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**ALBERTO CASTALDINI**
**Contra Genezei: Antropopoieza, evreii și național-socialismul**

(Against Genesis: Anthropopoesis, the Jews, and National Socialism)

Foreword by MIHAELA GLIGOR

Translated from the Italian and Afterword

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**T**HIS BOOK is an important contribution to the elucidation of a phenomenon which, from a certain point of view, seems to be in the realm of the *absolutely inexplicable*: totalitarianism. Inexplicable, because despite entire libraries on the subject, we still refuse to accept that such a thing could happen. The question *How was this possible?* continues to haunt us. And no matter how much more is written, the answer will probably never fully satisfy us.

Communism and Nazism, *heterozygous twins*, as a French philosopher called them, have been the main strains of this pathology. Alberto Castaldini focuses on the latter. The author uses extensive documentation, coupled with vast erudition, in explaining the reconfiguration of the concept of human nature orchestrated by the National Socialist regime during its twelve years of existence. The reader is reminded that, beyond the regime's defining racial-biological component, the stakes were in fact much higher: challenging philosophical anthropology as it had been shaped by the biblical tradition and classical philosophy (the two spiritual pillars of Western civilization) (pp. 137–164).

Castaldini's essay is based on a rich documentation, supported by an impressive bibliography, in which multi-disciplinarity

finds a natural place. The footnotes provide substantial explanations, which shed additional light on a subject that is by no means simple. In eight comprehensive chapters, Castaldini tackles topics such as racial science/*Rassenlehre* (pp. 27–47), the heritage of the ancestors/*Abnenerbe* (pp. 49–63), or the *immunization* of a community (pp. 95–96, 109–110) understood exclusively as a *community of blood* (*Blutsgemeinschaft*) against a pathogen: the stranger, the Jew. The author undertakes a veritable archaeological work, bringing to the surface from the depths of history names such as Fritz Lenz, Eugen Fischer, Hans F. K. Günther and Otmar von Verschuer. Once true stars of the academic world, occupants of important chairs at prestigious European universities, they have now fallen into well-deserved oblivion. As exponents of a pseudo-science of race, within disciplines such as 'hygiene' and racial psychology (pp. 29–31), their notoriety at the time is indicative of the collective insanity that had gripped Germany in particular, but also other countries of Europe.

What happened with all these theories, as Castaldini points out, was a reduction of man, as complete being and a complex synthesis between soma and psyche, to his *physis*. This goes against the whole European philosophical and spiritual tradition, including some German thinkers of the time, such as Max Scheler, Helmuth Plessner or Arnold Gehlen, who advocated "a broader interpretation of humanity that does not conflict with the biological sciences" (p. 27).

Under the influence of 19<sup>th</sup> century positivism there was a "zoologization" of German anthropology. The intentional confusion between races and species gives credence to the idea that differences be-

tween human races are not in terms of grade but of the *essence*, of the *kind*, like those between different species. The ontological unity of the genus *homo*, affirmed by the Christian tradition and by the scientific tradition (Linnaeus, Buffon), was shattered (pp. 68–72, 171–177). The polygenism advocated by the exponents of racist theories sought to suggest that the lesser species of hominids gave rise in the course of evolution to the lesser human races, while the higher ones were at the origin of the northern variety. So, a human community, a nation, had to guarantee its biological purity, because the stranger, a veritable virus, was liable to affect its immunity. Consanguinity was morphologically expressible, visible in all the gestures and features of a human group. Consequently, Germany moved towards a deculturalized and biologized history.

Biology was not the real target of the National-Socialist rhetoric, but rather the corruption of the spirit and the souls: the stake of evil throughout human history. This is visible in the deterioration of language in the Nazi newspeak, described in those years by authors like Robert Musil, Karl Kraus, or Viktor Klemperer (pp. 114–115), an analysis taken up by thinkers like Eric Voegelin. Terms like *Sonderbehandlung* or *Endlösung* were cynical euphemisms, masking the fall of humanity into the darkest abyss. Evil has no creative power but parasitically feeds on the good. The perversion of the medical profession in concentration camps was emblematic in this respect, as the author notes. From guardian angels and saviors of lives, doctors became an instrument of crime, responsible for separating the ‘cattle’ fit for work from those too weak to deserve to live. The hideous caricature of the good,

its utter distortion, reached its climax at Auschwitz-Birkenau (pp. 17–26).

Alberto Castaldini writes engagingly, managing to avoid academic pedantry in language. That is not to say that this is an undemanding work. The book forces the readers to make an intellectual effort, without discouraging them, and it is useful both to specialists in the field and to those who are new to the topic.

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BOGDAN IVAȘCU

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**DANIELA POPESCU****Navigând în ape învolburate: România și Turcia în vreme de pace și de război (1934–1948)**

(Sailing in troubled waters: Romania and Turkey in times of peace and war, 1934–1948)

Foreword by VIRGILIU LEON ȚĂRĂU

Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2023

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**T**HE RECENT publication of Daniela Popescu’s book can be seen as one of the representative events on the agenda of the Cluj publishing house Mega in 2023. Originating from the author’s doctoral thesis (defended in 2020), the current work analyzes in an unprecedented manner the specific situation of Romania and Turkey in the international context of the period preceding the Second World War, then in the context of the war proper, and finally in the first postwar years. Daniela Popescu, a lecturer at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest, specializing both in contemporary history and in international relations, proposes a binocular approach to the analyzed subject, combining the investigation of the regional