This is the author's third book and it is now being reprinted in Bucharest, where it was first published last year. This constitutes a considerable success for a collection of essays which is clearly meant for an academic audience. Nothing could indeed be more remote from the popular journalism which tends to make bestsellers nowadays (not only in Romania) than the kind of erudition played by Antohi when he writes about Humboldt, Tocqueville, or Foucault, to mention a number of lesser-known Romanian thinkers. This versatility is explained with engaging frankness by the author himself in the Foreword. He remembers how, after 1990 when all of us were seized by the frenzy of recovered liberty, he tried to be at the same time a historian, a philosopher, a sociologist, a linguist, a politologist, a literary critic, an anthropologist, a translator, a public intellectual, and a professional. Later, but a number of years ago, I had the opportunity to take a walk with Antohi through the University Parks in Oxford and I still remember how he swore that would make up the time he had been obliged to lose as a teacher of French in a miserable town in his native Moldova. That ambition must be deemed to have been fulfilled.

If I knew no more than the average reader about Antohi's personality and his interests, what might I be able to guess from the texts he has collected in this volume? He loves jazz (see The Sound of Utopia, the first chapter of the book). The years he spent in Jassy in the 1980s provided him with the opportunity to meet a group of local writers and intellectuals while he also met the philosopher Mihai Şora, who was for him a benevolent mentor (see the penultimate chapter, The Utopias of a Better-Knowing Sage). Temporarily attached to the History Institute of Jassy, which enabled him to contribute to remarkable collections of essays edited by Alfred Zub, he got off to a roaring start in Bucharest when Şora became, for six months in 1990, Minister of Education (see the 'juicy' footnotes in the same chapter). However, his career as a civil servant—a General Director in the Ministry—was neither long nor particularly successful. There is a sense in which even the most scholarly works autobiographical. To dedicate one study to Rudolf Steiner and another to Mircea Eliade cannot be considered an innocent act. The references and
compliments sparsely interspersed throughout these texts bear witness to specific intellectual itinerary.

Antohi's hallmark in these essays may be discerned in their vast scope and the variety of their subjects. Those who have read Stigmate et utopie. Imaginaire culturel et réalité politique dans la Roumanie moderne, the translation—recently issued in Paris—of a previous volume by the same author, are already familiar with Antohi's long-standing interest in utopias. This time he delights himself and us—with a few reflections on music as it was conceived by persons disparate as Plato and Berlioz: a civilizing art. He carries his learning gracefully, with a fine sense of humor. After all, to assert that music is a subtle expression of the harmony which reigns in any orderly state—which might have been true during the centuries between Palestrina and Mozart—is a way of saying that every epoch gets the music it deserves.

The purpose of a number of other essays is to expose the fallacies of Utopia. When Antohi's criticism of progressivist views was first expressed in 1988, he had to take the form of an apparently neutral dissertation on narrative technique. It attempts an interesting comparison between the logic of utopian fantasy and the mental processes of a historian who makes his own selection from the facts before reorganizing them on the basis of a pattern which he already has in his mind. It is for this reason that utopian novels always fail from a literary point of view (the author's silence about the novels of Hesse at Jünger seems to suggest his disregard for them). This is followed by a close philosophical analysis of the latest theories on historical narrative (Hayden White, Paul Ricoeur, Jörn Rüsen). This meditation on the way in which human time is 'normally' cast in the form of a narrative is, with its sensitive discussion of the texts, perhaps the most rewarding essay for the historically-minded reader.

There are many pages in this book which caused me to seek out a glossary of the terms used by Michel Foucault. Foucault was not a standard author for my generation. This essay, it seems to me, overrates Surveiller et punir, a book which, according to Antohi, „should not be understood as a history of the invention of prisons“ (Really? What is it then, for God's sake?) Foucault's emphasis on language and—especially—the nature of power was a central element in the intellectual development of many Eastern Europeans, twenty years ago. I am not surprised that this author was seduced, as other Romanians were at that time. Indeed, we might be grateful for the keen and imaginative observations made by Antohi in the margins of Foucault's work.

Much more convincing is the insightful glance at Alexander von Humboldt. Antohi argues that the great Naturwissenschaftler not only inaugurated a new literary genre, but used narrative technique as an aid (even a stimulus, perhaps) for scientific research. Actually, every time that Antohi himself ventures into the nineteenth century, we can be sure of impressive results. He writes about the French Revolution or about Tocqueville, but he does so in order to find out how they affect our world. And both subjects lead him to discuss at length the troubled relationship between democracy and the intelligentsia. He does n