u> social relations, rather than through <u>thinking or hearing about</u> such relations. To ask whether ideology "reflects" social and economic relations is less useful than to see it as a means for enforcing and contesting them. Ideological processes are contests in which alternative conceptions of the world enter into conflict and, through their encounter, acceptance of or resistance to the existing order of domination is furthered. In talking of ideology that is national, I refer to discursive struggles involving the concept of "the nation" or "the Romanian people." Ideologies thus understood are the result, then, not of agreement and repetition but of <u>disagreement</u> and <u>argument</u>. Disagreements and debates are fundamental to producing ideology because arguments rarely make explicit all the premises underlying them. Unarticulated premises are ideological precisely because, remaining unstated, they go unquestioned, and in this way they shape discourse, thought, and practice. To investigate the formation and reproduction of ideology, then, I do not concentrate on <u>central</u> pronouncements, on what regime spokesmen continually reiterate, but on challenges raised in one quarter and answered in another.

The most important feature of the context in which people were likely to be arguing, in Romania under Ceauşescu, was an ongoing struggle for a greater share in centrally allocated resources. The organization of Romania's socialist society was such that all producers of intellectual and cultural values had to compete for an advantageous position with respect to the political center and what it defined as valid cultural activity, worthy of state support. Competitors phrased their bids for more resources by claiming to represent the cultural values best suited, in their view, to their nation: the "true" values for Romania. To make a claim of this kind entailed, of course, an implicit or explicit definition of national identity, without

which one could have no prescription for what would serve Romanians best. I call such cultural competitions contests for cultural representativeness.

Disputes among representatives of different cultural and (by this argument) national values could be found in nearly all spheres of intellectual endeavor in Romania. I discuss here a development that took place in philosophy in the 1980s, centering around a group I call the "Noica School." This "school" by no means encompassed all that was happening in Romanian philosophy at the time; indeed, it was at best marginal to the central directions of the discipline. Its members were developing an important intellectual and political program, however, and were doing so in contest with other groups, some of them equally marginal in a disciplinary sense. The example is significant because it shows how a marginal group could raise a fundamental challenge to power and because it illustrates how this occurred through argumentative dialogue internal to such specialist fields as philosophy and literary criticism.

The activities of the "Noica School" and the arguments in which they engaged were much broader than will be covered here (see Verdery 1991: chapter 7). To give a sense of the "politics of culture" in which they participated, and of intellectual endeavor in Ceauşescu's Romania more generally, I describe some of their views in juxtaposition to one of the responses offered them. This response came from a group I call "ethnophilosophers."[3] Although some analysts (not to mention Romanian philosophers!) might object that the "ethnophilosophers" are inappropriately paired with the "Noica School" because the intellectual agenda of the latter was so much more serious than of the former, I insist on this pairing because seriousness of content was not always relevant to the bureaucrats dispensing support for cultural activity in Romania. The two groups are eminently comparable because both were struggling for a better place in Romania's cultural life and can thereby show how such competition proceeded, and because a language of national identity figured centrally even if not always openly in the discourse of both groups. Thus, their contests over ideas were simultaneously contests for state support and vehicles for constructing national ideology.

I should add one other preliminary comment about contests in Romanian philosophy. Arguments over the proper definition of Romanian philosophy and its relation to national identity and national values were possible only because during the 1960s the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party ceased to rely primarily on Marxism for its legitimation and began to appeal to national values as well. This meant that philosophy--which until then had been uniformly defined as Marxist philosophy, with no other definitions permitted--could now broaden its self-definition. Alternative images of philosophy could emerge and

fight it out, and these did not have to restrict themselves to variants of a Marxist philosophy but could (and did) include aspects of the national character or national traditions among the themes they might treat. To say that Marxist philosophy was dethroned from its central legitimating role in Romania in the 1960s is not to say that persons specializing in materialist philosophy were tossed out of university positions and institutes of philosophy, for such was not the case. It is to say, however, that philosophy was opened to a pluralization of the strategies through which people could hope to achieve eventual high status in their field. That pluralization was the condition for the emergence of Noica's School onto Romania's cultural stage.

THE PARTICIPANTS

The philosophical and literary arguments to be discussed below require a brief description of their dramatis personae. These include: philosopher Constantin Noica; his immediate disciples, forming the Noica School; a large circle of outsiders (literary critics, sociologists, etc.) interested in Romanian culture and in the possible contributions of Noica's group to it; a group of critics and others hostile to Noica's followers, this group included the "ethnophilosophers"; and other professional philosophers, who regarded Noica and his school with varying degrees of enthusiasm from a largely professional point of view. This fourth group will not appear in my discussion, even though it was an important part of this environment. Most significantly, it was they who largely monopolized institutional positions in philosophy--university posts, positions in research institutes, editorships of the major journals--forming, in a sense, the group to whose position both Noicans and ethnophilosophers aspired, marginal as these were to the established organization of philosophy.[4]

Constantin Noica, who died in 1987 (in the midst of the controversy in which his followers had become embroiled) was a philosopher who had been trained in the 1930s in Romania, France, and Germany. Two aspects of his past created major problems for his integration into Romanian intellectual life after the communists came to power: he had come from a well-to-do land-owning family, and he had had a brief association with the fascists of the interwar years. In addition, the kind of philosophy he pursued (influenced by the ancient Greeks, Hegel, and Heidegger) was antithetical to the Marxist philosophy enthroned by the Communist Party in 1948. Noica paid for these aspects of his past with a number of years of imprisonment and forced domicile, which ended only in 1964. He then joined a research center, the Center for Logic, from which he retired with a pension in the early 1970s. At that point, having spent his professional life without students, he began to tutor a few young philosophers he had encountered along the way.

Noica also began publishing philosophical works: not the metaphysical and ontological treatises of before but works that expressly linked philosophical questions with national identity (e.g., Noica 1978, 1987). I refer to these works--which bore such titles as "Romanian Ways of Speaking Philosophically" and "The Romanian Sentiment of Being"--as his "national writings." Through them he found it possible to express thoughts of a metaphysical nature that he would have had trouble publishing in another form; but they also gained him the admiration of people interested in developing a specifically national philosophy: those I call the "ethnophilosophers." Their views, as it happened, coincided rather closely with those of the Communist Party leadership. Because of this, Noica's relation to the regime in power was highly ambivalent, a fact that made him an object of contention among groups quite variously situated on Romania's cultural scene.

Among the young philosophers to enter Noica's tutelage were a few who formed the nucleus of what came to be called "the Noica School." The most important of them were Gabriel Liiceanu and Andrei Pleşu.[5] Particularly significant in their relations with Noica was the way they worked with him: in individualized tutorial relations, a kind of apprenticeship, that was totally different from the training offered in the formal institutions of philosophical learning in Romania. The group included a number of others, not all of whom were fully sympathetic to Noica or considered themselves his followers but who engaged in intense discussions with the core disciples. To call these people "Noicans" is something of a misnomer, but the term accurately defines a group from whose close interaction emerged something of major significance.[6] Whether or not they agreed with Noica is less relevant than the fact that he and his influence had sparked the relations among them.

The activities and writings of the people who congregated around Noica drew the attention of a sizable number of Romanian intellectuals, journalists, Party personnel active in the cultural sphere, and others. They tended to break down into two camps, as is evident in published reviews: those who were impressed with the thoughts and writings of the "School," and those who rejected the claims of the Noicans to cultural leadership but were nonetheless enthusiastic about Noica himself. The latter, who include those I refer to as "ethnophilosophers," formed part of a larger group in Romanian cultural life engaged in promoting what they perceived to be truly autochthonous values, the cultural values of the Romanian people (hence the prefix "ethno"), in which imitations and borrowings from the West would have little place. "Ethnophilosophers" were to be found in various institutions--the Institute of Philosophy, the Ştefan Gheorghiu Party Academy, etc.--in which they were not, either in individual or in institutional terms, advantageously positioned with respect to the philosophical enterprise.[7]

How did marginal Constantin Noica become central to disputes within the cultural field in the 1980s? How did this relatively arcane thinker and his tiny school become something of an intellectual household word? Aside from his "national writings" of the 1970s, which gained him some notoriety, the principal impetus for the 1980s contest around Noica was two books published in 1983 and 1987, Jurnalul de la Paltinii (Journal from Paltinii) and Epistolar (Letters); the first was written and the second edited by Gabriel Liiceanu, a philosopher in his mid 40s and an ardent follower of Noica.[8] The books harvested a bumper crop of reviews, commentary, denunciations, and other public notice, which brought them to the attention of a wide educated public.

Liiceanu presents his Journal from Paltinis as the diary he kept between March 1977 and July 1981, recording his encounters with Noica and other "disciples" at Noica's mountaintop cabin in Paltiniş. The discussions, anecdotes, and even Liiceanu's eventually learning to disagree with his mentor inform the book's expressed aim: to illustrate a "paideic model" in culture, the model provided by Noica, who knew not only how to instill cultural values in the absence of any institutional base or formal resources but also how to liberate his followers from his tutelage. The Journal was followed four years later by Letters, consisting of correspondence that the Journal's publication had provoked among Noica, his immediate disciples, several of their close associates, and a few others.

Both books work some important effects upon the reader. For one thing, both but especially the Journal create a strong sense of Liiceanu as authoritative in speaking for and about his mentor. The affection and intellectual intimacy radiating from these pages give him a fair claim to monopoly over Noica. Second, both make philosophizing very accessible, by presenting it through ordinary conversation. Even though the ultimate philosophical stakes of the issues under discussion are often invisible to the general reader, as conversations they not only are accessible but convey the impression that deep philosophical matters can be discussed similarly to the health of one's friends or a quarrel with one's neighbor. Third, despite this impression of accessibility, there is nonetheless a great deal of talk about exclusions: what is and what is not a worthwhile activity, who is or is not a good philosopher or a cultured person, and so forth. This exclusionary talk reveals the contest for representativeness in which the books were engaged: a contest with other philosophers and related disciplines to define the "true" philosophy that would best represent Romanians' cultural values and serve their philosophical needs.

These two books, together with others by important Noicans, a large number of reviews, conversations with Noicans and other

intellectuals, and additional publications in the Romanian cultural press of the 1980s, form the "data" for the discussion to follow.[9] In analyzing these data, I will pay particular attention to how people talked and what issues they raised. I will not ask which position was "correct" or who was doing "real" (or the "best") philosophy, for those concerns of the participants are incidental to my purposes. I attend, rather, to the stakes of the competition and the way in which notions of Romanian identity became entangled in it.

THE CONTEST FOR REPRESENTATIVENESS

From these sources of data it soon becomes apparent that there was a struggle to "possess" Noica--to try to offer the definitive account of his philosophical tasks and the importance of his work for Romanian culture--along with a struggle to define what Romanian culture should be, and what place philosophy should have in it. Reading these texts, one sees behind them such questions as: How is philosophy in Romania to be defined? Are ethnic questions an obstacle to it, an aid, a <u>sine qua non</u>? Is proper treatment of the concepts of Marxism necessary to good philosophy? Different answers to these questions ramify into several new issues. Which past writings--past accumulations of culture and values--should be incorporated into philosophy in Romania, and which are irrelevant? What behaviors, what mechanisms of transmission, are appropriate for the devotee of philosophy in Romania? In what institutions is philosophy best created and protected? These questions received a variety of answers, and the answers reflect different notions of value underlying different claims that one or another program best represents both Romanian philosophy and Romanian culture more broadly. The different answers show Noicans and ethnophilosophers engaged in a largely hostile dialogue about the definition of philosophy and culture; from it we can understand something about what each of them stood for and, beyond this, something about the larger field of culture in its relation to politics. I will outline their different answers to these questions, emphasizing what sorts of accumulated capital were seen as the "stock" upon which philosophy should draw and where this stock was believed to reside (in print, in souls); what raw materials were seen as necessary for good philosophical production; and how each side defined competence in philosophy.

The philosophy advocated by Noica's followers--and, as they presented him, by Noica himself--would be built upon imported (Western) philosophical values, those of the great tradition of philosophical thought that originated in Ancient Greece and culminated in modern European, especially German, philosophy. These "imported" values would provide both raw material (in the form of <u>questions</u>) for speculation and tools for processing that material, the remaining tools and raw material coming from one's individual talents ("genius"). Noica's pronouncements and his

actual philosophic output made it clear that for him, the foundation of philosophy could not be built on any "inheritance" but on that of Ancient Greek and more recent European philosophy. For Noica and his followers, the "means of philosophical production" were the stocks of philosophical thought that professional philosophers had accumulated over millennia of speculation, largely in a written tradition: an immense stock of cultural values. This immense stock must in some sense be reappropriated anew by anyone claiming title to the discipline: one cannot draw upon it automatically through membership in a community--by "being Romanian," for example--but must undergo an arduous and prolonged apprenticeship to the "high cultural" values of world philosophy. Although it was true that Noica (unlike his followers) also found philosophically relevant "raw materials" in Romanian traditions, he most certainly did not regard this as sufficient basis for philosophical creation, which he saw as possible only within a philosophical discipline of speculative thought established above all by the Greeks and the Germans.

Noicans defined "true" philosophy not just by placing it in a genealogy of written professional texts but also by delimiting it from science, the arts, and literary criticism, that is, by its position in a larger field of academic and expert specializations, rather than by its relation to national matters. Furthermore, they insisted on stringent and specialist standards of professional competence, criticizing the work of others (such as certain Romanian translators of Heidegger) for giving a falsified image of the original because of their inadequate understanding of its philosophical content (see, e.g., Kleininger and Liiceanu 1987). Competence, for them, was therefore defined through professional or expert claims that amounted to a blatant apology for professional expert status as understood in the West. Noicans presented an image of philosophy and of Romanian culture, then, that was European above all, that tied Romanian identity to "universal" European values.

In contrast to the Noican view of philosophy was the ethnophilosophers' view that contrary to the Noicans' denials, a major philosophy could be built up using the national language and spirit as its "raw material." As ethnophilosophers saw it, national values--far from being irrelevant or an obstacle to philosophy, as Noica's followers (if not Noica) would argue--could give rise to model philosophical works (see Stroe 1984, Macoviciuc 1986, Coja 1984). Ethnophilosophers objected to importing values from abroad, preferring indigenous stocks as the basis for Romanian philosophical production. A perhaps extreme example of the result was their interest in Geto-Dacian philosophy (that is, the presumed philosophical precepts of one of the peoples seen as ancestral to present-day Romanians) (see Vetişanu 1982). Related to this was their attention to the unwritten philosophical wisdom of the Romanian people, as evident

in proverbs ("the first philosophy of the Romanians"), for example (Calendar 1988, Iancu 1988). Those who wrote on these subjects were careful to explain what characteristics a philosophy ought to have: a logical structure, a generalizing character, an ontological universe and a theoretical content, the emission of judgments, and the objective of finding general truth. That is, they display an explicit intention of defining what philosophy is. They also emphasize an unwritten accumulation of popular (rather than learned) philosophical wisdom, acquired simply by being born into the Romanian people (or so one gathers, since the matter is not spelled out). That is, their sort of philosophy would require much less individualized acquisition through patient study than in the Noicans' view. Here is an illustrative passage from an ethnophilosopher:

> The archaic form of Romanian philosophy is to be identified with unwritten philosophy. It is an implicit philosophy, unsystematic, a state of the spirit, a spiritual attitude, a protophilosophy. Constantin Noica refers to this wisdom as the beginning of knowledge, as the prehistory of philosophy. Elements of unwritten philosophy have existed in Romanian culture ever since the Romanian people and its spirituality were formed, [and they owe much to] the autochthonous vein of Geto-Dacian spirituality. [Thus,] Romanian philosophy did not spring up belatedly [that is, in reaction to Western imports], [but has been] a perennial value of Romanian spirituality" (Iancu 1988; original emphases).

In this ethnophilosophical definition of philosophy, the prior accumulations upon which philosophy should draw are first and foremost the reservoirs of Romanian spirituality, as much as or more than other philosophical writings. One article specified that what is accumulated--literally, amassed as treasure [tezaurizat]--in popular philosophy is life experience, rather than other people's writings or thoughts (Calendar 1988). Insofar as written philosophy was important to the ethnophilosophers, it would be exclusively that of certain twentieth-century Romanian philosophers sometimes "denigrated" by the "importers of European values" (that is, the Noicans) (see Macoviciuc 1986). Thus, Romanian philosophy would be built not on the learning embodied in other (Western) philosophy but on some alternative kind of symbolic capital; perhaps one might call it racial. As against the Noicans' European definition of Romanian culture and identity, then, the ethnophilosophers offered a definition that was indigenist.

The opponents perceived by these writers were not limited to Noicans, however, but included adherents to other philosophies as well. Noicans and Marxist philosophers alike were accused of

importing foreign values and dismissing the greats of indigenous philosophy:

> In spite of [the admiration of Plato and Ovid for it], Geto-Dacian philosophy has been neither recognized nor included--even in its most general lines--in our dictionaries and encyclopedias. It was not even in the History of Romanian Philosophy.... What was the reasoning offered by our researchers, specializing in every kind of philosophy except that of our country? "We have no texts"; "those are only statements about the philosophy of [Geto-Dacian priest] Zamolxe"; "the Geto-Dacian vision of the world contains no independent concepts."... The spiritual infirmity of these would-be specialists is apparent from their very negations. After all, we have no texts from Socrates either, only Plato's statements about him, yet his philosophy is in the encyclopedias" (Vetişanu 1982ii).

These ethnophilosophers were waging war against all the persons entrenched in university departments and institutes, who monopolized the writing of dictionaries and encyclopedias and who defended a capital that was written, ignoring the important sphere of orality. The targets of this ethnophilosophical sniping were not the Noicans, who had equally little institutional clout, but those who manned the central fortresses of the discipline. It is clear that for ethnophilosophers, these people lacked elementary philosophical competence, which ethnophilosophy defined as above all a spiritual qualification (rather than an expert one).

None of this seems outrageous from a certain anthropological point of view, to which the notion of an "ethnophilosophy" resting on oral and experiential foundations is quite congenial. Parallel ideas are found even in some writing in social theory--one thinks of Gramsci's emphasis on "common sense" as the philosophy of the masses oppressed by the hegemonic ideologies professional philosophers have created. What makes these examples significant for present purposes is their express claims for a certain kind of philosophy, carefully defined as such and resting on certain kinds of accumulation. Precisely by virtue of their explicit invocation of someone like Noica and challenge of the way philosophy was defined in manuals, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, these claims entered into a contest to define the field, to present their view of it as the most representative of Romanian values.

Noicans and ethnophilosophers came to the contest for representativeness with proposals that privileged certain values and therefore would shift resources toward the particular margin they occupied. If we inspect the proposals and the strategies each implied, we can see better the field of values within which

Romanian culture was being produced, for a proposal, a strategy to acquire resources, could not be credible unless it appealed to values that resonated at least to some extent with values championed by groups closer to the center. Otherwise, the claims would fall completely flat. It was precisely the furor raised by Noica's School that suggests credible activity at the margins of central values, activity that mobilized the opposition of others who were also marginal and hoped to move up.

One way to inspect someone's proposed strategy is to ask how the participants envisioned "pollution" in the cultural world, and what this implied in the way of purifying activity. For both Noica and his followers, "The territory of culture must be protected only from unwarranted ambitions, from the ignorance of the ignorant, and from imposture." That is, the chief source of pollution was ignorance, incompetence, and cultural imposture, which means that purification came from cultivating professional competence and disseminating its results: from a concern with truth. For ethnophilosophers, pollution came not from incompetence but from external borrowing and imitation, the introduction of foreign cultural matter, and the purifiers would be "[t]hose who do not chase after imported universalist models, those who use their own heads to think." The two positions legitimated, respectively, an intellectual strategy in which accumulation of knowledge and expertise took pride of place, permitting a defense of truth, and a protectionist strategy aimed at reducing foreign competition for an internal symbolic market and at defending cultural self-sufficiency. Each strategy had a clear attitude toward the standard preferred by the others. The Noicans outright rejected cultural autarchy, regarding imports as integral to professional competence and to local production; their opponents viewed claims to professional competence with skepticism, especially when borrowing underlay them, and supported a competence that was essentially innate in the ethnic collectivity and its "spirit."

Each of these alternatives played upon values supported by one or another group more centrally situated in either the political apparatus or cultural institutions. Ethnophilosophers, lacking control over professional institutions (the institutes and university departments of philosophy) compensated by seeking an accommodation with the nationalism and autarchic policies of the Romanian Party leadership. For none of these people was "professional competence" truly a significant value. Noica and his followers, on the other hand, had no grounds for claiming a place in Romanian culture except for expertise (and creation based upon it). These remained credible values only because at the heart of dialectical materialism as a science of society lies a strong affirmation of reason, knowledge, and expert status. In appeals to reason and competence, Noica and materialism found common ground: for example, Noica willingly recommended publication of a treatise written by a materialist philosopher,

because of its excellence and originality--in short, its philosophical competence. The "official" philosophy shared more with Noicans than with ethnophilosophers, who therefore became alarmed at the credible threat Noicism posed. After all, Marxist philosophy and Noica shared a genealogy from the Greeks up through Kant and Hegel, a genealogy the others intended to declare philosophically irrelevant.

It is important to recognize, however, just how explicit a claim the Noicans were laying to a specific kind of social space, with their references to competence and expert status. Zygmunt Bauman has argued that a characteristic of the modern world is the erosion of intellectuals' claims to expert status, as the market increasingly takes over as a site of judgments, of authority, and of the formation of tastes; this means that states no longer require the "legislating" functions of intellectuals (Bauman 1987: 159, 168). In the present example, expert authority was being eroded not by the market but by institutionalizing a portion of "expertise" in the form of Party rule and by seeking to absorb all other intellectual platforms into the formal institutions the Party permitted. The efforts of Constantin Noica, together with persons in other fields in which expert status was believed to be equally under threat, amounted to a poignant attempt to reconstruct an authority for experts. It was the effort of an intelligentsia excluded from power and not yet resigned to that fact.

An additional element of the struggle for representativeness among different and contending philosophies centered on the Noicans' claims that Noica's method of teaching constituted an exemplary paideic experience. Both in the preface to his Journal and in its subtitle (A Paideic Model in Humanist Culture), Liiceanu announced that he intended it to offer a model of cultural training that was exemplary. Such wording makes this claim the heavy artillery of a battle as to whose definition best represented "culture." The stakes in this battle involved the subject of cultural reproduction: who would control the processes by which culture was transmitted to the next generation, and in what institutions would this occur. The struggle to represent "culture" now became a matter of seeking to monopolize or direct its reproduction through time. Would reproduction take place within or outside the instances that were officially authorized?

Tied to this was a major element of Noica's cultural campaign, not yet mentioned: his search for twenty-two geniuses:

> I have often been asked to convince Eliade to return for a visit. The idea then came to me to tell those who made this request that we don't need to bring Eliade back, because in fact we have him here already, and not just one of him but twenty-two times over. If

> there are 22 million Romanians today, then one young person in a million probably has genius. But for these 22 geniuses we must have trainers (Liiceanu 1983: 172).

With this began Noica's campaign to "harvest future geniuses." He appealed to local authorities to employ in fictive jobs the especially gifted young people he identified, just as was done with top athletes, so that they might perfect their capacity for cultural performance. This quest of Noica's and his "paideic model" constituted a direct assault on the formal institutions of cultural transmission.

The "paideic model" was the only aspect of Noica's program to which the ethnophilosophers took exception. They strove to attribute it to his disciples, saying that Noica had intended to make culture accessible to a wider audience but the disciples had produced a paideia that was "elitist." They asked what, if anything, in the disciples' paideic experience with Noica could be considered exemplary (e.g, Geana 1986: 96), or they rejected the whole idea that a paideic experience had occurred at all, as can be seen in reviews such as the following:

> [Noica] meditates and behaves like a philosopher (I refer to his writings), but [Liiceanu behaves] unphilosophically.... Liiceanu missed the lesson that he could have learned from Noica: the lesson of dialectics. The relation of teacher and disciple would then have justified itself. Such a relation is not present here (Stroe 1984; emphases added).

Or again: "This Journal has not convinced us that there occurred in Paltiniţi an encounter between teacher and disciple" (Stroe 1984).

One of the most frequently used devices for challenging the "paideic model" was a rhetorical separation of Noica's person/life from his work/writings. The chief Noicans argued that Noica's existence, his person, and his biography, were more important than the content of his work. One of them disagreed, for example, with Noica's claim that he had no biography beyond that found in his books:

> [T]hose who believe this--and Noica in the first place --are mistaken.... Circumstances in today's Romania are such that what counts is not Noica's opus but more importantly his simple existence. His 'role' is more significant than his 'philosophy.' It might emerge eventually that his whole speculative apparatus, with his Romanian etymologies...will prove of secondary or strictly 'historical' importance, compared with the memory of his presence, salutary for several generations of Romanian intellectuals trapped by the

> consequences of a tragic formative void.... What is exemplary is precisely Noica's biography. His opus is merely important in a certain academic sense.... (Pleşu 1985: original emphases).

This comment underscores the experience of cultural transmission that Noica offered his followers, an experience they played up by purposely downgrading his work, with its "Romanian etymologies." The emphases of their opponents were, of course, precisely the reverse:

> The path toward Noica's thought does not go to Paltiniş [that is, the location of the paideic experience] but through his writings. To go to Paltiniş is to become mired in the anecdotal and the accidental. The true path is rather the path of the concept in its dialectical purity (Stroe 1984).

This critic questioned Noica's personalized model for transmitting culture, so unlike the forms of public education. By putting Noica's biography in parentheses, he also suppressed Noica's fascist past, embarrassing to the position that critics such as he had staked out on the ideological terrain. For these people, it was not Noica's life but the national content of his writings that counted the most.

The reservations of these ethnophilosophers against Noica's paideia help to confirm a suspicion that they were speaking from a position close to the political apparatus and in defense of its means. Although Noica failed to distance himself from power verbally, at the level of practices his paideia was utterly opposed to the regime of practices implemented by the authorities. The antithesis to power lay not just in the obvious fact that Noica's promotion of cultural values and grounds of cultural accumulation was at odds with the autarchy and opposition to Western "imports" so common in Ceauşescu's speeches. Nor was it merely in Noica's effort to foster thinking and the capacity for independent thought, instead of rote memorization and mechanical repetition; disagreement instead of unanimity; a "standard of living" defined in spiritual rather than material terms. Noica's "school"--his way of transmitting cultural values--instituted a wholly different relation of authority: a non-hierarchical distribution of speaking and listening roles, individualized rather than mass processing of students, a subjection to authority that was willed, voluntary, rather than enforced.[10] One reviewer observed that among the most striking qualities of Liiceanu's discipleship was his way of relating to authority on the basis of love (Breban 1988: 62). This "school" contained none of the panoply of power-serving disciplinary procedures that Foucault (1978) has revealed in all the official forms of education. Instead of the discipline of a small classroom arranged in a grid, in which the body of the

pupil is subjected to hours of obedient and docile immobility, the practices of Noica's "school" were open and peripatetic. Mentor and disciple moved freely between the undifferentiated space of Noica's room and the hills outside; climbing their slopes was the body's accompaniment to the mind's ascent into thought. The ethnophilosophers, with their tendency to cozy up to power, could not have been blind to these implications, nor could they be expected to demonstrate great interest in this alternative way of transmitting culture. But because they wished to present themselves as Noica's defenders, they stopped short of overtly criticizing these elements of his program: they limited themselves to denying that the Noicans had participated in a special learning experience with Noica, and to focusing the spotlight away from his life and toward his work.

THE CONTEST FOR AUDIENCES AND THE OPPOSITION TO POWER

So far I have discussed the strategies through which Noicans and ethnophilosophers competed for a better position in the field of culture by presenting themselves as the champions of values suited to Romanian identity. I have also suggested that the question of "paideia" shows their rather different relationship to the centers of power. I turn now to another point, which concerns the relations of intellectuals promoting certain values to the wider publics that might orient to them. I suggest that here, as well as in the matter of "representativeness," Noicans competed with others for cultural audiences.

Although several Noicans acknowledged in conversation that their writings consciously aimed to insulate Noica from manipulation by people such as the ethnophilosophers, Liiceanu offered elsewhere a somewhat different account of his motives for publishing his two books. He gave three reasons: first, to publicize Noica's paideic model; second, to offer a different form of communication, one of sincerity and openness in which "truths" were told and feelings clearly expressed, in place of the duplicity and ambiguity so characteristic of communications in socialist Romania; and third, to popularize philosophy and make its issues accessible to a wider public, rather than allowing it to seem simply an erudite matter for a few specialists. All three of these--concern with how to teach, with how to communicate, and with broadening the popular base--were part of what I call the formation of a <u>cognizant public</u>. By this I mean efforts on the part of an elite to build an audience that recognizes and supports the definitions of value upon which that elite group claims status.

Attention to forming a cognizant public--in the sphere of culture or creation, for instance--increases the chance that publics will know enough to <u>acknowledge</u> a given claim to creativity or professional competence, and will grant their attention to this claim in preference to someone else's.

Liiceanu's reasons for publishing his books show that he sought to do this in three ways. First, the "paideic model," as already shown, employs mechanisms for reproducing culture and values that were not those of political authority. Second, the attempt at greater communicative "directness" and "sincerity" expanded the audience to whom a communication would be comprehensible, for as anyone knows who has tried to decipher a communication in Aesopic language or specialist jargon, such enciphered messages presuppose a community of shared knowledge so esoteric that normally educated censors or readers do not recognize what is significant. Thus, any retreat from Aesopianism or specialist jargon would open a message to more hearers. Third, the effort to popularize philosophy forms an audience in the most obvious way. It was an effort pursued not just by writing more accessible "philosophy" books but also by translating into Romanian major works of Western philosophers, such as Plato, Heidegger, and Hegel. The translators spoke of their work as if the issue was to create not instruments for philosophical production but means of consumption--to form public tastes (generally in a pro-Western direction). Translations, therefore, were part of creating a larger public for culture, a sort of raising of the spiritual standard of living, just as the state claimed to raise the material standard of living.

The Noicans' concern with raising the spiritual standard of living received its most eloquent formulation in a 1985 essay by Liiceanu entitled "Philosophy and the feminine paradigm of the listener," a skillful effort to defend and insulate Noica against accusations and usurpations from various quarters. The essay points to Noica's profoundly "democratizing" impulse, most visible in his introduction into philosophical writing of an epic principle: the idea that any thought worth pursuing must be narratable. An excellent example of this was Noica's interpretation of Hegel's phenomenology (Stories about Man), whose chapter headings resembled those of an epic adventure (e.g., "The unusual accidents of consciousness," "The extraordinary adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym," or "The carnival of vanities"). Noica, writes Liiceanu, reframed the structures of speculation by reformulating them in an epic register. The effect of this was to reposition philosophy from the rostrum of the lecture hall to the fireplace. Liiceanu then places Noica's epic principle within the line of philosophical writing that began with Plato, whose dialogue form differentiated minimally between the expertise of teacher and listener; to Aristotle, who hierarchized the relation; and on to Hegel, whose books "only God" could understand. With each step, writes Liiceanu, philosophy lost part of its audience. I would add that with each step, cognizant publics were narrowed who might respond to the divergent claims of rival philosophers.

Liiceanu then suggests that in such a context, any modification of the form in which philosophy is communicated will

necessarily affect its audience. Any reintegration of philosophy with literature or art, in particular, reestablishes lost lines of communication, restoring the possibility that philosophy might be perceived not as an arcane specialty but as something that treats the problems of everyone. Much of Noica's writing addressed readers directly, in a colloquial style, sometimes in the form of letters, using the second person singular (see Noica 1986)[11], that brought them into the text and presented its problems as their own. Liiceanu's own books were constructed in a similarly inviting way, breaking down the barriers between a text and its readers to engage them in a direct manner.

Why was this preoccupation with the audience significant? Partly, of course, to build the "cognizant public" that would recognize the authority and value of those who had built it. The Noicans aimed to present as everyone's concern a set of values that were their particular concern, and to broaden the public that would look to them for solutions. But the formation of audiences had greater import than simply this, above all in the field of philosophy. While the de facto legitimation of Party rule had shifted to nationalism, its de jure legitimation--and what linked Romanian socialism to the international socialist community, without which the Romanian Communist Party would not have remained in power so long--still came from the officialized version of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. No socialist state could wholly disown its heritage in the European philosophical tradition from which the Noica School also derived. Any group of thinkers who claimed descent from the genealogy running from Plato through Hegel, which is also the genealogy of Marxism, and who resuscitated serious creative use of that tradition, was a threat to the foundations of Party rule. Intrinsic to Marx's heritage, for example, are the dialogues of Plato, which Noica managed to publish. They inquire into the nature of the ideal society from a position that regards the actual society of their day as not measuring up to that ideal. To this implicit subversive premise of Plato's dialogues--a critique of the forms of the present--all potential Romanian readers were positively disposed. One had only to get their attention, to bring them into the audience.

The specific content of the message these philosophers hoped to offer to such an audience emerged more or less covertly in their writings, as well as from the way Liiceanu's Letters juxtaposed its participants' correspondence and the issues their letters raised. The message was, in brief, a plea for pluralism and for political-moral engagement. The plea for pluralism constituted a culturally-based strategy for opposing the centralization imposed by Party rule. The plea for engagement came from an insistence that cultural action be ethically or morally mediated, which amounted to a severe critique of Noica's public conduct: withdrawal from public life. This refusal of public ethics, claimed the Noicans, was tantamount to aligning

oneself with the forces of rule. In choosing an ethics of engagement with the world rather than Noica's professed distance from it, Noica's followers and others in cultural life were bringing themselves directly into conflict with Ceauşescu's regime.

Noica's School represented two things, then: an opposition to power and, more subtly in their advocacy of Plato and Greek philosophy, the possibility of a systematic alternative understanding of the world. As long as such alternative visions circulated, they challenged the new hegemony proposed by the Party. Perhaps this was the reason--whether consciously recognized or not--for one very peculiar review of Liiceanu's Letters. The book was serialized virtually in its entirety in The Week (Saptamîna), an ultranationalist cultural newspaper with close ties to power; the serial appeared in the column of the paper's editor-in-chief, Eugen Barbu. It began in the week immediately following Noica's death in December 1987, and its tone was at first friendly, noting the correspondents' fine writing style, the book's interest and exemplary organization, and so forth. For months on end (the serial lasted nearly a full year), perhaps 75-80 percent or more of Barbu's weekly column consisted of direct but selective quotations from the letters; the brief commentary he interpolated from time to time became more critical as Noica's death receded into the past.

The Barbu-ized Letters had several important traits, all relevant to the question of audience. (1) The selective quotations removed much of the sense and nearly all of the intellectual substance from the exchanges, which thus appeared as so much froth. (2) Barbu commented almost exclusively on how childish, silly, hypocritical, trivial, ignoble, and often outright ridiculous the participants were, how their punctuation left a lot to be desired, and how they quarreled constantly among themselves. Pivotal episodes in which these quarrels were reconciled were omitted from Barbu's serial, leaving the permanent impression that the Noicans were permanently fragmented. (3) By serializing the book--stringing it out a few paragraphs at a time over almost a year--Barbu eliminated one of its most compelling and mobilizing features: its sense of urgency and passion. (4) Barbu reiterated time and again what terrible snobs and elitists all the Noicans were, and how much he disliked this. (In the issue of 17 June 1988, for example, he wrote: "I am not in favor of establishing classes [of readers], of ennoblements or aristocratizations in thought or in literature.")

This serial can scarcely have had another objective than to capture the audience sought by the Noicans. Since Letters was printed in only 16,000 copies and sold out at once, it was possible that many readers eager to know what all the fuss was about would turn to the more readily available Week to find out.

By making the Noicans out to be foolish, ignoble, petty squabblers over trifles, Barbu undermined their pretensions to be the heirs of as grand a thinker as Noica, competent philosophers and valuable creators of philosophy for Romania. By calling Letters unworthy of philosophy and the writers hypocrites, he destroyed the book's claims to be a model of dialectical philosophizing and of communicative directness. By labeling them elitists and snobs, he removed any interest "the masses" might have had in what they were saying. By continually defending Noica against these no-account rascals, he supported the ethnophilosophers' claim to being Noica's true heirs, the protectors of his name and image. And Barbu did all this in the cultural publication with the second largest circulation in all of Romania.

While the Noica School also engaged in other activities that showed them as a focus of opposition to Party rule (see Verdery 1991: chapter 7), the implications of their message as an alternative to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and their attempt to gain an audience for this alternative amply illustrate their political program.[12] It was not insignificant, in the era of Gorbachev's rise, to have philosophers--of all people--speaking of pluralism, opposing centralization, democratizing their genres, and invoking a European heritage. The moral standing these philosophers gained through their activities in the 1980s gave them a strong public platform, and their public recognition in the wake of Ceausescu's fall shows how important their example had become.

CONCLUSION

In this essay I have sought to show some of the mechanisms involved in the struggle for access to resources for the production, distribution, and transmission of "culture" in Ceaușescu's Romania. Groups involved in this contest commanded different sorts of vantage points for improving their situation relative to the centralized allocations which then characterized Romania's political economy. Noicans had no solid institutional base, but they shared certain critical emphases with--and a major part of the genealogy of--the official legitimator, materialist philosophy. Ethnophilosophers likewise had no solid base within the institutions of philosophy, but in exchange they had privileged access to circles close to the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party and to general cultural publications associated with those circles. Their vantage point gave them a strong hand in the attempt to undermine the formation of a "cognizant public" by the Noicans, a public that might prefer the Noicans' definitions of culture, of values, and of competence, rather different from the values being advocated by the Romanian Party leadership.

My discussion has also suggested how deeply entangled these

definitions of culture and values were with definitions of national identity. These grounded the entire discussion, in two ways. First, Romania's relationship with the West was itself constitutive of the entire "Noica phenomenon" at several points in its trajectory. There were Noica's ongoing relations with his former rightist associates now in the West, such as the Romanian émigrés Emil Cioran and Mircea Eliade,[13] occasionally denounced by the regime and always contributing to the ambiguity of Noica's political allegiances. There was the East-West separation fundamental to Liiceanu's Letters: when the Journal hit Bucharest bookstores, Liiceanu and Pleşu were in Germany, and had they been at home the reverberations would have been conveyed in speech rather than on paper. The issues addressed in Letters and its creation of a political opposition took their very life, then, from a Romanian relationship to the West.[14]

A second and more important reason why the matter of national identity grounded arguments around Noica was that Noica's followers were distinguished from their opponents precisely on the fundamental question: is Romania European and is European culture relevant for establishing one's credentials as a producer of culture in Romania, or can one have adequate title by indigenist means--by being born on "Geto-Dacian" soil, for example, by learning proverbs, and by thinking in the philosophically rich language Noica had shown to be Romanians' natural linguistic endowment? Arguments about Europhilia, imported values, indigenist archaism, and so on were a basic part of relations between Noica's followers and their main opponents.

Each party to this contest offered a proposal for the "true" Romanian identity and "genuine" Romanian cultural values. Yet behind these contests over identity and the values supportive of it, the discussion was producing a fundamental construct that was never called into question: the notion of "the people" or "the nation" for whom values were being debated. Thus, like so many other contests in Romanian intellectual life (see, e.g., Simmonds-Duke 1987), the contest over and through Noica contributed to perpetuating a national ideology to rival the faltering one of Marxism-Leninism. This outcome was the unintended consequence of intellectual activity, of specialist programs and debates, carried out in a particular kind of social system. And at the same time that these activities were reproducing a Romanian national ideology, they were constructing an opposition to one organization of power and preparing the way for another.

NOTES

1. I acknowledge here a debt to Pavel Campeanu, Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, Claude Karnoouh, Gail Kligman, and Ştefana Steriade, who commented on earlier versions of this essay, and also to Andrei and Delia Marga, who first brought Noica to my attention and who gave me copies of the two books discussed below (virtually impossible to find, otherwise). These persons and many others with whom I discussed the Noica School offered me not only data but interpretations, which entered into my own and cannot be adequately attributed. I am also grateful to several scholars, particularly Sorin Antohi and Al. Zub, who provided me with many of the reviews and other bibliography scattered among various magazines.

2. For further discussion of my concept of ideology, see Verdery 1991: Introduction.

3. This term does not appear in any of the writings I consulted; I am coining the expression so as not to prejudge the analysis by using a term such as "nationalists" (or, for those in the know about Romanian cultural life, "protochronists"). "Ethnophilosophy" as a notion emphasizes the creation or recognition of an <u>indigenous</u> Romanian philosophy minimally beholden to Western traditions. It is a composite that did not exist as such but had ample precedent in the writings of earlier thinkers such as Vasile Pârvan and Ovidiu Densuşianu.

4. One can see something of how Noicans and ethnophilosophers arrayed themselves with respect to each other and with respect to the philosophical "institution" in the way each of the two groups argued over things who was better at "dialectics."

5. Following Ceauşescu's overthrow, Liiceanu was named director of an important publishing house and Pleşu became minister of culture.

6. In the circle closest to Noica I count Gabriel Liiceanu, Andrei Pleşu, and Sorin Vieru; those in particularly significant relations with them included Alexandru Paleologu, Thomas Kleininger, Vasile Dem. Zamfirescu, and Victor Stoichiţa (now living in Germany), most of whom figure in <u>Letters</u>. It is to these people, despite differences among them, that I refer with the terms "Noica School" or "Noicans," for all were touched in transformative ways by their exposure to Noica and to the others. My lumping of these persons under a single label obscures many important differences among them in style, politics, and relation to Noica. In the circle of persons relatively well disposed to the project of the group I include Ştefan Augustin Doinaş, Radu Enescu, Andrei Pippidi, N. Steinhardt (despite a nasty review), Nicolae Manolescu, Mircea Iorgulescu, and others. Among those

favorably disposed to Noica but hostile to the purposes of the others are such people as Eugen Barbu, Paul Anghel, Ion Coja, Dan Zamfirescu, and Ion Stroe. I do not discuss commentaries from the Romanian émigré community, which helped to bring more attention to the Noicans and thereby broadened their internal and external audience.

7. By this I mean that they held unimportant posts in their institutes of philosophy or belonged to organizations marginal to serious philosophical work as this was socially defined.

8. The Journal was published in 8,000 copies and Letters in 16,000 (the usual specialist work in philosophy might expect a run of 5,000; novels generally had much larger runs, often exceeding 75,000 copies). Since in Romania any book that got as much attention as these did was read much more widely than the size of its press run--one of my associates guessed that any copy would pass through at least ten sets of hands--these figures indicate at best what the press was prepared to risk (politically) in choosing to publish these books. Both were published by Cartea Românească, the press of the Writers' Union, which had somewhat greater editorial independence in its selections than did the majority of presses.

9. My interpretation rests on Liiceanu 1983, 1985, and 1987; Pleşu 1985, 1988; Paleologu 1980; a large number of commentaries and reviews; uninformed readings of Noica 1975, 1978 and 1987; and conversations with a variety of persons, both central participants in the events and interested bystanders. I also had two brief meetings with Noica in the summer of 1987, totalling about two-and-a-half hours, before I had read any of these works. At the time, I was interested in Noica's relation to the interwar national discourse, not in his contemporary significance. While these two meetings contributed little to the discussion in the present essay, they did give me a feel for this fascinating and elusive personage and for his link with the problem of national identity.

10. This is not to say that Noica's relation to his disciples was egalitarian, which it surely was not. I emphasize, rather, the manner in which his authority was defined and exercised, in contrast to the manner of the regime.

11. The first sentence of Noica's preface to his book Letters about the Logic of Hermes reads thus: "These letters are addressed to someone, in the hope that when they reach the border-crossing of culture, they will be intercepted and perhaps read by a few mathematicians, logicians and other magicians of naked forms." His first chapter begins: "To your confession that you do not know what logic is, I reply that I don't know either." (See Noica 1986: 5, 11.) It is difficult not to feel

that one could get somewhere with this treatise on logic, even if one knew little about the subject.

12. One might ask why the books of the Noicans were published, if they were such a threat to power. Liiceanu himself often wondered whether he ought to allow his writings to be used by power, as he assumed must be the case if his books were permitted to appear--and his productivity suffered, in consequence. While I cannot answer the question of why the books were published, I would guess that it had to do with hidden support from persons high up in the Party leadership, with struggles between the bureaucracies of culture and propaganda, and/or with the efforts of publishers to promote values (and salable works) that strengthened positions they wished to defend. Defenders of the books could always point to ambiguities in the texts that made them acceptable or even desirable--such as that the <u>appearance</u> of opposition would make people think that the climate was not, after all, so oppressive, or that the Party was strong enough to afford the publication of an occasional provocative text.

13. Mircea Eliade, now deceased, emigrated from Romania in the 1940s and ended his days as a world-renowned philosopher of religion at the University of Chicago; Emil Cioran became the epigone of a skeptical philosophy in Paris.

14. Although my discussion has not included these, there was also the support of Western-based Radio Free Europe, which lionized Liiceanu's books and magnified their effects and their audience within Romania. Additionally, there was the fact that this oppositional group gained internal leverage through its relation to and recognition by the West. Anyone producing culture with an eye to "universal" recognition was more likely to receive invitations abroad, which would augment both leverage for their values and their cultural authority at home; the arrest of such a person was also very likely to bring down a storm of Western protest upon the Romanian authorities. The group's relation to the West helped to keep them active in cultural production, rather than permanently silenced.

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