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## A RADICAL REFORM PROJECT: FEDERALISM AND ETHNO-NATIONALISM IN THE THOUGHT OF A.C. POPOVICI

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**Abstract:** *THE AIM OF THIS PAPER IS TO PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE RADICAL REFORM PROJECT PURSUED BY A.C. POPOVICI. A ROMANIAN INTELLECTUAL WHO BECAME KNOWN AS A CONTROVERSIAL, YET RESOURCEFUL POLITICAL THINKER IN THE LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES, POPOVICI'S MOST FAMOUS PROJECT CAN BE FOUND IN HIS PERSISTENT ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE NATURE OF THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE THROUGH A PARTICULAR PERSPECTIVE. THIS WAS A PERSPECTIVE WHICH MIXED FEDERALISATION WITH NATIONALISM AND A CONSERVATIVE, ELITIST OUTLOOK WHICH WAS SIMULTANEOUSLY HIGHLY CRITICAL OF WHAT IT SAW AS THE LEVELLING EFFECTS OF WESTERN UNIVERSALISM AND DEMOCRACY. THE PAPER LARGELY FOCUSES ON IDENTIFYING THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS IN THIS REGARD, SUCH AS FEDERALISM, ETHNO-NATIONALISM, AND RACE, WHILST ATTEMPTING TO INCLUDE SOME OF THE MOST RELEVANT SOURCES WHICH WERE INSTRUMENTAL FOR THE FORMATION OF POPOVICI'S VISION. MOREOVER, AS MOST OF THE AUTHORS WHICH HAVE APPROACHED POPOVICI IN ANY SERIOUS, SYSTEMATIC FASHION ARE HISTORIANS BY FORMATION, THE PAPER SERVES TO INTRODUCE THE STUDY OF HIS THOUGHT TO CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SCIENTISTS. DESPITE THE INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS AND POTENTIAL ISSUES ONE MAY UNCOVER IN POPOVICI'S PROJECT, THE PAPER CONCLUDES THAT HIS THOUGHT, INVOLVING FEDERALISM, ETHNIC TENSIONS, AND THE IMPACT OF MODERNITY, IS WORTH REVISITING.*

**Keywords:** *A.C. POPOVICI, FEDERALISM, RACE, NATIONALISM, GREATER AUSTRIA.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Considered a nationalist, a racist, an anti-Semite, and a reactionary by some, and seen as a patriot, a traditionalist, and a visionary by others, Aurel C. Popovici was, in any case, one of the most complex and combative Romanian political thinkers of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the ideas upon which he steadily built his conceptual universe had very precise targets in terms of the political, the social, and the cultural, particularly when it comes to his most important work, *The United States of Greater Austria* [*Die Vereinigten Staaten von Gross-Österreich*] (Popovici, 1906). This work, published in Leipzig in 1906, focussed on the idea of preserving Greater Austria from the turmoil of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the work itself was controversial, debated, and altogether quite well-known during Popovici's own lifetime, its main ideas never really took root among his contemporaries. Nonetheless, the echoes of his work could occasionally be felt in the interwar period and beyond, long after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

## A CONTROVERSIAL POLITICAL THINKER

Despite its complexity – for both good and bad – the ideology and thought of Aurel C. Popovici have remained mostly unknown in the West, with the limited number of works dedicated to his ideas coming from a historical background rather than from a political science background. After all, there are only a few authors – most of them of Romanian origin – whose articles are written in English, and which focus on Popovici's ideas, rather than merely mentioning them in passing. Published in 1997 and 1999, chapters written by Turda deal with the symbolic geography of Romanians in Transylvania (Turda, 1997), as well as with Popovici's nationalism and political representation in the Habsburg Empire (Turda, 1999). To this, one must add Neumann's contribution, which explores Popovici's federalist theory in some detail, while also considering its impact alongside other political theories involving federalism and nationalism in the Habsburg Empire (Neumann, 2002). In turn, a more recent work on Popovici has involved an exploration of his vision of democracy versus nationalism (Sabău, 2013). Lastly, in a book published in 2015, Turda dedicates an entire chapter to Popovici's views on the politics of race (Turda, 2015).

After Popovici's death in 1917, his work and ideas ceased being discussed at any real length, but were eventually rediscovered with regards to two main directions: federalism in the European space and nationalism in the Romanian space. One must consider the fact that the Romanian public had access since 1910 to a volume expanding upon his doctrine, called *Nationalism or Democracy. A critique of modern civilisation* [*Naționalism sau democrație. O critică a civilizațiunii moderne*] (Popovici, 1910). It was only in 1939 that his 1906 work was translated, after the German version had led to numerous reactions, both in the Kingdom of Romania and in Transylvania. Nonetheless, Popovici's writings were forbidden in Romania after the Second World War (Crișan, 2008: 14).

An unexpected interlude in this regard took place in 1977, when, at the initiative of the billionaire Iosif Constantin Drăgan – who was born in Lugoj on the very year of Popovici's death – various commemorative events were organised, along with the publication of the collective volume *Les précurseurs de l'eupéisme – Aurel C. Popovici* (Drăgan, Habsburg, Pons, Randa, Wolf, 1977). This commemoration actually had some echoes in the Romanian press of the time, with the newspaper “Săptămâna” publishing a laudatory article (Chiuzbaian, 1977: 1), and then a critical one three weeks later (Șorban, 1977: 3), with Hurezeanu (1977: 47-51) attempting to definitively solve this dispute in the “Socialist Era” newspaper. These events notwithstanding, Popovici would remain an essentially unknown figure to the Romanian public, even as several studies would approach his federalist project in specialist literature (Popa, 1985: 231-251; Bogza, 1988: 137-151).



It was only after 1990 that Popovici's writings were partially rediscovered, with two important moments being the re-editing of his works from 1906 (Popovici, 1997a) and 1910 (Popovici, 1997b), as well as the publishing of a number of articles dedicated to his life and ideas. In this context, an important documentary source is Crișan's (2008) massive monograph – published in collaboration with the Brukenthal National Museum –, entitled *Aurel C. Popovici (1863-1917)*, which enables one to better understand the personality of this would-be reformer of the increasingly tumultuous politics of the Dual Monarchy. Indeed, the need for reforming of the Empire had been increasingly obvious during Popovici's life, as its accumulated tensions and contradictions were heading for a breaking point. For instance, Dalibor Roháč makes a case for a rational choice-based perspective on the collapse of the Empire, arguing that federalisation would have been a gain for an otherwise over-centralised state, yet such a move was ultimately not feasible since the Empire's ethnic groups could not pursue their interests in a coordinated manner in negotiating with the central government (Roháč, 2009). As described by Neumann, the ideal of federalism was ultimately defeated by nationalism, even though Popovici was one of the contemporary thinkers with the intellectual resources to discuss alternatives:

Federalism was defeated by nationalism and this not only stimulated the appearance of new states after the First World War, but also generated serious tensions throughout the twentieth century. Popovici, Renner, Jászi, and their cohort in Austria-Hungary, all concerned with seeking political alternatives, understood the importance of reforming the administrative and political system in central Europe. They were the witnesses to and actors in a transitional epoch that spawned great doctrinal debates. They found the necessary intellectual resources to elaborate ideas, hypotheses, and even theories about reorganization of an area, without ever finding a way to make anything practicable (Neumann, 2002: 897).

Moreover, as Schorske states, the newly empowered liberals did not rally the masses against the old ruling elite, but unwittingly unleashed the forces of a general disintegration. Thus, although being sufficiently vigorous for dissolving the existing political order, their liberalism could not withstand the advent of new social forces, such as Czech nationalism, pangermanism, Christian socialism, social-democracy and Zionism, which, Schorske believes, were paralysing the political system and undermined its faith in the “rational course” of history (Schorske, 1998: 114-115). Neumann argues that Popovici's studies in Graz actually “drew him closer to the frustration specific to the provinces, thus distancing him from the cultural and political crisis in Vienna” (Neumann, 2002: 885). With Popovici being inspired by the German political model of *völkische Kultur* and relating it to the Romanian phenomenon, this led to him apparently “estranging himself from the monarchy's problems” and establishing “the essential paradigm for the federalization of the state, namely, the political theory of the ethno-nations” (Neumann, 2002: 885).

Moreover, in a manner influenced by the German culture-civilisation dichotomy, Popovici's image of the West is one of artificiality and inauthenticity, whereby rationality has led to the endangerment of culture – and thus of the spiritual identity of its peoples. As seen in a later work, to the internationalising nature of modern Western culture, Popovici opposes what he considers as the organic, authentic life of Romanian national culture – even granting that its representatives, such as a village priest, will be seen as leading a “patriarchal, reactionary, and miserable” life by Western standards. By contrast “the greatest part of the international, European culture of the present day, essentially has the character of waiting staff” – which he considers an otherwise honourable profession but a contributor to cultural decline (Popovici, 1910: 28). For the elitist Popovici, what this means is that Westerners, in their attempts at providing universal education have merely led to a great lowering of knowledge and standards (Popovici, 1910: 29). Unsurprisingly, Popovici goes on to argue that such a Western “waiter” has been forcibly civilised, thus becoming an automaton (Popovici, 1910: 29-30).



Popovici may thus be considered part of distinctly nativist, autochthonist reaction to the levelling forces of modernity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire crisis, the activities of thinkers like Popovici represented a reaction to these often turbulent forces, a reaction that sought more sophisticated solutions to a sense of crisis which seemed to have permeated an entire society.

### **A RADICAL REFORM PROJECT**

The following section will offer a brief overview of some the fundamental points encountered in the thought of A.C. Popovici, mainly focussing on his famous work on the reform project of the Habsburg Empire. This will be done while pointing out – insofar it is practical – some of the sources which inspired his apparently paradoxical political vision, a vision which united nationalism, conservatism, federalism, and a critical view of modern cosmopolitanism. The radical reform project pursued by Popovici and the apparent contradictions therein are readily apparent:

However the Romanian thinker’s double theoretical perspective – nationalist and federalist – cannot be overlooked. The enlightened idea of Austrian citizenship and cosmopolitan ideology were both rejected, and a new political solution, based on the “essentialist” idea of the ethno-nation, was born (Neumann, 2002: 871).

At the same time, the need for an alternative system that would bring an end to the political crisis – and which would also not trigger the ultimate collapse of the Monarchy – led to the evolution of projects that, for various reasons, moved away from cosmopolitanism and towards a distinct form of federalism.

One method of information gathering for Popovici’s contemporaries – useful also for being involved with the latest trends and debates – was found in the Austrian cafés, described by Stefan Zweig as a sort of “democratic club”, which was open to everyone, and which provided access to newspapers and magazines from across the Western world (Zweig, 1988: 56). Such places thus served as important sources of information regarding the latest international events, and Popovici appears to have taken full advantage of this fact, even though the typically moderate tone of the discussions (Johnston, 2000: 131) would have likely been contrasted to his own, which was rather militant in nature.

Moreover, Popovici would make good use of his foreign language skills, pouring over a multitude of sources for his analytical endeavour. The newspapers and magazines used by Popovici involved contemporary sources – such as 1904 and 1905 –, but also older ones, with editions from 1898, 1896, 1895, 1893, 1891, 1888, or even from 1869. These informational strata are in a complementary relationship, with Popovici using publications in the following languages: 15 in German, 11 in English, 7 in Hungarian, 4 in Romanian, 3 in French, and one in Italian. Some of the German publications are mentioned only once („Münchener Allgemeine Zeitung”, „Die Grenzboten”, „Ostrauer Zeitung”, „Tagespost”, „Die Zeit”, „Tägliche Rundschau”, „Preussische Jahrbücher”, „Bukovinaer Post”, „Nordeutschen Allgemeine Zeitung”, „Der Weg”), while other are used very often in order to provide the opinions of contemporaries, as well as to strengthen the author’s own argumentation.

One such publication is “Neue Freie Presse”, characterised by Popovici as a great “liberal” Viennese newspaper, using it to show the way in which national problems gradually took centre stage politically, with Slavism and Germanism at the forefront (Popovici, 1997a: 33). The problem of nationalities was older, and – after the enthusiasm of 1848, when the idea of a Europe of nations was opposed to a Europe of monarchs (Le Rider, 1997: 87) – it eventually grew in intensity until it became a permanent destabilizing factor. Thus, from the “United States of Europe” – which appeared in 1848



in the “Moniteur” of the French provisional government, the idea quickly degraded under the pressure of increasingly radical national movements. (Fleck, 1991: 58-59).

Arguing that Dualism has merely led to the creation of two multi-ethnic states, and thus increased existing national problems, Popovici is convinced that this generalised failure can be blamed less on the national issues themselves, but more on Vienna’s weak-willed policy, which mistakenly relied on the Hungarian compromise as the only way in which to solve the issues at hand (Popovici, 1997a: 35-36). For Popovici, the solution to the crisis lay instead with the creation of Greater Austria. Consequently, he quotes Rudolf Springer, who similarly argued that Dualism will be strengthened with time rather than diminished, and the empire would thus be forever split into two states, which would lead to the ultimate defeat of the Habsburg imperial idea (Springer, 1905).

Neumann argues that the way in which Popovici singled out Budapest’s administration “for the near total dysfunction” meant that this would easily lead on a path to segregation, with an opportunity being seized in attempting to develop “an ethno-national theory of German-Romantic inspiration” (Neumann, 2002: 870). This certainly would have contributed to Popovici’s hostility towards Hungarian nationalism and to the idea of Dualism as a whole. Unsurprisingly, already in the first pages of his work, Popovici insists upon the notion that although Dualism itself has been proven as harmful for the monarchy, it was nonetheless upheld by numerous Viennese publications (Popovici, 1997a: 8). This was something which he saw as particularly threatening, since, as he put it, the largest, most well-known newspapers published points of view which were favourable to the Hungarians and their cause (Popovici, 1997a: 7).

As a speaker of Hungarian, Popovici made ready use of the Hungarian press throughout his book, in order to inform himself or to debate on the nationality problem – with the most often quoted publications being “Budapesti Hirlap”, “Egyetértés”, “Független Magyarország”, or “Pester Lloyd” (in German). For instance, Popovici makes use of an “Egyetértés” article by Ludwig Mocsáry, an old follower of Kossuth, who writes that after thirty years of Magyarisation legislation, the Magyarisation of the various ethnic groups is still an impossibility, a fantasy which only serves to increase the deep discontent of non-Hungarians (Mocsary, 1904 apud Popovici, 1997a: 43). At the same time, making use of “The Nineteenth Century” magazine, Popovici writes of the case of the Danish minority in West Prussia and Northern Schleswig in order to make an analogy with Romanians in Transylvania. Thus, although all subjects in school were taught in German, and although older pupils were forbidden from using Danish, and with a repression of the Danish media, the result was that Danish was still being spoken everywhere (Popovici, 1997a: 95).

In pursuit of his goal, Popovici also used a great deal of texts which were published outside of the Empire. This includes newspapers such as “Revue des Deux Mondes”, “Le Temps”, “Revue Politique et Parlementaire”, “The Saturday Review”, “Fortnightly Review”, “The Spectator”, “The Times”, “The Nineteenth Century”, “The Contemporary Review”, “The Federalist”, “The North American Review”, “The National Review”, “The Standard”, and “The Daily News”. Thus, if anything, the problems at hand were approached from points of view which were sufficiently varied. For example, in “Revue des Deux Mondes”, Popovici found many articles analysing the complex situation of the Empire after 1867, often proposing solutions which were quite similar to his own political views – namely, that Dualism had ended up merely amplifying existing tensions in multi-ethnic regions. Moreover, Popovici made use of English language magazines, discovering not only that they were quite familiar with the situation in the Empire but also that many favoured a strong and healthy Austria – as Karel Kramar did for “The National Review” (Kramar, 1902 apud Popovici, 1997a, 327).

His federalist vision found even more supporting arguments in articles from newspapers published in the United States, such as “The Federalist” or “The Contemporary Review”. Thus,



Popovici can point to Alexander Hamilton's writings in "The Federalist", regarding a new constitution which would prevent the collapse of the federation (Hamilton, 1961: 92 apud Popovici, 1997a: 251). Moreover, Popovici also points to the so-called "imperial unity" of the American state as described by Albert Shaw in "The Contemporary Review" in 1892, which was possible due to federative principles and the solidity of its political organisation, and which – the author argues – without precedent in history, with the unifying cement being state autonomy, state unity on matters of general importance, and the universality of citizen's rights (Shaw, 1892: 307 apud Popovici, 1997a: 236). Essentially, in Popovici's mind, the option for a strong federal state could save the monarchy, leading to the end of the systematic oppression of the majority of its peoples and the "shameful" struggles between the various nationalities (Popovici, 1997a: 259).

So as to not be blamed of a unilateral vision, Popovici made scant use of Romanian journals and magazines, and this only briefly, in the last two pages of his work. Nonetheless, he does so by linking the idea of a federation to the peril of Russian penetration into the Balkans. Thus, he mentions the 1848 memoirs of Ion Maiorescu – a diplomatic agent of the Romanian government for the Frankfurt Parliament –, which had been published in 1888 in "Revista Nouă". Fearing a Russian assault, Maiorescu recommended the union of all Romanians in the Principalities, as well as those in Transylvania, Hungary and Bucovina in one state and its federal union with old Austria (Maiorescu, 1888: 333-334 apud Popovici, 1997a: 380).

This idea of a federation for the Danubian peoples would be discussed again in later decades, for instance by Émile Laveleye in an article in "Revue des Deux Mondes" (Laveleye, 1871: 382). Even in 1896, the idea of a Russian peril would be proposed by an anonymous editorial article, entitled *The Balkan Federation* [*Federațiunea balcanică*] and published in "Gazeta Transilvaniei" – considered by Popovici to be the oldest and most important newspaper of Romanians in Hungary and Transylvania (Popovici, 1997a: 382) – with the anonymous author declaring that such a federation would consist of local Slavic states under Russian protection, as a result of Austria's lost opportunities and erroneous support of Dualism (Anonymous, 1896: 1). The article goes on by arguing that if Austria had ceased pursuing the principles of *divide et impera*, and if all its peoples had been treated equally, there would be no reason to fear a Russian federation in the Balkans. On the contrary, there would be the potential for the basis of a Danubian Confederation led by a federated Austria (Anonymous, 1896: 1). A similar argument is selected by Popovici from the newspaper "Tribuna", showing once again the way in which the federal ideal was greatly influenced by the geopolitical realities and urgencies of the time:

What would the monarchy obtain through this liberty given to its peoples? It would win the sincere friendship of these peoples; by encouraging the political and cultural particularisms of its Slavs, it would estrange them from all the aspirations of Pan-Russianism; it would obtain the peace among nationalities and, through this, the possibility of progress in all fields; the monarchy would win the sympathy of neighbouring peoples to the east and those in the Balkans as well; it would even win their adherence to this alliance, so as to be protected by the northern colossus; the development of all its nations would help the empire to become a great power, and the Habsburg Empire, thus consolidated, would become a natural shelter for its nations and, at the same time, the strongest defence instrument against the assault of the 100 million Muscovites (Tribuna, 1891 apud Popovici, 1997a: 382-383).

Although Popovici was linked to the newspaper due to its support for his ideas, he refrained from commenting other similar articles, limiting himself to a fragment from an article published in 1898 the Bucharest newspaper "Liga Română". Interestingly, the author argues that the federalisation of Austria-Hungary would mean guaranteeing the existence of the Romanian state, even discussing the possibility that Romania itself might join such a federation in the long run (Cosacescu, 1898: 641 apud Popovici, 1997a: 385).



Moreover, Popovici's criticism of Dualism and the resulting policies is based on over ninety books and brochures, most of them in German, Hungarian, and French. One of the most often cited authors is Rudolf Springer (Karl Renner), whose work points to the necessity for the coordination of the Empire, “the organic unity of the whole” alongside the legitimate division of things which are by their nature divided (Springer, 1904: 35 apud Popovici, 1997a: 135). Popovici reiterates how Dualism has divided a multi-ethnic state in two multi-ethnic states, thus destroying the chances of unity that would have been provided by the Monarchy (Popovici, 1997a: 153). Also quoting Friedrich Tezner, Popovici considers Dualism to be more harmful than the defeats at Königgrätz or Solferino, as the imperial constitution of 1867 represented an “inorganic” mix of contradictory principles (Tezner, 1899: 212 apud Popovici, 1997a: 144). The 1867 compromise, with its imposition of the supremacy of the German and Magyar nationalities at the expense of the Slavs and Romanians would thus lead to permanent discontent and the rise of nationalist movements. Popovici's analysis also relies on Louis Eisenmann's 1904 work on Dualism – later praised by Jacques Le Rider for its insight (Le Rider, 1997: 80) – where Eisenmann argued for maintaining the Monarchy and turning the Empire into a sort of monarchical Switzerland (Popovici, 1997a: 235).

The crucial issues of federalism and nationalism aside, Popovici also placed a somewhat important emphasis on matters of race – always linked with the idea of the nation – and what he saw as the impact of race in politics and world history. As Turda mentions, the way in which Popovici approached the idea of race was inspired by Central and West European Social-Darwinism, with it being, first and foremost, a criticism of the theory of national Hungarian superiority and thus linked to Hungarian nationalism (Turda, 2015: 142-143). Moreover, his own views on race must be considered in the background of the fusion between racial thought and social Darwinism with nationalism, a direction which became popular among Romanian nationalist thinkers in Austro-Hungary at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Turda, 2015: 144). Thus, while Popovici was also inspired by authors such as Knox, Gobineau, or Gumplowicz, he built his own ideas further, while also applying them to the local context. Thus, the idea of race as a fundamental truth, along with combating the thought of racial mixing – arguments which were based on the thought of Disraeli and Gobineau (Turda, 2015: 145-146).

One of the most important features discussed by Popovici is that of race mixing, since, as he saw it, this practice had negative effects on society. Popovici's thoughts on race echo various thinkers of his time, like Herbert Spencer, who had declared in “The Spectator” that mixed marriages should be forbidden as they led to negative results (Spencer, 1904: 118 apud Popovici, 1997a: 78). Furthermore, Popovici agreed with Gobineau's theories, which asserted that race mixing was the true reason for the disappearance of peoples (Popovici, 1997a: 76). In turn, Popovici argues that the Hungarian government introduced civil marriage so as to ease Magyarisation through mixing (Popovici, 1997a: 78). Popovici also quotes the ethnographer Albrecht Wirth, who wrote that, while many Germans and Jews have been won for Magyarism, the Magyars themselves have corrupted their own nation in a profound way (Wirth, 1904: 308 apud Popovici, 1997a: 81). Other authors discussed by Popovici, and which write about the impact of race mixing, include Otto Ammon (Popovici, 1997a: 77), Armand Corre (Popovici, 1997a: 81), and Georges Vacher de Lapouge (Popovici, 1997a: 81). Popovici also uses the famous work on crowd psychology authored by Gustave Le Bon, with the latter arguing that the Empire had been built upon a balance of hatred between its different races. Going further, Popovici quotes Le Bon's assertion that those peoples with a high degree of civilisation have carefully avoided mixing with foreigners, since the first effect of mixing different races is the destruction of their souls, meaning the common ideas and feelings which give strength to peoples (Le Bon, 1902: 46 apud Popovici, 1997a: 78).



In any case, the impact of federalism and nationalism became ever more present in the many political debates which took place from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century throughout Central Europe, with significant consequences for the later political evolution of the Austro-Hungarian successor states (Neumann, 2002: 864). Contributing to this difficult debate, Popovici “conceived the federalization of the empire based on ethno-cultural and racial purity”, with Neumann considering that the “still unsolved problems of the nation-states and their minorities in East Central and South Eastern Europe speak to the reality of this federalist formula”, arguing that perhaps a “re-consideration of the different theories of federalism can offer a clearer perspective of the past and more rational projects for the present and future” (Neumann, 2002: 864).

## CONCLUSION

Confronted by a changing world and by the looming uncertainties which were part of its transformation, A.C. Popovici looked to his radical reform project as a way of saving those things which were, to his mind, worthy to be saved. In this pursuit, he made use of the various academic and political trends of his day, thus approaching the complex and often highly controversial issues of federalism, nationalism, and race. With his use of a large array of sources, as well as by proving a certain capability for analysis and synthesis, Popovici can thus be considered, in Turda’s words, as one of the most complex Central European nationalists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Turda, 2015: 142).

Indeed, even though the visibility of his work has had a difficult trajectory, the thought of A.C. Popovici is worth revisiting in the present day, not only by historians but also by political scientists. This is due to several reasons. Firstly, it sheds light on a distinct reaction to a modernising and democratising society at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and is thus illustrative of some of the challenges of the modern project – both political and cultural – which have yet to be truly solved, even in the context of the contemporary European Union and its multiple, intertwined crises. Secondly, Popovici’s criticism of the universalising and levelling tendencies of modernity and democracy points to a position that partially serves as a precursor of sorts to the later debates between globalists and anti-globalists. Lastly, through his combination of Conservatism, nationalism, federalism, and views on race, Popovici has a complex, yet peculiar position in Romanian intellectual history. Thus, while acknowledging the limited appeal of his ideas among his Romanian contemporaries, the preface of his 1910 work on nationalism and democracy nonetheless defends his conservative, elitist position:

[...] it is the *duty* of every man with convictions to all he can in order to bring down all this construction of democratic <<civilisation>> [...] I fight firstly against the doctrines of social, universal democracy. But I also fight against all those who flirt with them and thus systematically weakened the spiritual unity of the entire Romanian people (Popovici: 1910, VII-VIII).

To conclude, in his exploration of federalism, despite its limitations, Popovici nonetheless possessed a keen eye and was thus able to approach and interact with a wide variety of currents regarding this dilemma. While he maintained a clearly anti-liberal, anti-democratic view, this is a fact which, nonetheless, does not diminish the complexity of his thought. This makes it a worthwhile study for political scientists, including if one is to understand the context of a specific take on identity, modernity, nationality, and politics in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the echoes of their crises, which can still be distinguished over a century later.





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