

Fighting for Anatomy. Overview regarding two prestigious Romanian anatomists of the 20th century: Victor Papilian and Grigore T. Popa

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Abstract

During many centuries, the progress of Anatomy was based on the perseverant and laborious activities done by anatomists. Their work can be considered as a fight for Anatomy. A particular problem arose when this fight is excessively done and it limits the ability to correctly analyze the contribution made by other scientists in the same domain. This situation was identified at different personalities who lived in the same time and were involved in the same fundamental field of research. If, theoretically, the similarities between scientists should get them closer, in order to have a better communication, the antagonisms can lead them to rivalry. Our paper exemplifies a historical case in which the personages are Victor Papilian (1888–1956) and Grigore T. Popa (1892–1948). The resemblances between these two famous Romanian anatomists from the first half of the 20th century induced an evident scientific rivalry. Papilian and Popa brought a significant contribution in anatomy. Each of them was very much appreciated by his students. It is interesting that both of them had achievements in literature. We present the reasons of their disagreement and its consequences. Paradoxically, not the contrasts, but the resemblances between their strong characters produced a sort of animosity between them. This attitude diminished in time and their successors – Ioan Albu from the Cluj Faculty of Medicine and Ion Iancu from the Jassy Faculty of Medicine – had a long lasting and successful cooperation.

Keywords: Victor Papilian, Grigore T. Popa, anatomy, differences, similarities, fight for progress.

Introduction

The evolution of Anatomy was marked by great discoveries and prestigious anatomists. Unfortunately, during centuries in some countries the relationships between some important anatomists were burdened by the lack of harmony. There were many causes for this situation, which ranged from personal intolerance to ideological conceptions. Generally speaking, the conflict between different anatomists reflected the conflict between physicians, which was present since antiquity. It was illustrated by the ancient proverb "*invidia medicorum pessima*" (the medical envy is the worst). Indeed, the envy among physicians was and is still considered a great danger. The severity of this negative attitude was analyzed by the Italian Ferriani using the scale of professional jealousy as more severe than the jealousy between architects, advocates, etc. [1]. One of the notorious examples of envious attitude dates from the XVIth century, when Andreas Vesal (1514–1564) gained many enemies because he put into evidence many anatomical errors committed by Galen (129–201). One of Vesal's enemies was his professor of anatomy – Jacques Dubois (1478–1555), who was an adept of Galen's unquestioned leading role in anatomy [2].

It is known that celebrities living in the same time rarely share the same feelings, opinions or attitudes. This situation becomes more contoured when it occurs to remarkable scientists, cultural and artistic personalities or to political leaders having many discrepancies between them.

Commonly, the resemblances among people bring them closer to each other, sharing their opinions or working

together in the same field. However, too many similarities between people having strong characters and being endowed with infrequent qualities may produce reciprocal rejection. In those cases, a small incandescent spark is enough to cause a conflict between them. Similarly, too many differences among people lead to a real discontent.

Two prominent Romanian anatomists of the first half of the 20th century – Victor Papilian (1888–1956) and Grigore T. Popa (1892–1948) – had many qualities: intelligence, a great capacity of scientific work, a great cultural interest, etc. The problem was that besides this bouquet of qualities, both anatomists had very strong characters. It may be expected that their similarities in thinking, as well as their scientific and cultural concerns to bring them closer to each other, in order to have a significant collaboration. There were also differences between them, such as the individual temper or an unsparingly attitudes in some situations (some of their attitudes were considered inflexible). Actually each of them fought for defending anatomy (and especially the didactic part of anatomy), because both of them were devoted to this science.

To get a better understanding of the core of this controversy between these two great Romanian anatomists, it is necessary to analyze the differences and the similarities between them.

Considerations on the differences between Victor Papilian and Grigore T. Popa

The first two contrasts between them belonged to their youth: the origin and the training. For children or teenager these differences can be the source of different

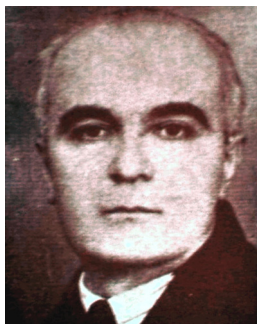
reactions of animosities. For adults these differences may be involved in an inferiority complex.

From the point of view of Victor Papilian's ancestors, it is useful to note that he was the son of the captain physician Constantin Papilian (1852–1917), who subsequently became general. Constantin Papilian had an Oltenian origin. However, some of his ancestors came from a Moldavian family's governors related to the prince Ioniță Sandu Sturza [3]. This is an element which can remove the suspicion that Papilian disliked Moldovans. Furthermore, having innate qualities of honesty, Victor Papilian was not a vain person.



Professor Victor Papilian (1888–1956).

Unlike Papilian, Grigore T. Popa came from a poor family of Moldavian plowman, having yeomen farmer ancestors. Besides the work of plowman, his father fulfilled a kind of public notary activity in their village [4]. Although the originating contrast between the two anatomists was obvious, yet it did not induce differentiation in their moral education.



Professor Grigore T. Popa (1892–1948).

Regarding the pre-university training, Papilian had a particular element, which produced a positive influence during his career. He followed simultaneously the high school and the Conservatory from Bucharest. His professor was Rudolf Malcher (1878–1967) at the violin class. It

was not frequent for a child to be concomitantly pupil at a high school and student of a faculty of music. Graduating the Conservatory, Papilian was hired in the Orchestra of the Education and Cults Ministry, meantime playing the violin in a string quartet [5]. The beginning of V. Papilian career was stopped due to his father's firm opposition. Therefore, V. Papilian became student at the Bucharest Faculty of Medicine.

In contrast to Papilian, Gr. T. Popa had to work hard to obtain the necessary money to continue his pre-university studies. From the beginning, he became student at the Jassy Faculty of Biology. After a very short time, on the advice of Prof. Paul Bujor (1862–1952), Popa was transferred at the Jassy Faculty of Medicine. Yet was a resemblance between V. Papilian and Gr. T. Popa, in that both did not follow the career they wished. The first gave up his career as musician, the other quit his military career. It was also another difference between them. While V. Papilian put into practice the indication of his father, Gr. T. Popa did not follow his parents' wishes to have an ecclesial career. However, he had a motivation not to become priest, as he knew that he had not the vocation for a religious career [6]. His opposition was probably due to lack of the necessary vocation to become a priest.

During his whole medical career, Papilian proved a passion for anatomy. This was noticed for the first time by Prof. Paul Petrini (1847–1924) – the head of the Anatomy Institute from the Bucharest Faculty of Medicine. In 1910, Papilian was appointed as preparer at his Chair. Next year he was advanced assistant at the same Institute.

In contrast to V. Papilian, Gr. T. Popa devoted himself to anatomy only after he defeated his repulsion to corpses, as well towards everything related to illness and death.

After the end of the First World War, in 1919, Papilian became associate professor at the Institute (Chair) of Descriptive and Topographic Anatomy, at the new created Romanian Faculty of Medicine from Cluj. The appointment was made at the recommendation of the two illustrious physicians: Prof. Gheorghe Marinescu (1863–1936) and Prof. Victor Babeș (1854–1926) [7].

After four years since he started the academic career at the Cluj Faculty of Medicine (in 1923), Papilian was promoted full professor. He continued to be the head of the Chair of the Descriptive and Topographic Anatomy until 1947. Having a university career in Cluj (1919–1940 and 1945–1947) and in Sibiu (between 1940 and 1945, during the Second World War, while the Faculty of Medicine was in refuge), Papilian became a real Transylvanian by adoption. Unfortunately, at the beginning of Communist regime, in 1947 he was forced to end the didactic activity and also to stop his academic life.

Unlike V. Papilian, who remained faithful to the Cluj Faculty of Medicine, Gr. T. Popa developed his career partially in Jassy and partially in Bucharest. In 1914, he was appointed by Prof. Francisc Rainer (1874–1944), custodian-preparer at the Institute of Anatomy from the Jassy Faculty of Medicine. In 1920, Popa was advanced assistant and substitute lecturer. A few months after graduation Popa followed Prof. Rainer in Bucharest, at the Chair of Anatomy from the Faculty of Medicine (where his master was transferred as professor of anatomy and embryology). Gr. T. Popa was employed assistant,

then lecturer. In parallel, between 1923 and 1927, Popa activated as professor of anatomy and anthropology at the Bucharest Higher Institute of Physical Education, where Rainer had been appointed professor of anatomy, kinesiology and anthropology in 1922. Thus, Gr. T. Popa helped Rainer's didactic activity. In 1928, Popa returned to Jassy, and become professor of descriptive anatomy at the Jassy Faculty of Medicine [8]. Following the retirement of Fr. Rainer, in 1942 Gr. T. Popa was again transferred to the Bucharest Faculty of Medicine, being professor at the Anatomy and Embryology Chair.

Another difference between V. Papilian and Gr. T. Popa was due to Papilian's profound passion for music. In 1920, he was founding member of the Symphonic orchestra of the "Gheorghe Dima" Philharmonic from Cluj. In 1933, he was appointed governmental commissar at the Cluj Romanian Opera House and president of the board of directors of the same Opera House. Between 1934 and 1936, he was appointed director of the same Opera House. During this period, he promoted important Romanian operas. It is interesting to note that at the Bellini's centenary, Papilian organized in Cluj a performance of the opera "Norma", to which he invited soloists of La Scala Opera House from Milan.

A special part in V. Papilian's medical career, as well as in Gr. T. Popa's activity took place during the First World War. However, there were some marked differences between their war participation. Thus, Papilian attended also the Balkan War in 1913, working at a health service. During the World War I, between 1916 and 1917, his occupation was focused on surgery. The experience earned in these years allowed him later to perform countless experiments at the Anatomical Chair of Cluj. Thereby, making experimental researches, Papilian discovered the link between the vegetative system and different pathological conditions, such as infections reactions and allergic diseases. These findings contributed to the progress of medical treatments. Two examples are illustrative: the infiltration with Novocaine of Arnold nerve for the treatment of occipital neuralgia and the vagus nerve dissection in the surgical treatment of asthma [9]. Papilian also performed some very progressive experiments, which were not mentioned in the biological literature up to him, such as the development of malformations by bird eggs centrifugations or after the administration of various chemicals. Many of his experimental researches were communicated in the sessions of the Anatomical Meeting Society from Cluj. As example, it is useful to mention "The anatomical relationship between meninges and spinal nerves" and "Blood circulation in the pituitary gland" [10].

In contrast to Papilian, Popa attended the First World War as battalion physician in some sanitary formations of the Army. From the medico-historical perspective, it can be observed that the activity done by Gr. T. Popa during this war had a very little effect on his further activity as anatomist.

☞ Similarities between the two great Romanian anatomists

Victor Papilian and Grigore T. Popa were contemporaries more than a half of century (56 years). Although they were part of the same generation, living in the same

country and having in common many scientific preoccupations, between them was no collaboration. Throughout their lives, both of them became medical celebrities and authorities in anatomy. Their domains of researches in biology, medicine, anthropology and embryology proved to be similar. They both have done extensive activities not only on scientific field, but also on cultural, journalistic and editorial domains. Both of them had wide horizon in the majority fields of knowledge. It is difficult to assess who was more competent or most comprehensive in reflections. They had didactic vocations, being relentless against laziness and inactivity. They were beloved mentors, to which students manifested a great respect. Although Victor Papilian was sometimes sarcastic with the deceptive students, he easily regretted his timing impulsivity. As his daughter – Mihaela Papilian – recounted, her father loved his students and collaborators. It is sufficient to recall just two examples. Prof. Papilian and his son – Victor V. Papilian – were the only ones from the Anatomy Institute who gave the necessary blood for transfusion for a laboratory-assistant's wife. If he was begged, Prof. Victor Papilian did not refuse to guarantee for someone who needed to borrow money, although four or five times, he had to pay the unpaid promissory notes. Mihaela Papilian explained the feeling of love of her father: "his love for people and his understanding for all human condition traits made him incapable to hate, even those who hurt him. After the first moments of revolt and deep pain – because those who kicked him had been helped by him – he forgave them not in words, but genuinely; he had a great regret for them. And yet he really hated Hitler". She concluded: "Only those who never wanted [his love] did not receive his love" [11]. This quotation stresses between its lines that Prof. Papilian was very upset for his former pupils, who did not help him after 1947, when his persecutions began (persecutions done by the communist authorities). There were two exceptions: Constantin Velluda (1893–1978) – who continued to collaborate with Papilian in the '50s – and his former student Valeriu Anania (1921–2011).

Both Victor Papilian and Grigore T. Popa taught very interesting anatomical lectures, which were appreciated by their students. Many times Papilian demonstrated an unusual selection for the anatomical terms. He presented his courses in an extremely attractive fashion and in a very expressive manner. Valeriu Anania noted in a remarkable recollection that "Papilian achieved a unique performance: his courses always ended, against the didactic sobriety, in the applauses of students. He had the gift to crown his lesson with an idea, if not necessarily philosophical, at least marvelous" [12]. Therefore, the students wishing to have a sit in the first rows of benches in the Cluj anatomical amphitheatre arrived there earlier, between 6 and 6.30 am, the lecture beginning at 8 o'clock [13]. Discussing Popa's style of speech, one of his former students – Gheorghe Chipail (1905–1997) – remarked that Gr. T. Popa was a skilful wielder of the spoken and written word, defending his beliefs without fear [14]. Therefore, Gh. Chipail also appreciated that Gr. T. Popa's "lectures and courses had not the appearance of a speech. However, he spoke fluently, in a common language, as from person to person, expressing his ideas with an

impressive clarity; it was therefore impossible not to be captivated by his ideas" [15].

Concerning the anatomical books written by these two famous Romanian anatomists, it should be noted that Prof. Papilian was the author of an ample didactic anatomical literature. Right from the start, in 1920, he realized some chapters, calligraphic handwritten and then xero-graphed. In the same year, he published in 1920 the first volume of the "Practical Handbook of Dissection". The second volume of this handbook was edited in 1921. The second edition of this very useful handbook was printed in 1932. At the third edition, from 1945/46, coworkers were Ion Gabriel Russu (1904–1969) and Victor V. Papilian (1920–1982). This book was reedited in 1959, after Victor Papilian's death. A greater attention must be offered to Papilian's "Elementary Treaty of Descriptive and Topographic Anatomy". In 1923 was published its first volume having the following chapters: "Generalities", "Osteology", "Artrology" and "Myology". In 1924/25 was published the second part of the first volume of this "Treaty of Anatomy" ("Angiology" and "Nervous System"). In 1928, Papilian edited the second edition of the first part of the first volume of his "Elementary Treaty" and also the second volume, entitled "Viscera". In 1942/43 appeared the third edition of the first volume and also the second edition of the second volume of this Treaty. In 1945 was reedited the fourth edition of the first volume. In 1944 and 1946 appeared two successive editions of "Viscera".

Analyzing from the didactic perspective, Prof. Gr. T. Popa's courses for students, it comes out that he did not write a proper course of anatomy. He preferred to translate (together with his wife Florica Popa) the anatomical treatise written in 1858 by Henry Gray (1827–1861). However, Gr. T. Popa did not limit to a correct translation. He wrote some valuable annotations and additions of functional anatomy.

With regard to the student exam, both V. Papilian and Gr. T. Popa showed a special exam exigency, firmly condemning any attempts of fraud. However, the students respected and loved their masters. A suggestive example took place in 1947, when many students from the Bucharest Faculty of Medicine and some students from the Faculty of Law protected Prof. Popa for not being arrested by the State Security agents [16]. This situation was the beginning of some persecutions ordered by the Communist authorities against Gr. T. Popa. Another significant example was put into evidence in August 1956 at Cluj Central cemetery, when a large number of former students attended Papilian's funeral (which has been an unpleasant surprise for the State Security).

Both professors had a great formative capacity on students, young members of their Chairs and for other coworkers. Each of them founded a significant school of anatomy, Victor Papilian in Cluj, and Grigore T. Popa in Jassy.

Being very appreciated for their achievements, both of them hold leading positions in the faculties where they carried out their careers. Prof. Papilian was Dean of the Cluj Faculty of Medicine twice: in the academic year 1930/1931 and for the second time, during the refuge of the Faculty in Sibiu, between 1940 and 1944. Prof. Popa was Dean of the Jassy Faculty of Medicine (1938–1940)

and of the Bucharest Faculty of Medicine (1944–1945). In 1936, Gr. T. Popa was elected correspondent member of the Romanian Academy.

It is useful to mention that both had supported the idea that higher education extension is a necessity. In this respect, it should be noted Papilian's insistence to set up a university in Craiova [17].

Analyzing the frequency of the abroad scientific or cultural experience had by Victor Papilian and Grigore T. Popa there is a significant difference. Popa had a Rockefeller scholarship, which gave him the opportunity to specialize in Chicago, working as the Rockefeller Foundation Research fellow, in Woods Hole at the Marine Biological Laboratory and in London at the University College (between 1925 and 1928). He also traveled several times to the UK for researches and scientific meetings (1928, 1930, 1932 and 1935) [18, 19]. About Papilian, there are not registered certain period of his abroad specialization in research. Certainly, during his abroad trips he visited some faculties of medicine. He probably did not visit especially some experimental laboratories. It is possible that he was not interested in doing this kind of scientific trips, as he had a highly developed scientific intuition. Many of his researches and experiences of anatomy, embryology, physiology and toxicology done in Cluj represented original discoveries. However, he traveled abroad as director of the National Theatre from Cluj and of the Opera House from the same town, to inquire on site about the modern theatre and opera houses [20].

In a Christian manner, both anatomists had constant concern for the oppressed people. Papilian and Popa were democrats and also great lovers of people. Each of them fought against discrimination, against nationalism in medicine and science, against racism, fascism, oppression and against the Marxist ideology.

Each of them manifested an unflinching courage against all kinds of totalitarianism, both becoming victims of the Communist regime. In 1947, Victor Papilian was forced to end his didactic career at the Cluj Chair of Anatomy. Next year, he was detained for a short time (for political reasons). Then, in 1952, he was imprisoned for one year. Being very ill (heart failure), Prof. Papilian died on August 15, 1956. A lot of former students, colleagues and admirers participated at his funeral.

As for Prof. Popa, he was discharged from the Dean position and from the Romanian Academy in 1945. In the next year, he was removed from the education system. Constantly menaced and hunted by the communist authorities, abandoned by his colleagues and living clandestinely at various friends, Popa managed to avoid detention. However, being very sick (hypertension, renal sclerosis and finally uremia) he died on July 18, 1948. A small number of students and only few members of the didactic staff of the Bucharest University participated at the funeral service. One of the reasons of this situation was that they were scared by the authorities, because Gr. T. Popa was considered an enemy for the Romanian Communist regime [16].

Unfortunately, both of them died at an age when they would have been able to shape generations of students and young doctors and when they would have been capable to do new researches, as well as to bring new contributions in literature.

Posterity was ungrateful towards both outstanding anatomists during the first two decades after their death. Although their achievements were done in multiple areas, they did not receive their rightful homage during the first years after the end of their lives. Only in 1964 and in the following years, when it was a relaxation of the oppression done by the Romanian Communist regime, their names gradually began to be mentioned in various studies of history of literature and, a little later, in the history of medicine [21, 22]. Even so, some literary contribution of Papilian were described in a negative light, due to the fact that they were analyzed using the ideological criteria of the Communist regime [23].

☞ **Some considerations about the conflict between Grigore T. Popa and Victor Papilian**

The conflict between these two important anatomists occurred in 1924, when Popa blamed Papilian of plagiarism. The accusation was more unbearable, being done in the press. Gr. T. Popa began the polemic with Victor Papilian, having the motivation that the first volume of the “Elementary Treatise of Descriptive and Topographical Anatomy” (edited by Papilian in 1923) contained plagiarized data from anatomical textbooks wrote by some foreign authors. The first step of this polemic is dated January 13, 1924. At that time, Gr. T. Popa published the article entitled “Illegal loans and plagiarism” in well-known “The Truth” (Adevărul) newspaper. Victor Papilian was upset by this article and thank that the accusation written by Gr. T. Popa had a defamatory character. Thus, in the same month, Papilian defended himself against this accusation, editing a booklet entitled “A response”. At the end of this brochure, he included a meaningful short story – a fable in prose having the title “The history of the humbug donkey and the jealous crow”. Unfortunately, there were other moments which followed in this conflict. We do not intend to analyze sentence by sentence this polemic, because, as far as we know, this conflict irrevocably ended during the life of these two Romanian anatomists. However, it is useful to know that Papilian’s sadness, which rapidly changed into indignation, was great. He considered himself to be: fair, scrupulous and guiltless of plagiarism. Perhaps because his dignity was affected by Gr. T. Popa’s imputations, Papilian’s response was completed with a fable having a rather severe message. For its better understanding, we will briefly detail its content. It is an allegorical story presenting a donkey, which appropriated his master’s outfit (who was a scientist monk). After the death of his master, the donkey did a long trip. Finally, he arrived in the land of penguins, where the donkey presented itself as a great scholar. Moreover, the donkey promised to penguins to finish the building of a tower, which was very beloved by them. The liar donkey was helped in its false promises by a crow, which advertised for the donkey, croaking all day. Meanwhile, a small penguin brought with a lot of effort the necessary stones to build a new tower. The result was a beautiful and strong new tower. The liar donkey and the jealous crow tried to compromise the little penguin with the accusation for bringing foreign material. However, the attempt to discredit the work done by the little penguin

was useless, because penguins observed the differences between the old tower, which continued to be unfinished and the new tower, which was already built. Consequently, the penguins wanted to punish the donkey, but an elder quiet them [24].

Studying this controversy after more than 90 years since it occurred several clarifications are required, in order to have a more nuanced understanding of the context of this “fight”.

First of all it can be noted that Papilian’s Treaty of Anatomy was the first complete Romanian textbook of this specialty published in our country. For this reason, he introduced the term “elementary” in the title of his treatise. However, it was not only a textbook because some information was designed for young physicians (and not for students). The second aspect, which should be put into evidence, is that at the beginning of the interwar period all the students of the new created Romanian Faculty of Medicine from Cluj needed urgently Romanian language textbooks. From the ethnical point of view, the students who came to study medicine at Cluj were heterogeneous. Most of them did not know French language. The ones who had learned this language did not know German or Hungarian. It is sure that Papilian did not know at all Hungarian language at that time. Moreover, this wish was very powerful, being a sort of compensatory situation. It is necessary to add that at the former University from Cluj was impossible to use the Romanian language in the didactic and scientific activities. These goals determined Papilian, as other professors, to write urgently treaties in Romanian language. In these circumstances, it was possible that few omissions were forgotten in the text of the anatomical treatise without being corrected. It was not impossible that those who helped Papilian in publishing his treatise to do some inaccuracies. As Mihaela Papilian (the daughter of Prof. V. Papilian) noted, the handwritten of her father was difficult to be deciphered. The consequence mentioned by Mihaela Papilian was that hundreds of pages of the textbook of anatomy written by her father were handwritten again by her mother – Ecaterina Papilian. The situation was more complex, as a large part of the illustrations were drawn by Ecaterina Papilian according to anatomical pieces [11]. It is possible that Ecaterina Papilian did not understand some details in order to draw them more accurately.

Moreover, during the first years of the interwar period, Prof. Papilian needed a great deal of time and energy to solve many urgent administrative problems, which occurred in the activity of the Chair of Anatomy. Thus, in 1919, the edifice of the Anatomy Chair from Cluj had great damages due to the First World War. However, the situation of the Anatomy building was more severe, having neither running water, nor electricity. As V. Papilian confessed, arriving in Cluj in that year, he did not find a beautiful institute as the one of the Anatomy Chair from the Bucharest Faculty of Medicine, neither dissection tables, nor laboratory material and auxiliary staff. He needed four years to create an anatomical teaching, period in which he made huge efforts for this purpose, efforts associated with patience and meticulousness [25].

As shown Mihai Ionescu (1928–1999), Papilian’s Treaty was complete, including “all chapters of theoretical

and practical study of human anatomy having medical training purposes". Making a synthesis of the basic characteristics of the "Elementary Treatise of Descriptive and Topographical Anatomy", M. Ionescu revealed that it was the first treatise presenting a complete Romanian anatomical nomenclature: "The author gave in brackets the International Anatomical Nomenclature existing at that time – elaborated in 1895, at Basel". M. Ionescu continued to put into evidence that starting with the third edition of this anatomical treatise, Papilian mentioned the International Anatomical Nomenclature elaborated in 1935, at Jena. Referring to the size of the two Elementary Treatise volumes, Ionescu recognized that the dimensions are smaller than those of Léo Testut (1849–1925) treatise "but so complete that anyone can learn of it". M. Ionescu's was that Papilian's Treatise "became a classic book [...] because it reached almost the perfection" [26].

In less than five years since the first volume of this Treatise was published for the first time it was sold out. For Iacob Iacobovici (1879–1959) this was the best test for the value and the utility of Papilian's textbook. Iacobovici added that Papilian's book is a "wonderful guide; is not only a textbook for students, but is also a guidebook for any surgeon who desires to reach a technical perfection" [27].

The greatest part of the physicians from Transylvania appreciated Papilian's treatise. However, not only the Transylvanians appreciated it, but also students from other Romanian faculties of medicine. The publication of this Treatise represented a stringent need for the students from Transylvania and a great help for the training of many medical students from Jassy and Bucharest.

It is obviously that in 1924 Gr. T. Popa did not know all these aspects. Some of them became evident only having a historical perspective. Otherwise, he would have quit describing in public what he named "plagiarism techniques". It is possible that if the entourage of both anatomists would have been wiser, it would have been possible to pacify the warlike atmosphere. It is difficult to know the temperament of the members who advised V. Papilian and Gr. T. Popa during this polemic.

This controversy, viewed in medico-historical terms, was mentioned in some papers, which are not the subject of our study.

However, a problem arises. Would Gr. T. Popa accused V. Papilian of plagiarism after Popa himself was accused of stealing an idea of his master – Francisc Rainer (1874–1944)? This allegation was done in 1944 by Ilie Th. Riga (1908–1977). He considered that Rainer mentioned for the first time the possibility of the existence of a hypothalamo-hypophyseal portal system (and not Gr. T. Popa) [28, 29]. This accusation affected Prof. Popa very much. The accusation was done a year after the death of Rainer and 14 years after Gr. T. Popa published his important discovery, done in collaboration with Una Lucy Fielding (1888–1969). Prof. Popa reply was entitled "Paternity, priority and ... billingsgate". We do not want to give other details about this conflict.

Instead of conclusions, we should add some remarks. Both V. Papilian and Gr. T. Popa were outstanding anatomists, with numerous cultural and moral achievements. Being authentic values, they should not be analyzed uni-

laterally. Also, they should not be considered in a competitive ruthlessly. Being human beings, it was possible that they had done some errors during their careers. However, being precious scientists who contributed to Romanian's prestige, their errors should not be severely criticized. Each of them wanted the progress of anatomy. It was a sort of fight with themselves and sometimes with some of their colleagues, in order to contribute in a better way to the development of anatomy in Romania.

This study was written to commemorate 60 years since the death of Victor Papilian.

Conflict of interests

The author declares that he has no conflict of interests.

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Received: October 2, 2015

Accepted: January 30, 2016